Advertising and sponsorship policy
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ANNEX 1: COI definitions
1. Introduction

As a Government trading fund the Met Office is expected to operate on a commercial basis and meet financial targets. One form of revenue we have chosen to undertake is allowing advertising across our digital channels. The revenue we receive from this advertising will allow us to invest more in our digital services, providing more innovative and interesting content for users.

Perceptions of brands are formed through people’s experiences of them and our digital channels provide huge reach to a variety of differences audiences. We therefore need to carefully consider the impact any advertising or sponsorship associations have on our brand and reputation.

This policy outlines the general principles which help us to manage this process and help us make our decisions. This policy is owned by brand and sets out:

- What advertising is
- What sponsorship is
- Organisations that would be suitable advertisers, sponsors or partners
- Our response to controversial advertising or sponsorship
2. About advertising

Online advertising involves the Met Office selling advertising inventory on the Met Office digital channels. Advertisers may expect there to be a link between known user interest and who sees the advert.

Compared to sponsor and partner relationships, advertising is regarded as stand alone, where the Met Office is simply the platform for an external organisation to promote their own goods and services without the need to directly link it to the host. Careful selection of advertisers is still undertaken.

Examples

![Lifeboats advertisement](Lifeboats.png)
3. About sponsorship

Sponsorship packages may offer organisations exclusivity on online channels, individual pages or printed marketing/information materials.

Compared to advertiser relationships, sponsorship is regarded as a slightly more in depth relationship where an external organisation is paying to be associated with a product or event that the Met Office produce or organise. Due to this, more care and attention needs to be given to the selection of sponsors as the deeper connection will have a greater impact of the Met Office brand.

Examples
4. Organisations that would be suitable advertisers or sponsors

The appropriateness of organisations has been categorised into those that will enhance, damage or have a neutral impact on our reputation. This list is not definitive but sets out the general principles which should influence our approach. In each case, an individual assessment of brands should take place, as there will be a spectrum of brand appeal in every industry.

4.1 Organisations that will generally support and enhance our brand

- Government/public sector: NHS, Inland Revenue, TV licensing etc.
- Organisations associated with excellence in science & technology: Apple, IBM, Dell, Sony, Bose etc.
- Brands associated with being ‘green’: Toyota Prius, Ecover etc.
- Sustainable travel brands: Trainline; rail companies, Eurostar, ferries; UK tourism
- Charities (excluding adverts which carry lobbying messages)
- Leisure brands: Walking, cycling, skiing, sailing, surfing, climbing etc.
- Cultural brands: Theatres, concerts, films, books etc.
- Insurance companies
- Media: BBC, Broadsheets, BBC magazines, current affairs magazines, specialist interest magazines (Coast, Good Food)

4.2 Organisations who would neither enhance nor damage our brand, as long as they are not promoting unsustainable or environmentally unfriendly practices.

- Cars
- Credit card companies
- Aviation
- Premium brands: Watches, perfumes, shops, clothes, travel, cars, hotels
- Retailers
- Supermarkets
- Fast Moving Consumer Goods (chocolate bars, crisps, toiletries etc)
- Utilities companies
- Oil companies
- Mobile phones and networks
- Financial & legal organisations
4.3 Organisations who would damage our brand

- Gambling brands
- Cosmetic surgeons
- Credit card and loan companies (irresponsible lending)
- 'Adult' brands
- Competitors
- Organisations with extreme views that contradict Met Office views or brand
- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Poor corporate responsibility
- Unethical sourcing of products or services
- Brands that are currently contentious or high profile for the wrong reasons

As the Met Office is a Government Trading Fund, we cannot be seen to be endorsing organisations or products. To help ensure we choose the right partners we have referred to the Government sponsorship and partnership guidelines:

You should develop clear criteria against which the appropriateness of a sponsor can be judged. These will be different for private sector organisations and charities, but might include:

- Relevance of the sector for the specific message
- Its demographic relevance and synergy with the audience
- Its ethics (e.g. child labour)
- Its financial record, for example is the organisation viable or currently under investigation by such as the Competition Commission, HMRC or Charity Commission
- Its relationship with the department leading the campaign, e.g. is it involved in any significant commercial negotiations with any government department?

Other considerations:

- Will the activity dilute the department’s message?
- Could there be any justifiable cause for complaint – from either the public or the media if the relationship goes ahead?
- Will the relationship impact any aspects of Met Office commercial activity or data licensing?
- Will the colour of the advertiser or sponsor conflict with our weather warnings? (see guidance below)
Examples of advertisements which we would deem inappropriate and not allow on the Met Office digital channels are below:

1 Tip for a tiny belly:
Cut down a bit of your belly everyday by following this weird old tip.

HALLOWEEN PUBCRAWL
THE BEST NIGHT THE GREATEST SPECIALS
FULL TICKETS, GROUP RATES,
OR MORE INFORMATION, LOG ON TO PUBCRAWLS.COM OR CALL 212.724.8008

travelgirls.com
59€ month

4.4 Restricting advertising on certain sections of the Met Office website

There may be the cases where advertising, and certain categories of advertising, are restricted on certain sections of our website. For example; we will not place advertisements on the education micro site as the audience for this is children.

Another example would be our climate change and research channels. The following organisations would not be deemed appropriate for these pages unless the messages in the adverts and sponsorship support the mitigation of/adaptation to climate change:

Climate Change and Research channels
- Airlines
- Long haul foreign travel companies
- Oil companies
- Car brands
5. Colour Guidance

The communication of our weather warnings is of paramount importance to public safety. Our weather warnings are communicated using the colours - green, yellow, amber and red. The warnings are displayed on the Met Office homepage across the top banner. Fig. 1

It is preferred that advertisers avoid sending graphics that contain block colours that may conflict and confuse these warnings. Where possible, advertisers should be encouraged to use secondary palette colours. See RAC example Fig. 2

Fig. 1 Weather warnings colour

Weather warning position

Fig2. RAC example

RAC were a sponsor of our UK weather pages. Their corporate colours are white on orange and directly clash with the Amber warnings. To avoid confusion with the warning they used their secondary palette colours of orange on white.

Preferred option:

Non-preferred option:
6. Response to controversial advertising and sponsorship

In the event that an advert or sponsor attracts controversy, we will respond in the following way:

- Evaluate validity of issues raised by stakeholders and the impact on brand. If the impact is felt to be small then we should continue with the advertising with a robust line on the brand fit between the advertiser and the Met Office.
  If it is felt that continued use of the advert will continue to damage the reputation of the Met Office then the following should take place:
- Immediate removal of the offending advertisement or advertiser from the Met Office website.
- If the Met Office feels it necessary it will communicate that the advertisement has been removed, the reason why the advertising has been removed and an explanation of why the advertisement was chosen.
- We should underpin all communication on the issue with the key message of why we are advertising on the web as established below:

'The Met Office has chosen to accept advertising on our digital channels. The advertising will allow us to invest more in the services on our website, providing more innovative and interesting content for users.'
ANNEX 1: COI Partnership and Sponsorship definitions

Partnership marketing

Partnership marketing is the development and delivery of government messages via partnerships with private and public sector organisations, utilising one or more elements of the partner’s range of marketing communications channels.

Partnership marketing does not usually involve payment of any fee to the partner; it is generally in-kind activity.¹

Sponsorship

Sponsorship generally involves the payment of fees for the right to be associated with an activity. Government departments can use sponsorship in two ways;

1. Undertaking financial sponsorship

A government department may pay a fee for the rights to a public association with an activity, item, person or property, in return for a set of benefits. A number of different types of sponsorship fall under this heading:

- event sponsorship; and
- media sponsorship (of TV/radio programming, cinema, digital or press content).

2. Seeking sponsorship

Alternatively, a department may act as a rights holder, seeking external financial support or the provision of services in lieu of payment in return for a set of benefits, for an activity, event or campaign that the department has created.