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During Oral Questions on the funding of the Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit on 28 February, you asked why there are so few successful prosecutions for illegal access to film and TV content if as the government has said, existing laws already cover this activity.

The Government recognises the devastating impact that growth in Internet Protocol TV (IPTV) boxes and the illegal streaming that they facilitate is having on the creative industries and is taking action, where possible, to mitigate these effects. However, the Government believes that current legislation can be effective in addressing the problem. A recent case heard at Nottingham Crown Court resulted in a four year prison term for one man following his arrest for supplying IPTV devices. More recently an individual was found guilty of distributing pre-loaded boxes and ordered to pay £250,000.

It is true that only a small number of cases have so far made it to the courts, but as more arrests are made we are expecting the number of cases being prosecuted to rise. For example, on 14th February the Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit (PIPCU) arrested five people for offences concerned with the sale and distribution of illegal Internet Protocol TV (IPTV) devices. This case and several others like it are still to be prosecuted.

The Government is however not waiting for these cases to complete and is taking action on a number of fronts:

- The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) launched a Call for Views on 23rd February to gather detailed evidence from industry and those with experience of investigating and prosecuting offences relating to illicit streaming devices. The Call for Views seeks evidence on the scale of the losses suffered, the effectiveness of the current legislation and where amendments might be needed. The Call for Views will close on 7th April 2017.
- IPO, working with CPS and PIPCU, is currently preparing new guidance for Trading Standards Officers.
- Officials in IPO are in discussion with the major intermediary platforms (e.g. Amazon, eBay, Facebook, Twitter) about ways they may be able to, for example, reduce the number of illicit listings and speed up the process of notice and takedown of the boxes.

The Government is not against taking action where evidence proves that such action is necessary. Responses to the Call for Views and the outcome of cases in the courts over the coming month will be important in determining if changes are necessary. I will also be placing a copy of this letter in the House library.



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