

16 March 2023

Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP
Secretary of State
Department for Business and Trade

by email

Dear Secretary of State

Mineral Products Association Ltd

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Geographical Indicators for UK Natural Stone

Geographic Indication (GI) schemes are familiar and well-established schemes that protect identifiable products in food and agriculture, where location is an important part of their designation. The Mineral Products Association represents producers who extract and refine high quality natural products that are geologically unique, such as natural dimension stone.

Our members have raised concerns that their products are facing unfair competition from lesser quality products that are passing themselves off as originating from specific locations across the UK, leading to loss of business for UK SMEs. For example, Portland Stone, which can only be produced on the Isle of Portland, is as geographically specific as a Melton Mowbray Pork Pie and we believe that it should be afforded similar protection against cheap imports being mis-sold using its name.

The argument for natural products such as stone is similar to that for food. The protection afforded by the GI scheme is entirely appropriate for natural products. A trademark protects intellectual property and applies to a manufacturer who is able to distinguish their product from others in the market. It cannot be applied to a natural product that may be offered by more than one producer in a geographically defined area.

The EU has started the process of extending protection to European producers such as Carrara Marble from Italy which has seen Chinese imports misusing its name. We therefore request that you consider extending protection to British non-agricultural products that are produced in specific locations.

Earlier this year, we were copied in to correspondence between the former responsible Minister and an MP for one of our producers, Albion Stone. From the response received, it is clear that the Government currently relies upon trademark rules to counter this mis-selling. This approach overlooks the way in which mineral products are produced and the nature of our industry. Our sector has many SMEs who in recent times have had to battle significant challenges and without legislated protection are unable to seek redress from those that choose to abuse the market in this way.

The EU has been considering expanding the GI scheme for some time. If they conform their decision to extend the GI scheme beyond food and agricultural produce but the UK does not, our market would become a more appealing target for companies seeking to import cheap imitations.

We would be happy to provide further clarification if required.

Yours sincerely,



Jon Prichard
Chief Executive

The Mineral Products Association is the trade association for the aggregates, asphalt, cement, concrete, dimension stone, lime, mortar and silica sand industries

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Registered at the above address