

6 August 2013

Statement re. Channel 4 Dispatches programme ‘Celebs, Brands and Fake Fans’, broadcast on Monday 5 August 2013, from David James, Chief Executive, Visit Peak District & Derbyshire

“Visit Peak District & Derbyshire was invited to trade with SM4B based on representations the Sheffield-based social media company made that it had several platforms on social media that might reach out to a wider customer base, and we did so in good faith.

“As a matter of course, we undertook a reasonable due diligence exercise as far as our resources allowed, and did not find anything to suggest that the company was engaging in unlawful or inappropriate practices.

“We commissioned SM4B in early 2013 to promote an online competition on a trial basis on our behalf. The results were unsatisfactory, raising only ten per cent of the Facebook entries we received, and as a result the brief contact between ourselves and the company was terminated.

“As soon as we were presented with evidence that alleged SM4B was breaching legislation and operating in a fraudulent and dishonest manner, we formally severed all ties with the company and sent written confirmation to this effect.

“Visit Peak District & Derbyshire’s policy is to grow its social media activity ethically and legally, and we would never knowingly use dishonest and unlawful means to boost the popularity and reach of our online campaigns.

“We welcome the programme makers’ confirmation that ‘there is no suggestion that Visit Peak District has behaved improperly in any way’, and would like to reassure the media, the public, all our stakeholders, commercial partners and members that we will make every possible effort to ensure that such an apparently serious breach of the ethical and legal standards we expect from our sub-contractors does not happen again.”

Ends.

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