

Funding the Future

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I noted the [Guardian reporting](#) this week that:

Adverts that claim products are carbon neutral using offsets are to be banned by the UK's advertising watchdog unless companies can prove they really work, the Guardian can reveal, as Gucci becomes the latest company to struggle with a high-profile environmental commitment based on offsetting.

I am pleased to note this move. Firstly, that's because I have long thought most claims about carbon offsetting are pure greenwash.

Second, this is because the viability of most carbon offsetting claims is so implausible. For example, it has been suggested that if Shell was to offset its emissions it would need to plant trees over the whole of India, and that is not going to happen.

Third, the whole claim seems to be an excuse for continuing to emit and to make no real changes to business behaviour.

The ASA is now demanding proof before the claim can be made. When a couple of years ago I included the same requirement in [sustainable cost accounting](#) I was told my suggestion was absurd and I could not possibly propose this. Now regulators are realising how spurious carbon offset claims are. My suggestion stands in that case.

The case for offsetting does not. We need real change in behaviour, not excuses for inaction.