

'Beach body' ads investigated after outcry in Britain

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Britain's advertising watchdog is to investigate ads for a slimming product that sparked outcry on social media this week when they appeared in London's underground rail network.

The advert for Protein World slimming shakes showed a slim woman in a bikini with the words "Are you beach body ready?"

Many of the posters were defaced following a [social media](#) backlash and more than 60,000 people signed a petition to remove them.

The Advertising Standards Authority said it had met with Protein World to discuss the advert and was investigating after it received 360 complaints.

"Due to our concerns about a range of health and weight loss claims made in the ad, it can't appear again in its current form," the watchdog said in a statement on Wednesday.

"We've launched an investigation to establish if it breaks harm and offence rules or is socially irresponsible."

Campaigners are to hold a "Taking back the beach" protest on Saturday in London's Hyde Park and have invited people of all body shapes to attend.

"Protein World is directly targeting individuals, aiming to make them

feel physically inferior to the unrealistic body image of the bronzed model," their petition against the advert reads.

As outcry built this week, social media users shared photos of posters they had altered with messages such "Love your body the way it is" and "Women's bodies do not need to be changed, for the beach or anywhere".

Protein World responded with feisty Tweets challenging the protesters, such as "Why make your insecurities our problem?" and "We are a nation of sympathisers for fatties".

Speaking to ITV news on Tuesday, the company's head of global marketing Richard Staveley said its aim was "to make the national healthier" and added the company had received a bomb threat.

"We've been inundated... with people defacing adverts, ripping them down, climbing over rail tracks in order to graffiti them... I think that's quite extreme behaviour," Staveley said.

"We've had threats on our head office, physical and violent threats. We had a bomb threat... that's been reported to the police."

The model depicted in the adverts, Renee Somerfield, also waded into the debate, telling an Australian news website that the backlash itself was "body shaming".

"Protein World's intention is to motivate and inspire their consumers to be the best, healthiest and fittest version of themselves, not to advertise that you have to look a particular way to be 'Beach body ready'," Somerfield said.

"Trying to petition body shaming by [body](#) shaming the ad is very

contradictory... Confidence is beautiful no matter what size you are."

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