

Print and Paper have a great environmental story to tell

Mr Carl Dovey
Chairman
Bates Office & Doveys Office
Acorn Industrial Park
Crayford
Kent
DA1 4AL

25 April 2012

Dear Mr Dovey,

Re: Misleading Environmental Claims

It has come to our notice that Bates Office and Doveys Office is encouraging customers to switch from using both virgin and recycled paper to “100% Wood Free” paper on the basis of inaccurate and unsupported environmental claims.

100% Wood Free Paper...So What? PDF document (copy attached) claims that “The paper industry is one of the largest polluters on our planet” which is an unsupported, inaccurate and misleading environmental statement. It continues to list numerous unsupported bullet points relating to virgin and recycled paper, regarding the amount of wood / forests used worldwide and claims that both virgin and recycled paper are unsustainable products, without providing any verifiable sources or facts.

This document also claims that “Tree Free Paper is a better choice for the planet” and provides several bullet points to suggest why, but again without any substantiated evidence to support it.

Bates Office and Doveys Office websites (screen grabs attached) both make misleading environmental claims regarding virgin and recycled paper destroying trees and forests, again without providing any verifiable sources or facts. The websites also make the unsubstantiated statement that “No other paper is more environmentally friendly in the UK”. This is environmentally misleading, unless you can provide the complete factual analysis to substantiate this claim. This would of course cover the full life cycle assessment of the product including carbon footprint and power source for the manufacturer, transport costs to the UK, (as we understand that the origin of the product is overseas), and other impacting factors.

We also note that both your websites claim your “100% Wood Free” paper is FSC Certified. This claim is highly misleading as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification scheme is only awarded to a wood or wood based product that is made with, or contains, wood that comes from FSC certified forests or from post-consumer waste. FSC certification is certainly not applicable to “100% Wood Free” paper! We will be making contact with the FSC organisation to make them aware of your claim and ask them to discuss with you directly.

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My organisation, Two Sides, which represents The Graphic Communications Industries, is concerned by the incorrect and damaging statements that are being given out by your companies. The linkage made by you between reducing the use of virgin and recycled paper, saving forests and helping the environment creates a false impression about the sustainability of virgin and recycled paper.

You are promoting "100% Wood Free Paper / "Tree Free Paper" as "a better choice for the planet", purporting to aid sustainability and seeking to gain credibility for your product by denigrating other types of paper without providing any evidence.

Paper is a renewable and recyclable product that, if responsibly produced and consumed, can be an environmentally sustainable media. It is often surprising to learn that in Europe, where 94% of our paper comes from¹, the area of forest has grown by 30% since 1950² and is increasing at a rate of 1.5 million football pitches every year – an area four times the size of London!³

Also, the paper industry is a relatively small user of wood. Of the wood extracted from the world's forests, 53% is used for energy production, 28% is used by sawmills and only 11% is used directly by the paper industry.⁴

I would be grateful if you would reconsider your misleading environmental messages regarding virgin and recycled paper and that "100% Wood Free Paper" is more environmentally friendly than traditional paper. I would also ask that, in promoting your own products and services, you do not damage the print and paper industry, and jeopardise the livelihood of the many thousands of people employed therein with possibly misleading and inaccurate statements.

Please find attached extracts from CSR Europe's Sustainable Marketing Guide, which would appear be at odds with your marketing initiatives and the new Code of Advertising Rules (CAP) - The extract re Environmental Claims.

Before reporting Bates Office and Doveys Office to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), and advising our industry via a press release about the action we are taking, I would propose a meeting with your marketing and legal departments. In recent similar conversations with BT, British Gas and Barclays concerning unsupported claims about the environmental benefits of electronic communication, we have been able to quickly find an amicable solution.

With thanks for your consideration

Yours sincerely



Martyn Eustace
Director

cc. Head of Legal Department

Sources

1. Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI) trade statistics 2007
2. UNECE, FAO, The Development of Forest Resources, 1950 to 2000
3. Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI) trade statistics 2007
4. FAO Statistics, 2008

