IPReg consultation on 2027/28 Business Plan, 2027 Budget and Practising Fees

The Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys (CITMA) is responding to the consultation by IPReg on its 2027/28 Business Plan, 2027 Budget and Practising Fees in its capacity as an Approved Regulator, as defined in the Legal Services Act 2007, and as the representative body for Chartered Trade Mark Attorneys and the wider trade mark and design profession. We are grateful to IPReg for the opportunity to comment.

Our response answers the specific questions posed in the consultation.

Question 1. What are your views on the proposed Business Plan?

General comments
Many of the activities contained within the 2027 Business Plan are a continuation of themes which have featured in recent years and therefore we generally support the proposed plan.

We welcome the continuing focus on evidence-based and risk-based regulation, maintaining high professional standards and ensuring that regulation remains proportionate and outcomes-focused.

We note that this Business Plan represents a more significant evolution in IPReg's operating model than previous plans, with an increased emphasis on data, intelligence, communications, public engagement and regulatory assurance. We support these objectives in principle, provided that the activities undertaken remain proportionate to the size and risk profile of the regulated community.

Driving forward the work on education
We remain generally supportive of the Education Review and welcome the progress made to date. We also welcome IPReg's continued commitment to stakeholder engagement and consultation throughout the process.

As we have noted in previous consultation responses, it remains important that due consideration is given to the Registered Trade Mark Attorney qualification route alongside the patent attorney qualification route. Any future arrangements should ensure there are no unintended consequences for the trade mark profession and that opportunities for improvement are considered across both professions where appropriate.

The proposed timetable is lengthy, and we have some concerns as to whether the pace of the review will keep up with the pace of change across the profession. We understand the need for consultation, detailed implementation planning and subsequent rule approval processes, but this needs to be balanced against the cost of the project and the speed at which change may be required.

We encourage IPReg to continue collaborating closely with stakeholders to ensure any transition arrangements are realistic, practical and minimise disruption to students, employers and training providers.

Economic crime thematic review
We support the proposal to undertake thematic work in relation to economic crime and the handling of client money. Understanding any risks within the regulated community is clearly important in supporting the new regulatory objective relating to the prevention and detection of economic crime.

However, given the nature of the intellectual property profession and the relatively limited number of firms holding client money, we encourage IPReg to ensure that any future regulatory interventions remain evidence-led and proportionate to the actual risks identified.

We would welcome publication of the findings of the review and appropriate consultation before any significant regulatory changes are considered.

Assessing the impact of the PII Sandbox
We continue to support the current cautious approach to the PII Sandbox. As noted in previous consultations, professional indemnity insurance remains an important consumer safeguard and any changes should be subject to careful assessment and consultation.

The limited participation in the Sandbox suggests that further evidence gathering remains appropriate before wider conclusions are drawn. This needs to be looked at in respect of the limited number of insurance providers in the market who meet IPReg’s minimum terms and conditions.

Building the evidence base
CITMA supports IPReg's ambition to improve its use of data and intelligence. Better data can help ensure regulatory decisions are targeted, proportionate and evidence led.

We would, however, welcome further clarity on:

- the specific outputs expected from the expanded data capability;
- how success will be measured;
- how additional intelligence gathering will reduce regulatory risks or improve outcomes; and
- how duplication with data held by other stakeholders will be avoided.

Diversity
We welcome the continued ring-fencing of reserves for diversity initiatives and the intention to analyse the results of the 2026 diversity survey.

We particularly welcome the intention to use diversity evidence to inform future education arrangements and widen participation into the profession.

Responding to LSB consultations and related work
As we have stated in previous responses, we remain concerned about the volume of activity generated by the Legal Services Board and the impact this has on the cost of regulation.

The consultation again confirms that substantial resource is required for LSB-related activity. We expect to see the LSB’s proposals to adopt a different approach to feed through into less resource required by IPReg to ensure compliance. Whilst it would be prudent not to make assumptions on any savings, if the requirements are lessened, we would expect to see appropriate adjustments in the 2028 budget.

We continue to encourage IPReg to seek opportunities, working with other legal regulators where appropriate, to minimise duplication and ensure that regulatory costs remain proportionate.

Encouraging innovation and AI
We are pleased to see continued recognition of technology and AI within the business plan and support the collaborative approach being taken by IPReg with CITMA, CIPA and with other regulators.

As adoption accelerates across the profession, maintaining an appropriate balance between encouraging innovation and ensuring public protection will remain essential.

Visible regulator
We strongly support IPReg's ambition to be a more visible regulator and to improve public understanding of regulated intellectual property services. Greater visibility of the regulator can help reinforce confidence in the profession, make it clearer to businesses and the public why they should seek advice from appropriately qualified and regulated professionals, and support the wider work being undertaken by CITMA to promote the value, expertise and public-interest contribution of Chartered Trade Mark Attorneys and the trade mark and design profession.

This is an area where the regulatory and representative roles are distinct but complementary. IPReg is best placed to explain the protections that regulation provides, the standards expected of authorised individuals and firms, and the safeguards available to consumers. CITMA, as the representative body, has an important role in promoting the profession, supporting member engagement, raising awareness of the value of specialist trade mark and design advice, and representing the profession to government, policymakers, business and the public.

We would therefore welcome IPReg's communications work being developed in close collaboration with CITMA and CIPA so that public-facing messages are consistent, mutually reinforcing and clearly distinguish between regulatory assurance and professional representation.

This work could support public protection, improve understanding of the regulated professions, encourage appropriate use of qualified advisers and help strengthen the reputation and visibility of the intellectual property sector as a whole.

We would be interested to understand how success will be measured and how visibility to the relevant public will be meaningfully achieved.

Question 2. Do you have any evidence of impact or comments on the Equality Impact Assessment?

We do not currently have any additional evidence regarding the impact of the proposals on different categories of individuals or firms.

We have no substantive comments on the Equality Impact Assessment. We welcome the decision to update the assessment following publication of the 2026 diversity survey and support the continued use of evidence to inform future policy development.

Question 3. What are your views on the proposal to increase practising fees by 2.97%?

In previous responses we have consistently stated that we would like to see the overall cost of regulation reduce over time and, where possible, result in lower or frozen practising fees. This remains our overall position.

Notwithstanding this, we recognise that the proposed increase of 2.97% is below CPI inflation and that IPReg intends to continue using reserves to support delivery of its business plan priorities.

We would welcome a clearer medium-term plan setting out how future efficiency gains arising from technology, data capability, process improvements and organisational investment will contribute towards stabilising or reducing practising fees in future years.

Question 4. What are your views on the proposed 2027 Budget?

We welcome the increased transparency provided within the budget documentation compared with previous years. The level of narrative supporting individual budget lines is helpful and enables more informed scrutiny.

There are, however, several areas where we would comment or welcome further information.

Staff costs
Staff costs increase from £761,650 to £911,820, representing the most significant increase within the budget. The increase is attributed in part to additional communications and data posts and a full-year CEO salary.

We would welcome further information on whether these positions are permanent or time-limited and the anticipated return on investment from these appointments.

Conduct, disciplinary, assurance and litigation costs
The proposed budget doubles this line from £50,000 to £100,000 due to case complexity and complaint volumes.

The consultation indicates that some if not all of the cost can be recovered following the outcome of the cases. However, in the projected income it states "No income estimate has been included for costs awards or fines from disciplinary case, as these are not within our control.

It would be helpful to understand if income from previous cases which have been concluded have been recovered to date.

It would seem reasonable based on previous cases to make a working assumption on the level of costs which can be recovered and therefore income received to offset the expenditure.

Communications investment
The budget includes additional communications expenditure alongside dedicated communications resource.

We would welcome greater detail on the specific outputs, objectives and anticipated benefits of these investments.

Reserves
We note the continued use of reserves to fund planned deficits and support strategic investment.

While we support the prudent use of reserves for strategic and time-limited projects, we encourage IPReg to ensure that ongoing expenditure commitments are sustainable over the longer term without creating future pressure for larger practising fee increases.

Question 5. Do you have any comments on the draft Practising Fee Regulations?

We have no comments on the draft regulations.

We would be happy to discuss any of these points further with representatives from IPReg if that would be helpful.

For and on behalf of the Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys

Keven Bader
Chief Executive

24th August 2026