IPO confirms continued funding for specialist IP crime unit

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Three-year funding commitment alongside new industry partnership pilot.

The Intellectual Property Office (IPO), in conjunction with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), has today confirmed that baseline funding for the Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit (PIPCU) will be maintained for a further 3 years, from April 2026 to March 2029.

The announcement reflects the strength of the partnership between the IPO and PIPCU - one of the most effective collaborations in UK IP enforcement.

This partnership has taken the fight to IP crime across the board, disrupting more than 100,000 websites providing illegal access to copyrighted content or selling counterfeit goods. This supports operations targeting physical counterfeits from vehicle parts to fashion, and cutting off income streams to criminal networks.

This vital work has delivered tangible results for rights holders and protected consumers from the harms of unsafe and substandard counterfeit goods. It has also helped shield the public from the serious risks associated with infringing websites - including fraud, data theft and exposure to serious criminality - while helping support the UK’s world leading creative industries and sporting occasions. In doing so, it has helped establish the UK as a global leader in tackling IP crime.

The IPO and PIPCU will also work together to develop a pilot scheme for collaborative industry co-funding, beginning in April 2027. This will act as a proof of concept - testing how additional enforcement activity could be delivered with partnership funding, with a view to scaling the model in future years.

Adam Williams, Chief Executive of the IPO, said:

> Our partnership with PIPCU has been central to the UK’s success in combating intellectual property crime. This continued funding ensures that vital work can continue - protecting businesses, the public, and the integrity of our IP system.
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> But we know there is more to do. The scale and complexity of IP crime continues to grow, and public funding alone cannot meet every challenge. A threat on this scale demands a response to match, and the most effective approach is one rooted in partnership - with government, law enforcement, and industry each playing an essential role. That is why we are exploring how a collaborative public-private funding model could deliver even greater impact. We will be reaching out to industry partners in the coming months to discuss how we can build on this foundation together.

The IPO and PIPCU are working together to identify priorities for the pilot and the level of contribution needed, and will reach out to stakeholders in due course

Pete O’Doherty, Commissioner at the City of London Police:

> It is excellent to see the IPO’s new 3 year funding agreement. This will enable our Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit (PIPCU) to continue its operational activity and further strengthen its partnerships that already deliver measurable results.
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> With the scale of intellectual property crime growing significantly in recent years, (as with all fraud) this partnership is more important than ever. It allows PIPCU to apply its specialist capabilities to disrupt criminal activity and protect intellectual property.
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> It is vital that we tackle fraud together as a whole system response and so the value of this public-private working cannot be overstated. By bringing together the enforcement powers and strategic oversight of the public sector with the expertise, intelligence and insight of industry, we are able to deliver a more coordinated and effective response.
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> Our collaboration strengthens prevention, enhances disruption activity and ensures that action is targeted where it will have the greatest impact.
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> We remain fully committed to tackling intellectual property crime and to matching our response to its increasing scale.

Dan Guthrie, Director General of the Alliance for IP said:

> We are delighted that the government will continue to fund the Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit (PIPCU) for a further 3 years. Having a central policing unit to tackle Intellectual Property (IP) theft is vital to both protect the public and support the economic powerhouse which is the UK’s IP-rich sector.
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> PIPCU is also rightly highlighted internationally as a model to tackle IP crime. We will engage constructively with the IPO and PIPCU to understand how industry might help to expand the work of the Unit in the future.

Industry partners interested in learning more about the pilot are encouraged to contact the IPO.

Background

1. The Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit (PIPCU) was established in 2013 within the City of London Police. It investigates serious IP crime, working closely with rights holders and law enforcement agencies domestically and internationally.

2. The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) is the UK government body responsible for intellectual property rights, supporting economic growth through an IP system that encourages innovation and creativity.

3. Funding of approximately £3 million per year will continue from April 2026 to March 2029, provided by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) via the IPO.

4. A pilot industry co-funding scheme will be developed from April 2027, exploring collaborative public-private funding models to support additional enforcement activities.

5. Key achievements of the IPO-PIPCU partnership since 2013 include:

- disrupting more than 100,000 illegal websites
- seizing counterfeit goods across sectors including automotive, fashion, and electronics
- reducing advertising revenue flowing to illegal websites
- supporting IP crime prosecutions domestically and internationally
- collaborating with international partners to address cross-border IP crime

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ipo-confirms-continued-funding-for-specialist-ip-crime-unit