# Prominent firms continue misleading greenwashing despite ASA rulings



Despite ongoing scrutiny from regulatory bodies, several prominent companies continue to propagate misleading greenwashing claims in their marketing efforts, an alarming trend highlighted by a recent investigation from Greenpeace UK's Unearthed. The investigation reveals that firms such as Virgin Atlantic, Renault, and Aqua Pura are still making unsubstantiated environmental claims in their advertisements, even after being previously censured by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).

The ASA initiated a crackdown on greenwashing in 2021, finding 44 companies guilty of making misleading environmental statements. However, as of last week, at least five of these same companies were still promoting the very claims the ASA had previously ruled against. Under ASA guidelines, advertisers must substantiate their environmental assertions, particularly those claiming products are "sustainable" or "eco-friendly," which require a strict burden of proof. The ASA, however, lacks the authority to impose fines for non-compliance, relying instead on reputational damage and public naming as deterrents.

Notably, Virgin Atlantic has maintained claims on its prominent social media platforms, stating that it completed the first transatlantic flight using "100% sustainable aviation fuel." This assertion led to censure from the ASA, which found it misleading, potentially causing customers to believe the fuel had no negative environmental impacts despite the contrary being true. The ASA highlighted that such absolute claims must communicate the environmental ramifications accurately to prevent consumer deception.

Similarly, Renault's advertising practices have come under fire. The company had repeatedly claimed its hybrid vehicles provided "up to 80% electric driving in the city," even after an ASA ruling deemed this statement misleading. The ASA’s scrutiny extends to other automobile brands as well; MG Motor UK faced backlash for promoting its hybrid cars as "zero emissions." This ruling was based on the lack of clarity regarding the emissions produced when these vehicles operate on petrol or diesel.

In the realm of consumer goods, Aqua Pura's recent marketing efforts included claims regarding "NEW Environmentally Friendly Caps," three years after being instructed by the ASA to remove such assertions due to lack of substantiation. Easigrass, a manufacturer of synthetic lawns, also continued to label one of its products as "eco-friendly and 100% recyclable," despite being told by the ASA to halt such claims. The ASA highlighted the absence of evidence supporting the environmental credentials of their plastic grass which can only be recycled at a single specialised facility in the UK.

An ASA spokesperson reaffirmed the organisation’s commitment to combating misleading green claims, underscoring the importance of clear and substantiated communication regarding environmental impacts. They noted that through ongoing monitoring — enhanced by an AI-driven system — their team continues to identify and rectify non-compliant advertisements swiftly.

In response to these allegations, representatives from the criticised firms have expressed varying levels of commitment to addressing the issues. A Virgin Atlantic spokesperson stated their dedication to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 through sustainable aviation fuel, whilst a Renault representative reported an internal investigation into raised concerns. Meanwhile, Aqua Pura attributed its continued issues to recent restructuring and pledged to align future practices with ASA recommendations.

This disregard for established rules demonstrates a worrying trend among major brands in an age where consumer awareness around environmental issues is greater than ever. The enduring prevalence of greenwashing not only undermines consumer trust but also complicates the broader effort to address climate change through genuine sustainability initiatives. As the ASA’s findings reveal, clearer regulations and enhanced enforcement mechanisms may be necessary to ensure that corporations do not exploit environmental language to mislead the public and evade accountability.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
2. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4
3. Paragraph 4
4. Paragraph 4
5. Paragraph 5
6. Paragraph 5
7. Paragraph 5

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

* <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2025/may/14/firms-greenwashing-adverts-after-being-censured-uk-investigation-finds> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2025/may/14/firms-greenwashing-adverts-after-being-censured-uk-investigation-finds> - An investigation by Greenpeace UK's Unearthed reveals that companies like Virgin Atlantic, Renault, and Aqua Pura have continued to publish misleading environmental claims in their advertisements, despite being previously censured by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). The ASA's 2021 crackdown on greenwashing led to 44 firms being censured for making unsubstantiated claims. However, as recently as last week, at least five of these firms were still posting such claims. The ASA's rules require advertisers to provide clear evidence for environmental claims, with a high burden of proof for absolute claims like 'sustainable' or 'eco-friendly'. While the ASA can name companies on its website and request the removal of non-compliant content, it lacks the authority to issue fines. The article highlights specific instances, such as Virgin Atlantic's promotion of a transatlantic flight using '100% sustainable aviation fuel', which the ASA ruled could mislead consumers about the fuel's environmental impact. Renault and Aqua Pura have also faced similar issues with their advertising practices.
* <https://www.asa.org.uk/rulings/virgin-atlantic-airways-ltd-g23-1224417-virgin-atlantic-airways-ltd.html> - The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) upheld complaints against Virgin Atlantic over a radio advertisement claiming the airline's Flight 100 was the world's first commercial transatlantic flight using '100% sustainable aviation fuel'. The ASA determined that the claim was misleading, as it implied the fuel had no carbon emissions or environmental impact, which was not the case. The ruling emphasized the need for advertisements to clearly communicate the environmental impacts of sustainable aviation fuels to avoid misleading consumers.
* <https://www.ft.com/content/b14ac2a7-5c1b-4c2d-baa2-d9d00e284219> - The UK Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has prohibited a Virgin Atlantic advertisement for making misleading claims regarding the environmental benefits of sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs). The advertisement showcased a transatlantic flight powered entirely by SAFs, described as a significant step towards decarbonizing aviation. However, the ASA deemed that the phrase '100 per cent sustainable aviation fuel' misled consumers by suggesting the fuel had no carbon emissions or environmental drawbacks. This ruling is significant as it is the first instance of the ASA banning an ad over SAF-related claims, reflecting the agency's intensifying scrutiny over 'greenwashing' practices. While SAFs do reduce carbon emissions significantly compared to traditional jet fuels, they are not emission-free. Virgin Atlantic contended that it accurately described the fuel blend used for the flight but acknowledged the ASA's decision. The regulator emphasized the need for advertisements to clearly communicate the environmental impacts of SAFs to avoid misleading consumers.
* <https://www.asa.org.uk/rulings/mg-motor-uk-ltd-a23-1209401-mg-motor-uk-ltd.html> - The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) upheld complaints against MG Motor UK Ltd over a paid Google advertisement that claimed their vehicles were 'Zero Emissions'. The ASA concluded that the ad was misleading, as it did not clarify that the 'Zero Emissions' claim applied only when the vehicles were being driven in electric mode, and did not account for emissions during manufacturing or when charged using electricity from the national grid. The ruling emphasized that environmental claims must be clear and substantiated to avoid misleading consumers.
* <https://marketinglaw.osborneclarke.com/advertising-regulation/the-grass-is-not-always-greener-easigrass-falls-short-of-asa-rules-on-green-disposal-claims/> - The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) ruled that Easigrass (Distribution) Ltd's claims about the recyclability and environmental credentials of their artificial grass product, Kensington Eco grass, were misleading and unsubstantiated. The ASA found that the product could only be fully recycled at specialist centres, of which there was only one in the UK, making recycling facilities not readily available to consumers. The ruling emphasized that environmental claims must be clear and substantiated to avoid misleading consumers.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2022/jun/08/adverts-claiming-evergreens-plastic-grass-eco-friendly-asa> - The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) upheld concerns that adverts claiming Evergreens UK Ltd's artificial grass was eco-friendly were unsubstantiated and misleading. The ASA found that the product was made of plastic and, considering its whole lifecycle, had a negative impact on the environment. The ruling highlighted the importance of substantiating environmental claims to avoid misleading consumers.