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affiliates**Furore over cut-price Alamy**

Alamy has started selling images for 60p, sparking furious protests from contributors.

James West, Alamy's CEO, announced the launch of the Limited Use initiative in a blog post earlier this month, stating that it would let contributors' images compete in the low cost 'micropayment' market without undermining their existing revenue streams on Alamy. The scheme is the first to emerge from the Novel Use pricing strategy, which Alamy launched in September last year and to which contributors signed up on a year-long basis.

Under the Limited Use scheme, individual bloggers, social networks users, teachers, academics and higher education students pay just 60p for small images and £1.80 for medium-sized images of around 5.5MB.

'(The new scheme) must not undermine our existing business,' said West. 'So we have restricted the licence to usages that do not currently feature in our revenue mix.' He added that the scheme 'must acknowledge the existing low cost pricing structures that are already out there if it is to stand a chance of competing'.

However, contributors have accused Alamy of launching a micro-stock-style pricing system. 'It takes hard work and time to put together a collection of saleable images and then to have them sold at 30p (after Alamy's cut) a go. What a slap in the face to Alamy contributors,' photographer Linda Kennedy wrote in response to West's blog post. 'Why couldn't Alamy have come clean when Novel Use was first mooted and call it what it is - micro-stock.'

Contributors are further angered because Alamy previously assured them that the Novel Use schemes would not move towards micro-stock. When West announced the launch of Novel Use in September 2007, for example, he said: 'Novel Use is not the same as micro-stock, both royalty-free and rights-managed images can be included and whereas with micro-stock you are committing to only work with that business model; with Novel Use your images also remain available on the normal Alamy site.' He added that Novel Use 'is not about discounting, it has been implemented to enable us to sell images for usages that fall outside of our standard price calculator'.

Contributors who agreed to join the Novel Use scheme before the launch of Limited Use have argued that they were misled, forcing Alamy to offer an opt-out option a week after the launch. 'I apologise unreservedly to those who feel they have been misled,' said West. 'This was not my intention and it is not the Alamy way of doing things.'

West was unavailable for comment when BJP went to press.

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