On 2 December 2005, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that he was asking Andrew Gowers, former Editor of the Financial Times, to lead an independent review into intellectual property rights in the UK. The Review will report to the Chancellor, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in Autumn 2006.

Intellectual Property is a critical component of our present and future success in the global economy. Our economic competitiveness is increasingly driven by knowledge based industries. The IP framework must balance the need to encourage firms and individuals to innovate and invest in new ideas and creative works with the need to ensure that markets remain competitive and that future innovation is not impeded.

While it has been suggested that the present UK system strikes broadly the right balance between consumers and rights-holders, it also appears that there are a variety of practical issues with the existing framework. The Review will look at both the instruments that are provided by government to protect creative endeavour, and also at the operations: how IP is awarded, how it is licensed in the market, and how it is enforced.

On 23rd February, Andrew Gowers launched a Call for Evidence, inviting industry, academia, and the public to submit evidence to the Review. The evidence will facilitate rigorous analysis of the IP system and will enable the Review, as appropriate, to make targeted and practical policy recommendations. To submit evidence, please see www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/gowers.