

Gabrielle Ginér
Head of Environmental Sustainability

24/11/2023

BT Group
1 Braham Street
London
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Dear Ms Ginér,

Population Matters is a charity, which campaigns to achieve a sustainable human population, to protect the natural world and improve people's lives. Our campaign, We Don't Buy It, targets overconsumption and aims to raise public understanding that to solve the environmental crisis we must reverse our growing demand for resources. We are contacting you today to urge EE to stop offering your phone upgrade schemes and instead promote to your customers more sustainable approaches, including your refurbished phone schemes.

First, I would like to thank you for your commitment to environmental action and the work EE is already doing to promote sustainability.

However, our environmental crisis requires more immediate and radical action from all industries. Population Matters iCon campaign addresses the impact of the mobile phone industry. As detailed in Population Matters' iCon report, examining Apple phones, but applicable to all, sourcing and transporting raw materials, manufacturing, distributing, marketing new releases and disposing of e-waste on the scale of the current smartphone market comes at too heavy an environmental price. Meanwhile, this year's Black Friday is expected to produce 429,000 metric tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions just from product deliveries. Critically, consumers abandoning their older, still functional phones to take advantage of your Black Friday deals through EE's Upgrade Anytime program exacerbates all these impacts.

In that context, I'm sure you are aware of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and the responsibilities for companies it establishes, if you aren't already. The GBF signed by a total of 188 governments (including the UK) is an international treaty intended to protect global biodiversity. Target 15 of the GBF addresses the responsibilities of governments to ensure that companies:

- (a) Regularly monitor, assess, and transparently disclose their risks, dependencies and impacts on biodiversity, including with requirements for all large as well as transnational companies and financial institutions along their operations, supply and value chains, and portfolios;**
- (b) Provide information needed to consumers to promote sustainable consumption patterns;**

We are confident that EE seeks to meet the highest standards of accountability and action in order to protect nature. EE offering its "Good as New" refurbished phone upgrade scheme demonstrates that your company already understands the value of sustainability, but your upgrade schemes incentivise customers to buy new phones at cheaper prices thereby exacerbating the environmental impact from the purchase of a new device. Data sourced by ADEME, shows that the purchase of a new smartphone produces 85.2kg of CO2 emissions over 7.61kg CO2 emissions from a refurbished

device. To fully commit to your own pledge to cut carbon emissions and reduce waste by 2030, we urge you to stop offering early phone upgrades and prioritise promoting EE's "Good as New" refurbished phone scheme to customers.

Finally, a poll conducted by Population Matters just last week found that 43% of respondents felt that manufacturers and retailers should do more to help customers extend the lifespan of their current phones. 42% agreed with the statement that 'upgrade culture' (encouraging people to buy the latest handset every year or more) is just a way of getting people to spend more money when they don't really need to. Just 11% polled agreed with the statement that annual upgrades "are a good thing".

Advertising to your customers to buy new phones to replace their current, perfectly functional devices fosters a culture of excessive consumption that conflicts with the principles of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Treaty and is destructive to our planet. We therefore urge you to stop offering deals for new smartphone upgrades, press manufacturers to end the annual upgrade cycle and concentrate on reliability, and substantially increase your marketing and information provision to customers to promote sustainability.

We hope your own commitment to sustainability, the measures required by the GBF and views on the need for environmental action, will persuade you of the importance of making this vital commitment.

Thank you for considering this important request and we look forward to your reply. We would, of course, be happy to discuss these issues with you at any time.

Yours sincerely,
Alistair Currie
Head of Campaigns and Communications
Population Matters