

IPReg: 2025/26 Business Plan, 2025 Budget and Practising Fees consultation

1. The Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys (CITMA) is responding to the consultation by IPReg on their 2025/26 Business Plan, Budget and Practising Fees in its capacity as an Approved Regulator, as defined in the Legal Services Act 2007 (the Act) 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.
2. Our response answers the specific questions asked in the consultation.

Question 1. What are your views on the proposed business plan?

3. Many of the activities within the 2025/26 business plan are a continuation of the activities set out in the 2024/25 business plan and therefore we generally support the proposed plan.

Driving forward the work on education

4. We understand there is a need to continue to focus on aspects related to the route to qualification for Patent Attorneys (PA). As highlighted in our response to the 2024/25 business plan consultation, we encourage IPReg, throughout this piece of work, to give thought to the qualification route for Registered Trade Mark Attorneys (RTMA) to ensure that any findings, advancements or beneficial changes are recognised and potentially realised in respect of the RTMA qualification route (where applicable). It is important to ensure that there are no unintended consequences of changes to the PA qualification system on the RTMA qualification route or to RTMAs. Our only comment on the specifics in this area is whether the proposed timetable is realistic, especially given how long rule change applications can take.
5. We support the work on important issues concerning accredited attorney qualification providers which will help to ensure the standards of those qualifying remains high and the experience students have is a positive one.
6. We would encourage IPReg to also consider new qualification pathways for RTMAs, including apprenticeships. The business plan focusses on the patent attorney profession, but there may well be opportunities and a desire for apprenticeship schemes within the trade mark profession, therefore it should not be ruled out.
7. We support the proposal to review the competency framework for RTMAs and we had hoped work on this would have already commenced. We would welcome engagement from IPReg with CITMA and the profession in this piece of work. We would be happy to be involved to help IPReg with the resource and expertise needed. We have paused our own work to review the [Advanced Competency Framework for Chartered Trade Mark Attorneys](#) to ensure we align any review with the work IPReg undertakes in this area, therefore it would make sense to work closely with IPReg to ensure appropriate alignment.

Thematic reviews

8. We support the proposed thematic reviews to ensure the new regulatory arrangements are effective and achieving the intended aims. We look forward to seeing the updated impact assessment and learning outcomes from the review. We welcome the opportunity to comment on the findings and sharing views on what is working well and where adjustments may need to be made.

Diversity

9. We are pleased to see, once again, a ring-fence of reserves for diversity initiatives. It is important for IPReg to support and align with the broader work of the IP profession in this area.
10. We welcome the diversity survey carried out in 2024 and we look forward to seeing the results of the survey and to discuss any actions to be taken, particularly any findings which are relevant for the trade mark profession.

Responding to LSB consultations and related work

11. We note the extensive amount of work expected to take place in responding to LSB consultations and related work. We note from the Section 51 PCF application¹ last year that IPReg estimate 25% of its FTE policy resource is used on LSB activities. This appears to be a high percentage. This resource required to handle this growing volume of work, coupled with the increase in LSB levy is resulting in the cost of regulation rising.

Impact of Covid-19: IPReg's office and Board meetings

12. The proposal to move to a smaller office and reduce the licence fees seems a sensible move.
13. We note that Lord Smith of Finsbury will complete his second term as Chair of the Board in September 2025 and will step down. We would like to take the opportunity to put on record our gratitude to Lord Smith in the way that he has led the Board and helped IPReg to progress. His willingness to have open conversations and listen to the views of stakeholders has been appreciated and resulted in a positive and productive relationship between IPReg and CITMA.

Additional comments

14. In our response to the 2024/25 business plan consultation we identified two areas of work absent from the business plan.
15. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and future technology. In response to the consultation IPReg agreed with our suggestion and allocated £10,000 from reserves to support work initially. We are aware that IPReg has recently set up a working group to look further into AI, but we are surprised there is little to no reference of the work planned in this area within the 2025/26 business plan.
16. Net zero. In response to the consultation IPReg clarified that given the ambitious work set out in the 2024 plan there was no plan to undertake work in this area, but it would be kept under review. We are still keen to see IPReg progress action to achieve net zero.
17. In the absence of featuring in the 2025/26 business plan we urge IPReg to make a commitment for work to commence in 2026 and details set out in the 2026/27 business plan.

¹ [Section 51 PCF application - 2024](#)

Question 2. What are your views on the proposal to abolish the fee paying category “Registered attorney practising as a sole trader and employing other regulated attorneys or other professionals”?

18. We have no objection to the proposal based on the rationale provided in the consultation.

Question 3. Do you have any evidence of the impact that each of these proposals will have on different categories of individuals or firms? In particular, do you have any evidence of the potential impact on the diversity of the profession? Do you have any comments on the Equality Impact Assessment at Annex B?

19. We do not have any evidence of the impact that each of the proposals will have on different categories of individuals or firms or any comments on the Equality Impact Assessment.

Question 4. What are your views on the proposal to increase practising fees by 3%?

20. In previous responses to practising fee consultations we made it clear that we hoped for a reduction in practising fees, all things being equal, in future years. This was something the LSB supported through an expectation that the cost of regulation would reduce over time. This remains our overall position, but we appreciate the continued difficult economic climate and inflationary cost increases cannot simply be absorbed or ignored. We therefore consider the proposal by IPReg to increase fees by 3% to be a reasonable approach.
21. We would hope that for future years IPReg would be able to lower fees or freeze fees to reduce the cost of regulation. We would welcome further information from IPReg before the next budget and practising fee cycle on how it will reduce the cost of regulation, given the increases we have seen year on year.

Question 6. What are your views on the proposed 2025 budget at Annex C?

22. We have no substantive comments to make on the proposed budget.

Question 6. Do you have any comments on the draft Practising Fee Regulations at Annex F?

23. We have no comments on the draft regulations.
24. We would be happy to discuss any of these points further with representatives from IPReg if it would be of assistance.

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



Keven Bader
Chief Executive

28th August 2024