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PRESS ADVISORY

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) this week announced it is upholding all six of the complaints made against wind farm opposition group Save Our Scenery (SOS) and materials they have been using to oppose the proposed Gwynt-Y-Mor offshore wind farm.

The formal complaints were submitted to the ASA—the independent body which polices the rules laid down in the advertising codes—in April of this year. They were submitted by the Sustainable Energy Alliance (SEA www.se-alliance.org.uk), the North Wales based environmental campaign group, which is supporting the proposed Gwynt-Y-Mor offshore wind farm.

One of the complaints was against a full page advertisement placed by SOS in a North Wales weekly newspaper, featuring a photomontage put together by the group to support their view of what the wind farm would look like.

An expert for the ASA said of the photomontage, “the wind turbines had been crudely added in an effort to represent what they could look like and appeared too close to the shore.” He added “the photograph was in panoramic format, which did not recreate the field of view given by the human eye and he considered that the photograph fell short of what the wind farm would look like to a viewer from the location shown.”

The ASA considered that “Because the turbines appeared too densely spread and too close to the shore, the photograph exaggerated the likely effect of the proposed wind farm on the horizon and was not an accurate representation of what the wind farm would like when built.” They concluded that “the advert was therefore misleading” and told SOS not to use the photograph again and to ensure any photographs they used in future were “an accurate representation of what they intended to depict.”

The ASA have also told SOS not to use a number of claims they made in a leaflet produced by the group. SOS claimed to have evidence to substantiate all of the claims made in their leaflet but failed to send any such evidence when requested to do so by the ASA. The ASA reminded SOS that they should hold evidence to substantiate all claims before publishing and that this evidence should be sent to the ASA upon request.

SEA group coordinator Jonathan Lincoln said “We are obviously delighted by the conclusions reached by the ASA council. By upholding the complaints against SOS, the ASA have underlined the importance of substantiated, factual information being made available to the public, so that the people are able to make truly informed decisions about important projects such as Gwynt-Y-Mor.”

Mr Lincoln continued, “the ASA's ruling must, surely, bring in to question the validity of the SOS's argument against the proposed wind farm and the submission put forward by SOS to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), who will be determining the main wind farm consent application. As such we believe that any petitions submitted to the DTI by SOS should be deemed as inadmissible since the signatories were clearly misled.”

He added “we will be sending a copy of the ASA report to the DTI, as well as to the Welsh Assembly Government and Conwy County Borough Council, the latter of which is objecting to the application after being lobbied by SOS.”

The full ASA adjudication report can be seen at www.asa.org.uk from Wednesday November 1st, 2006.

For further information about the Sustainable Energy Alliance please contact Jonathan Lincoln, Tel. 01766 830444, Mo. 07894 686571, E-mail jon@leafandstream.fsnet.co.uk or go to the SEA website www.se-alliance.org.uk.