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Mr Frank Thackwray
Chief Executive
The Automobile Association
Fanum House
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Dear Mr Thackwray

There have been a number of meetings recently between members of OS's Copyright Department and AA's Cartographic Division. The first meeting was initiated by OS as part of an exercise to publicise revised licensing terms for Publishers wishing to use OS mapping as the base for their products. The two most recent meetings took place on 30 July and 20 August 1996.

The last two meetings were instigated by the AA to give a detailed explanation of the methodology of production of your town maps. It was explained in some detail that in recent years you have produced your town maps independently of any OS mapping, and have used aerial photographs as part of the stated methods of production. It was claimed that the earlier editions of AA town maps, which were licensed by OS and acknowledged Crown Copyright, were all locked away and were not referred to in any way during the course of this 'independent' process of production of the recent editions.

Since the last meeting on 20 August we have carried out a detailed comparison of the earlier (OS licensed) AA town maps and the recent editions of the AA town maps (which have not been licensed by OS). The similarities are so comprehensive in every instance we have examined that we can only conclude that there has indeed been very substantial copying from OS-based maps in the current AA series of town maps.

OS has for some time had concerns that all the AA maps were derived from OS data. I myself raised these concerns in a personal meeting with Simon Dyer who, to reassure me, told me that if OS ever had evidence of copying, I should tell him. He said he would personally investigate the matter and, if he was satisfied as to the evidence put forward, then he would take appropriate but draconian action. This letter is sent on the basis of my verbal agreement with Mr Dyer. I have to say that the evidence put before me has dismayed me considerably in view of assurances given by your predecessor. I hope that you, as his successor, will therefore take this matter equally seriously.

I enclose a Memorandum, prepared by experts in our Copyright Department, which provides examples of copying on the AA map of Brighton. We have similar evidence in relation to many other AA town maps. Certain members of your Cartographic Division (we do not know which)



obviously must have known full well that they have copied OS-based material, and that the explanations they provided at the recent meetings simply are not true. We believe that this cannot have occurred without the knowledge of members of that Division at a high level.

I would ask for your comments in writing within 10 days from the date of this letter. Unless you are able to convince me that our evidence of copying is somehow wrong, I will have no alternative other than to pursue our claims for copyright infringement, and for compensation, through the courts. We could avoid such legal action if you could provide me with the following undertakings:

1. AA will refrain from publishing any town maps which use OS or OS-based material without the license of OS.
2. The AA will pay OS full compensation for town maps which are in any respect based upon OS Crown Copyright material and have been published by AA or its licensees without the license of OS.
3. For this purpose, the AA will allow OS to appoint independent accountants to carry out a thorough audit of all AA's records relating to the production, publication, sale and licensed reproduction by others of all town maps. You will appreciate that, without such an independent audit being carried out, OS would not have any means of calculating our claims for compensation. It would also have to be carried out within a time scale acceptable to OS and the cost of this audit will be borne by the AA.
4. That the AA will allow OS to carry out an audit of the documentary evidence in support of its claim that any other type of its other mapping of GB has been developed independently of OS material. Having apparently been deceived as regards the source of the town maps, we feel entitled to seek this thorough investigation of all your other GB mapping. We will be seeking undertakings similar to 1 and 3 above if our investigation of those other maps shows further evidence of copying.

As you know, OS protects Crown Copyright vigorously and takes a very serious view of what appears to be such a wide scale infringement by the AA.

I look forward to receiving your reply.

Yours sincerely


David Rhind

Encs.