

To Irwin Mitchell

I am in receipt of your letter of March 28th, 2018.

What an extraordinarily inappropriate, cynical and disproportionate communication! It was clearly written on the basis of a very blinkered, skewed and selective grasp of the facts. I assume you've read the web page you refer to - if you have, I can't believe you consider a charge of blackmail appropriate. If you haven't, then you're not doing your job.

I am a long established and well-respected English craftsman. The British designed and made hardware I've worked long and hard to develop and promote since 2011 - **smartWare** - is now an important part of my livelihood and is widely associated with me. And yet Linley freely admit that they copied my **smartHinge**, exactly drawn up from my originals, done behind my back, purely for their own profit, fully aware that this would deprive me of legitimate business.

In any case, the '*negative content*' you refer to is, to give it another name, the truth. Every word uploaded is true, as it happened, and any balanced, common sense reading must arrive at the same conclusion: that I have been appallingly treated by a company that should know better. But of course you're not paid for your common sense or balance, you're paid to wheedle out and massage any scrap that supports your client's 'case' and simply ignore everything else. And if Linley views this as being '*negative content*' then that fact alone proves that the company admits it has acted badly in this case and is rightly embarrassed by its actions.

The amount I'm claiming was discussed, and clearly justified, in a number of emails exchanged with Simon Emerson, Linley's Head of Trading, back in November 2017. I was happy to furnish him with any details he requested during that process - a courtesy not afforded to me in return. Actually I would probably have settled for a lesser figure if someone, anyone, had just had the courtesy to communicate with me in a straightforward manner that actually acknowledged the company's true position in all of this and admitted that the company had acted wrongly ...

Your letter says: '*our client has sought to resolve the underlying matter with you sensibly and commercially*'. What this actually means is: at a meeting I had to bludgeon out of the company I was offered a derisory amount for the right to use my hinge design [and no compensation for the business I had been deprived of during the years it had been used without that 'right'] on the understanding that I signed a 'gagging order' preventing me from revealing any of the facts of this case. An order the preparation of which I would have had to pay for, effectively making the offer ludicrously inadequate as recompense for losing some £40,000 worth of business. I naturally turned down this offensive offer.

So, not only did Linley never have the right to use this design, it still doesn't. And yet the company persists in using, and profiting from, the copied hinges notwithstanding. This not only defies common sense, making as it does a nonsense of their making the offer to buy the right in the first place - the fact of the gagging order further reinforces the company's embarrassment at the facts.

As a last resort I made every effort to contact David Linley direct in the hope that he would have a more fair-minded take on the situation and be prepared to communicate in a reasonable way to help settle this, not least to protect the good name of the company he founded and which still bears his name. I have attached a copy of that letter here which I believe to be reasonable, courteous and respectful. But for whatever reason I've received no response so, unfortunately, I have no choice but to use the only leverage remaining to me, that of making the facts public. If you choose to call that blackmail - that is your choice. But everyone else will view my action as entirely justifiable, and your characterisation of it as 'blackmail' as laughable and a travesty.

What's utterly sickening, of course, is that the bill for your services will very likely exceed the modest amount I'm claiming to settle this ... I suggest this is a measure of the thoroughly mean-spirited nature of the company.

It's now clear that nothing I do will lead to an even halfway fair settlement. And in any case the money isn't really the point - if the public airing of this issue leads, in whatever way, to the company being forced into making a settlement, then that will be a bonus. What's much more important is that the facts of this case are made public so that Linley's attitude to 'supporting' British craftsmanship and what constitutes 'quality' is shown in its true colours. To that end I will now be going ahead and making the facts of this case public without delay.

Linley markets itself internationally on its support for British craftsmanship and its 'Britishness'. "*... this island nation, island inventive race ...*" and "*... what we have in this country is a great body of people who are very able at making things beautifully and I love harnessing it ...*" are both quotes from David Linley interviews. I like to think that my honest, British endeavour is appreciated and fairly rewarded - I find it infinitely disheartening that the company believes it can short circuit that honest endeavour for its own profit with impunity.

I have gone to some considerable trouble, over a period of 4 years, to cooperate with the company to resolve this issue. I have written a detailed report on their copies with a view to improving them, but this was ignored. I've met with them to discuss collaborating to our mutual benefit, but despite positive signs initially it quickly became clear that these discussions were merely an exercise in 'fobbing off' - they reneged on everything that was discussed in the most dismissive, discourteous, time-wasting and damaging way possible.

So, for years Linley has been fitting their poor quality, weak, Chinese-made hinges, costing £1.50 a pair, to extremely expensive boxes, some recently costing as much £13,995, claiming that to fit a British made pair of hinges

costing £26.50 would make them, and I quote: '**commercially unviable**'. Quite apart from the fact of the unauthorised copying, this is a disgrace - the company is effectively conning the buying public into believing that they are buying the highest possible quality, British made items, but on which the hardware, at least, is cheap, Chinese-made tat.

The linley-facts web page has now been updated with further material, including your recent letter, this reply and various other supporting material. I have already informed Jacky Tsai of the facts and also posted on the Designer Makers forum. The password protection is still in force, but I will be removing it soon and will be actioning all the other avenues set out in my most recent email to Kevin Blumenthal during the next several days.

Linley's behaviour in this case is a gross abuse of power by a supposedly respectable company - I will not tolerate their blatant, casual appropriation of a product I've worked hard to develop, purely for financial gain.

Shame on you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Crawford', written in a cursive style.

Andrew Crawford
05/04/2018.