

Speaking note for introductory remarks

Thank you for inviting me to be here this evening to celebrate ACID's 25th anniversary. I was delighted to accept, to show my support for the UK's brilliant design sector and designers.

Great British design not only helps UK products stand out, demonstrate quality, and find consumers in a competitive global marketplace – but it is also important for our wider economy, contributing nearly £100 billion in GVA to the UK economy in 2019.

Intellectual property rights play a key role in how businesses compete, at home and in world markets. IP underpins the way in which businesses and individuals can commercialise their ideas, turning them into the products which improve the quality of life for everyone.

Indeed, figures show that intangible assets, often protected by IP, may make up around 70 to 80% of a typical firm's worth. And industries with an above average use of IP rights account for over a quarter of UK non-financial value-added output.

So, IP is vital to the government's mission to make the UK the best place in the world for creativity and innovation to call home, and to thrive.

And design is an integral part of this.

To ensure businesses can capitalise on new opportunities, we want to support them – and in particular SMEs - to understand and use their IP effectively, helping to foster economic growth and prosperity.

ACID has been a strong and consistent champion for SME designers for 25 years. Both in your own right and as a key member of the Alliance for IP, you have campaigned to ensure that IP rights are valued. The government has been pleased to work with ACID to help ensure our IP system continues to support creativity and innovation in design, and that our design system works effectively for smaller design-led businesses and lone designers.

Championing initiatives such as the introduction of criminal offences for the intentional infringement of registered designs, and the introduction of a Small Claims Track within the Intellectual Property Enterprise Court (IPEC), ACID has been a strong and consistent voice for Great British Design.

This government is also keen to future proof the designs framework, ensuring the UK remains a world leading IP environment. Emerging and future technologies might affect how designs are created and used, particularly in digital environments.

The IPO is currently carrying out a wide-ranging review of the UK designs system. It is important that the UK has a balanced regime which works for all users. This will

give the UK a competitive edge and allow designers to get the most from new opportunities.

The government will be consulting later this year to seek designers' views on issues including search and examination, simplification of the UK designs regime and measures which I hope will make it easier for small designers to enforce their designs.

I know that the introduction of criminal sanctions for unregistered designs is an important issue for ACID. We will be seeking evidence on this topic within our consultation, so I would urge you all to respond. I can assure you that the views of all respondents will be considered.

I also want to see a future designs system that is flexible in the face of rapid developments in technology, and not exclude specific technologies.

As IP and AI minister, I want to ensure that the designs framework encourages the development and use of AI tools for the benefit of designers, while ensuring the correct balance of incentives and protection.

Advances in AI technology mean that we must ensure the IP framework includes the right incentives for creation, and clear rules about the outputs of AI tools. The IPO is therefore considering the appropriateness of current law with regard to creation and authorship, as well as the implications of new technology for infringement.

I'd also add that there remains considerable work to do in terms of educating and building understanding of IP, among SMEs in particular.

The IPO already has an extensive programme in place designed to support these smaller firms to recognise, protect, and manage their IP. This includes grants to provide funding towards an IP audit by an IP professional, online guidance and tools for businesses, and a network of regional policy advisors.

The IPO are also reviewing their office-wide approach to supporting innovative SMEs to make the most of their IP assets. They made this one of their corporate priorities this year as they want to better understand the effectiveness of their services and interventions.

As the IPO continues to strive to deliver best-in-class IP services we cannot underestimate the key role that all our partners play in helping us deliver on our ambitions. Our partners, such as ACID, will remain crucial to this engagement.

I am delighted to join with ACID on their 25th anniversary to celebrate all those who play a vital role in supporting and promoting IP rights and highlighting the importance of the business of design to our economy.