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Salon Owner Faces Major Legal Battle with L'Oréal Over Name Rights

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A Nottinghamshire businesswoman is preparing to face cosmetics giant L'Oréal in a key legal hearing, as a years-long trademark dispute over the name of her salon reaches a critical stage. The case, which has already cost the salon owner tens of thousands of pounds, is set to be heard by the UK's Intellectual Property Office (IPO) later this year.

Rebecca Dowdeswell founded nkd, a specialist waxing salon originally based in Nottingham city centre since 2009. She is challenging a trademark opposition filed by French multinational L'Oréal, which claims that her use of nkd is too similar to Naked, a brand used

under its Urban Decay make-up range. The company argues that the similarity may lead to consumer confusion, a claim Ms Dowdeswell firmly rejects.

The dispute began when Ms Dowdeswell attempted to re-register her nkd trademark in 2022, following its expiration in 2019. Although she originally held the trademark since 2009, she admitted she failed to renew it in time due to the upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“That six-month window ran into the start of Covid, and chaos ensued for all businesses, including beauty salons, and I missed the expiry,” she previously told the BBC. “When I came to re-register the trademark, I was essentially starting from scratch, not renewing an existing one.”

L'Oréal filed its objection shortly after, citing concerns over its existing Naked trademark, which is widely recognised in its Urban Decay product line, particularly its eyeshadow palettes.

Ms Dowdeswell insists that the brands are clearly distinct and that customer confusion has never been an issue. “There has never been any evidence of consumer confusion. In 15 years of trading, no one has ever said ‘Are you the same brand as Naked by Urban Decay?’” she said.

Trademark Showdown

The IPO has confirmed the hearing is scheduled for 5 November 2025, though a final decision may not come until mid-2026 due to a backlog from post-Brexit trade mark transfers. The agency explained that following the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union (EU), around 1.4 million EU trademarks were transferred to the UK registry. The post-Brexit influx of approximately 1.4 million EU trademarks into the UK registry has led to significant delays in IPO processing.

Despite the drawn-out process and the £30,000 she has already spent on legal fees, Ms Dowdeswell says she is mentally prepared for what lies ahead. “I am ready to fight again. I think L'Oréal thinks I'm just going to go away, and I'm not,” she said.

Ms Dowdeswell said the postponement of the proceedings offered a much-needed break from the emotional strain the dispute had caused. She acknowledged that the process had

taken a significant toll on her personally, affecting her wellbeing, her family life with two young children, and the running of her business.

Meanwhile, L'Oréal indicated its willingness to reach a resolution. The company stated it had offered terms that aim to support Ms Dowdeswell's business while safeguarding its own trademark interests, and expressed hope that the matter could be settled in a way that suits both parties.

Though the legal outcome remains uncertain, Ms Dowdeswell appears determined to see the case through. Referencing the well-known L'Oréal slogan, she admitted she has often questioned herself whether the fight has been worth it, but ultimately believes it is a battle she cannot walk away from.