

Trusted Communications for Purpose-Led Brands

*What the brands getting it right are learning about
claims, and why trust is the key.*

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Anti-Greenwash Charter, and who wrote this up

The Anti-Greenwash Charter is an independent, not-for-profit signatory programme that champions responsible sustainability communications. Certified signatories publish a Green Claims Policy, have it independently reviewed, and earn the Charter mark as visible evidence of their commitment. Our focus is clear: helping organisations communicate sustainability responsibly and demonstrate the standards behind their claims.

CONTRIBUTORS



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Every claim is the brand

Every organisation participating in the roundtable was founded on a belief that reducing its social or environmental impact, beyond prevailing industry norms, matters. The way these organisations communicate those differences helps customers understand what they stand for. The standard applied to sustainability claims is therefore not a technical footnote: it shapes how the brand itself is judged.

The regulatory context for sustainability claims has shifted. The Competition and Markets Authority now has direct consumer-enforcement powers under the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act, in force since 6 April 2025. The Advertising Standards Authority continues to scrutinise environmental claims in advertising. From 27 September 2026, the EU's Empowering Consumers Directive will restrict specific claim types across EU markets, including unsubstantiated generic terms such as “eco-friendly”, self-created sustainability labels, and product-level carbon-neutral claims based on offsetting.

6 Apr 2025

CMA direct consumer-enforcement powers in force (DMCC Act)

Ongoing

ASA scrutiny of environmental claims in advertising

27 Sep 2026

EU Empowering Consumers Directive takes effect

The underlying standard for sustainability claims has not changed: they must be truthful, evidenced and not misleading. What has changed is the level of scrutiny and the consequences of getting them wrong. Unsupported claims can invite regulatory action and weaken customer trust. That is the backdrop to this conversation, but it is not the story of the roundtable.

The more revealing point is that representatives of nine organisations widely regarded as taking sustainability seriously spoke openly about the risk of communicating it badly. That concern reflects the difficulty of the task, not a weakness in purpose-led business. Across the discussion, participants returned to the same practical answer: build customer trust through evidence, precision, context and honest acknowledgement of limitations. This report takes sustainability communication as its subject and trust as its thread.

Nine purpose-led brands, one standard

In the summer of 2026, the Anti-Greenwash Charter brought together representatives of nine purpose-led consumer brands to examine how their organisations communicate sustainability. Representatives of eight brands joined a ninety-minute online roundtable, while the ninth took part in a separate interview session. The organisations spanned food, drink, household goods, personal care and grocery, and ranged from a young challenger to a long-established business. Several are certified B Corporations. All share a reputation for taking responsible communication seriously and a willingness to keep learning.



Several are certified B Corporations. What they share is a reputation for taking responsible communication seriously and a willingness to keep learning.

The session ran under the Chatham House Rule. Insights and quotations in this report are anonymised by role and sector and are not attributed to any individual or organisation. Brands are credited collectively, by their own agreement.

The discussion tested one common standard: sustainability claims should be evidenced, appropriately phrased and supported by enough context to avoid misleading people. Participants explored how to apply that standard across three areas: on-pack and brand communication, consumer marketing, and reporting and disclosure. Three facilitated breakout groups considered one area each before reconvening to compare findings. The sections that follow begin with the themes shared across the discussion and then examine each focus area in turn.

The shift to saying less, and why trust is what remains

If one signal cut through every room, it was this: purpose-led brands are deliberately saying less. They are narrowing the number of claims they make, leading with simple and defensible statements, and moving the detailed evidence off the pack and onto the website. This was not framed as retreat. It was framed as discipline.

The reasons were consistent. Part of the shift is risk: as scrutiny increases, making fewer claims can make them easier to govern and defend. Participants also recognised the practical limits of customer attention. Technical sustainability language can be difficult to absorb in the few seconds available on a pack or advert, so the challenge is not only to be accurate but to make an accurate point relevant and understandable.

"The easy part is being factual: you do not say anything that is untrue. The hard part is making the fact land: saying something that interests people and that they understand."

ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

This shift changes the role of an individual claim. A short statement should not ask customers to accept the brand's intentions on trust alone. It should be supported by accessible evidence and by a consistent record of responsible practice. Saying less can work when customers can readily check the detail and when the organisation has repeatedly shown that its claims stand up.

FEWER CLAIMS, BETTER SUPPORTED



Five themes that appeared in every room

1 A track record can protect trust

One participant described trust as something an organisation builds across many parts of its business over time. A broad, credible record of responsible practice can help an organisation respond to a limited error, correct it transparently and preserve confidence. That protection is not unlimited: the seriousness of the error, the response and the wider context still matter.

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Trust is built across different parts of the business. If a limited issue arises, a strong record can help us put it right transparently and maintain confidence.

ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

2 The playing field is not level

Several participants described an uneven competitive environment. A broad category characteristic can be presented by a competitor as though it were unique, creating doubt even when the implied distinction is misleading. Paid platforms can compound this problem by rewarding attention and response rather than the quality of substantiation.

3 Precision can create a defensible advantage

A practical response is to lead with a precise, product-level claim that is fully substantiated and genuinely differentiating, then make the supporting evidence easy to find. A blanket percentage claim may fail if a small number of ingredients fall outside its scope, whereas a specific figure tied to a defined product and boundary can remain accurate.

“

Many competitors cannot make this specific claim, but we can state it with confidence because it is true and evidence-based.

ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

4 Radical honesty earns credibility

Several participants described openly communicating gaps or goals not yet achieved. One went further, arguing that proactively disclosing known issues in its own supply chain, alongside the remediation under way, pre-empts reputational issues rather than creating them, and builds the audience's understanding before it asks for their trust.

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Being open about the challenges we're facing pre-empts reputational issues, rather than creating them. Transparency builds understanding first, and it's that understanding that makes trust meaningful, rather than blind trust.

ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

5 Trust is won or lost at the reporting-to-marketing handoff

The most detailed discussion concerned the internal process that turns a qualified evidence base into brief customer-facing language. Trust is most vulnerable when important scope, evidence or limitations are lost during that translation. Focus Area 3 examines how sustainability, compliance and marketing teams can manage this handoff together.



The challenge of being brief and accurate

On-pack communication is highly exposed: a claim appears on every unit sold and has little space for qualification. Packaging also communicates through colours, symbols and imagery that can imply an environmental benefit without stating one directly. From 27 September 2026, the EU's Empowering Consumers Directive will prohibit certain practices, including unsubstantiated generic environmental terms, self-created sustainability labels and product-level carbon-neutral claims based on offsetting. This gives brands a clear reason to review both words and visual cues.

Saying less, on purpose

Restraint was the common theme among contributors to the on-pack discussion. Participants described removing lower-priority claims and leaving the most compelling, defensible message on-pack, with fuller evidence online. One organisation had assigned a product-development specialist to trace claims through the supply chain and confirm that relevant certifications were in place before print. Participants noted that even apparently defensible wording can become contentious when competitors challenge one another — the lesson is to replace broad or evocative shorthand with plain, bounded language that can be proved.



We have spent substantial time reducing the number of claims. A dedicated colleague now checks the supply chain and relevant certifications before a claim reaches the pack.

ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

The two buyers behind every pack

Participants emphasised the influence of retail buyers as well as consumers. A buyer conversation creates time to explain evidence, limitations and commercial relevance in greater depth, and strong sustainability credentials can help secure internal advocacy and retail listings. Consumers can also be powerful advocates, but the pack must work quickly: it should carry the clearest defensible message while directing interested people to fuller evidence.



Retail buyers are people with values, and there is time to explain the detail to them, even when that detail is not immediately relevant to every consumer at the point of purchase.

ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

PRACTICE POINTS

- Lead with one differentiating, defensible claim; hold the full evidence on a linked impact page.
- Prefer plain, provable language over evocative shorthand that invites a challenge.
- Audit every on-pack claim back through the supply chain, and confirm certifications before print.
- Treat visual cues (colours, leaves, symbols) as claims you must be able to defend — some regulation restricts specific imagery outright, regardless of the accuracy of the claim behind it.
- Where a long-standing mark or symbol has never had formal certification behind it, treat new regulation as the trigger to put third-party certification in place, not just to remove the symbol.
- Use buyer conversations to explain evidence, limitations and business relevance in depth; strong sustainability credentials can support listings and advocacy.
- Prepare now for the Empowering Consumers Directive: review generic terms, self-created sustainability labels and offset-based claims.

CHARTER & TRUMRK RESOURCES

- [truMRK Transparency Report example](#)
- [Your certification is only as strong as your next claim](#)



Where the brand story meets evidentiary discipline

Consumer marketing places sustainability claims in public-facing, fast-moving channels where they can attract regulatory, competitor and customer scrutiny. The ASA's rules apply across marketing communications, including paid advertising, social content and commercial influencer activity. The core challenge is to translate evidence into language that works quickly without losing the scope or qualification that makes the claim accurate.

A claims policy that people actually use

The most repeated solution in this discussion was a central, living claims policy, described by one participant as a "claims bible". It records approved claims, their scope and their substantiation. Participants also described a two-pass review: a compliance specialist first checks whether the proposed claim is accurate, substantiated and properly scoped; marketing then makes the language clear and engaging without changing its meaning or removing necessary qualifications. The same approved language is included in briefs for influencers, affiliates and other external voices, with review rights where contracts allow.

"

Approved claims need to be reviewed regularly, and a shortened claim must retain its scope. A percentage reduction, for example, should make clear which product and comparison it applies to.

ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

When sustainability is not the lead

Sustainability is not always the main reason a customer chooses a product. Participants described leading with the product benefit most relevant to customers, while using specific sustainability evidence to deepen confidence and loyalty. A claim about a defined product design or intended contribution can be appropriate when it is supported by evidence and its scope is clear — it should not be used merely to imply an outcome that cannot be substantiated.

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A product's primary benefit may bring people to the brand, while credible sustainability practice helps build longer-term loyalty. We therefore use a specific, qualified claim rather than a broad promise about being good for people and the planet.

ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

PRACTICE POINTS

- Maintain a living claims policy as the single source of approved, substantiated claims.
- Use a two-pass review: compliance checks the evidence, scope and wording; marketing then improves clarity and relevance without changing the claim's meaning.
- Link short-form claims to accessible evidence, and ensure shortened versions retain the scope and qualifications needed to remain accurate.
- Write allowed-and-disallowed language into third-party briefs, with review rights where contracts allow.
- Use claims about product design, process or intended contribution only when evidence supports them and their scope is clear; do not let them imply an unproven absolute outcome.
- Spell out abbreviations and internal shorthand in customer-facing claims — the same acronym can carry different meanings across teams, and familiarity inside the business is not evidence that customers share it.
- Remember that responsibility for a paid message stays with the brand, including founder and influencer channels.

IN PRACTICE

The practices described above form the basis of a Green Claims Policy. A free Green Claims Policy template is available from the Anti-Greenwash Charter.

CHARTER & TRUMRK RESOURCES

- [Green Claims Policy template \(free\)](#)
- [Communication Materials Review](#)
- [Greenwash Awareness Training](#)



The substantiation engine

Reporting can provide the substantiation base for trusted sustainability communication. Impact reports, ESG disclosures, life-cycle assessments and certification data can supply the evidence, boundaries and limitations behind shorter claims. The challenge identified by participants was translation: turning a qualified data point into clear language without losing the context that makes it defensible.

Where it breaks: the internal handoff

One candid account from the session described sustainability specialists proposing evidenced themes, only for essential context to be removed as the material was shortened. The issue was not marketing's aim of making the report readable; it was that the evidence and qualifications supporting a claim could be treated as expendable. Participants also cautioned against filling sustainability reports with general corporate-interest material at the expense of evidenced social and environmental performance. The answer is not necessarily a separate publication, but a clear reporting purpose, proportionate coverage and an editorial hierarchy that protects material impact information.

What good looks like

Participants described a stronger model in which sustainability and marketing teams co-develop key messages from the outset. Collaboration improves both accuracy and clarity because evidence, scope and limitations are built into the narrative before the edit for length. Two further practices stood out: publishing supporting evidence in an accessible place and using audience behaviour to improve how information is structured, and explaining limitations plainly so readers understand both what the evidence establishes and what it does not.

The hard part is the translation: turning a defensible, qualified data point into language that lands.

PRACTICE POINTS

- Bring marketing and sustainability together at the start of the report, not at the handoff.
- Protect the substantiation: agree what evidence is non-negotiable before the edit for length.
- Set a clear purpose and editorial hierarchy so evidenced social and environmental impacts are not crowded out by general corporate-interest content.
- Publish accessible supporting evidence and use audience feedback or page analytics to improve its structure and signposting, without removing necessary context.
- Run campaign development and report assurance in parallel from a shared, pre-assured evidence base — for example a single agreed set of key messages — rather than writing the report first and briefing marketing afterwards.
- Name your limitations explicitly. An honesty box builds credibility for the claims you do make.

IN PRACTICE

Consider independent verification of reports and communications where it would help audiences assess the evidence and governance behind key claims. See the truMRK reporting case study.

CHARTER & TRUMRK RESOURCES

- [truMRK Transparency Report example](#)
- [Strengthening sustainability reporting through independent transparency](#)

What good practice looks like, in one place

Drawing the three focus areas together, the room's collective practice maps closely onto the four principles that underpin the Anti-Greenwash Charter. The checklist below distils the session into actions any brand can take.



Transparency

Openness about progress, challenges and evidence. Publish your evidence and make it findable. Link every short-form claim to the detail that supports it, and pay attention to what people actually read.



Accountability

Taking responsibility for the claims made. Hold a living claims policy as the single source of approved, substantiated claims, and extend it to every party who speaks for the brand, including founders and influencers.



Fairness

Presenting information in a balanced way. Give the context that a single claim needs. Resist absolutes, and choose the precise, product-specific figure over the sweeping statement.



Honesty

Avoiding exaggeration or misleading language. Say what is true and defensible, even when it lands a little less neatly, and name what you have not yet achieved.

THE AUDIENCE TEST

Before a claim goes out, apply three tests. Will a consumer understand it quickly? Could you defend it fully to a retail buyer? Could you also defend it to a regulator?

A claim that passes all three tests is one you can keep making.

CHARTER & TRUMRK RESOURCES

- [The Anti-Greenwash Charter's four standards](#)
- [Green Claims Policy template \(free\)](#)

2027 and the future of trusted claims

Looking ahead, participants expected price and health to continue competing with sustainability for customer attention. This can create pressure to reach for a bold claim at precisely the point when evidence and governance are weakest. They also warned against assuming that customers cannot understand sustainability. Over-simplification can itself become a warning sign; the aim should be accessible communication that preserves the context needed for an informed view.

There is also a more hopeful interpretation. Participants are not reducing sustainability messaging because they care less about the underlying work. They are choosing fewer, better-supported claims and keeping the evidence available behind them. Even when immediate customer demand is muted, organisations can continue building internal commitment and a credible record to draw on when public attention shifts again.

A follow-up contributor added a caution against a different failure mode: retreating into silence altogether. Where an organisation has the evidence and governance in place, staying quiet under scrutiny can look reactive and create more risk than proactive, evidenced disclosure — silence is not the same discipline as saying less well. The same contributor noted that broad, forward-looking commitments describing a direction of travel need visibly different language from fixed, time-bound promises, and may need time to develop before the right form of words is ready.

Why this is, in the end, about trust

The clearest conclusion of the day was that the conversation does not really stop at sustainability. A brand that is caught out on a sustainability claim does not only lose that claim; it teaches its customers to doubt the next claim, about nutrition, about quality, about anything. Credibility does not compartmentalise. The discipline these brands are building around sustainability communication — precision, substantiation, honesty about limitations, ownership of every channel — is the same discipline that protects every other claim they make. Sustainability is the subject. Trust is the asset. The two move together.

THE ANTI-GREENWASH CHARTER'S VIEW

*Go beyond regulatory compliance, build trust, reduce legal risks, and enhance your reputation.
Together, we can take a stand against greenwashing and help build a market where sustainability claims can be trusted.*

FURTHER READING [Getting sustainability back on the agenda](#) · [Trust is the KPI that changes the conversation](#) · [The rise of the responsible communicator](#)

Continuing the conversation

This report is shared through the Charter's channels and media contacts, and its findings feed directly into the guidance and recognition work we do to promote responsible communication. Direct quotations remain anonymised throughout, in line with the Chatham House Rule under which the discussion was held.

TWO FURTHER INVITATIONS

Two further invitations came out of the sessions: to reconvene the group in approximately six months to review what has changed, and to connect that discussion with the Charter's Future of Responsible Communication event in January. We look forward to continuing the conversation with all who took part. Please get in touch at info@antigreenwashcharter.com if you'd like to find out more.

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The roundtable was a ninety-minute online facilitated discussion held in June 2026, comprising short introductions, three concurrent breakout rooms (on-pack and brand, consumer marketing, and reporting and disclosure), and a reconvened plenary for cross-cutting discussion. Sessions were recorded and transcribed to support this write-up. One contributing brand, Tony's Chocolonely, was unable to join on the day and instead took part in a dedicated follow-up discussion, the insights from which are incorporated throughout this report.

All sessions were held under the Chatham House Rule. Participants are free to use the information shared, but nothing in this report is attributed to any individual or organisation. Quotations are drawn from the session transcripts and lightly edited for readability; they are presented without attribution throughout.

This is the final published edition of the report, prepared by the Charter's convening team from the session transcripts.



THE ANTI-GREENWASH CHARTER

An independent, not-for-profit initiative working to raise the standard of sustainability communications. We certify, we research, and we convene rooms like this one.