



Office for Product
Safety & Standards

Delivering protection and confidence in a strong, green economy

OPSS Product Regulation Strategy
2022 to 2025



Contents

Ministerial foreword	5
Section one: Introduction	7
Our remit	8
Our purpose	8
Our objectives	8
Outcomes	8
Our guiding principles	10
Delivering in partnership	10
Section two: The role of product regulation in a strong, green economy	12
The presence of products in our lives	13
Why product markets are regulated	13
Moving with the times	14
Economic context	15
Environmental context	18
Societal context	20
Section three: Delivery priorities	22
Objective one: Deliver protection through responsive policy and active enforcement	23
Objective two: Apply policies and practices that reflect the needs of citizens	25
Objective three: Enable responsible businesses to thrive	27
Objective four: Co-ordinate local and national regulation	29
Objective five: Inspire confidence as a trusted regulator	32
Section four: Governance	34
Our structure	35
Our resources	35
Accountability	35
External advice and challenge	36
Measuring impact	36

Ministerial foreword





This government believes in the importance of regulation that works for citizens, for the economy, and for the environment. Bad regulation is just a cost. Good regulation provides necessary protections, gives confidence and certainty to business, and supports fair and effective competition.

So, I am pleased to present this strategy from the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) that sets out how we are taking a focused, risk-based approach to regulating the products that are an everyday part of our lives.

Our approach ensures the everyday items we use do not cause us harm, that our homes are built from safe products, ensures we get fair measures on the goods we buy, and that

goods and technologies support our net zero ambitions. Put simply, product regulation protects people and places.

We will set clear expectations for business. We will protect those businesses that follow the rules, enabling them to invest with confidence and supporting them as they pursue innovation. At the same time, we will hold to account those who flout vital requirements. We will seize the opportunities presented to us by our exit from the EU to establish a stronger risk-based approach that enables the trade and growth that bring jobs and wealth to communities across the country.

Tragic events such as the Grenfell Tower fire, domestic emergencies caused by faulty appliances, and loss of life when children have swallowed magnets and button batteries show all too starkly why product regulation matters. This government is committed to effective regulation that works for all. We want to ensure that no matter where UK citizens live, no matter how they buy their products, and no matter how much they are able to spend, they can trust what they are purchasing, get what they pay for, and can buy with confidence.

Jane Hunt

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State,
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Section one: Introduction



The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) was established in January 2018. Our first strategy set out our plan to strengthen the product safety system. Four years on, we are publishing this new strategy, encompassing the full breadth of our policy, delivery, and regulatory responsibilities as a product

regulator. This strategy incorporates our organisational learning from our first years of operation and comes in the context of transformational change across the UK economy and society as the country recovers after the COVID-19 pandemic, responds to economic shocks, and addresses the climate challenge.

Our remit

OPSS is the UK's product regulator. We are responsible for the regulation of most consumer goods¹ and we are the national regulator for construction products. We hold policy responsibility for product safety, legal metrology (weights and measures), standards and accreditation, hallmarking, and Primary Authority. We enforce regulations across the product lifecycle from design, manufacture and assessment through to supply, end use and safe disposal.

Our purpose

Our primary purpose is to protect people and places from product-related harm, ensuring consumers and businesses can buy and sell products with confidence.

We act to keep citizens safe by keeping products safe. We seek to ensure consumers receive fair measures and get what they pay for. We work to limit the negative effects that products, their supply chains, and their disposal can have on our environment. And we facilitate products and markets that support clean growth and the transition to net zero.

Delivering these protections in a fair and transparent way helps maintain consumer confidence in markets and helps to support innovation and sustainable business growth.

We use science, evidence, and data to shape our interventions. We act proportionately, guided by the risk of harm, and seek to minimise complexity and cost for businesses and consumers.

Our objectives

Our core objectives, in support of our purpose, are to:

1. **deliver protection through responsive policy and active enforcement**
2. **apply policies and practices that reflect the needs of citizens**
3. **enable responsible businesses to thrive**
4. **co-ordinate local and national regulation**
5. **inspire confidence as a trusted regulator**

Outcomes

The outcomes we seek to deliver for citizens, business, and the environment are that:

- **people** are protected from product-related harm and can buy products with confidence
- **businesses** comply with their legal obligations and responsible businesses can operate with confidence
- **the environment** is protected from product-related harm and product regulation supports the transition to net zero

We will measure our progress towards these outcomes.

1 Excluding: food, medicines, and vehicles.

Purpose

To protect people and places from product-related harm, ensuring consumers and businesses can buy and sell products with confidence.

Objectives

- 1 To deliver protection through responsive policy and active enforcement.
- 2 To apply policies and practices that reflect the needs of citizens.
- 3 To enable responsible businesses to thrive.
- 4 To co-ordinate local and national regulation.
- 5 To inspire confidence as a trusted regulator.

Outcomes

- People are protected from product-related harm.
- Consumers can buy and use products with confidence.
- Businesses comply with their legal obligations.
- Responsible businesses can operate with confidence.
- Product regulation supports the transition to net zero.
- The environment is protected from product-related harm.



Our guiding principles

The following guiding principles underpin our activities, define our approach, and inform how we regulate.

Guiding principles



We put protection first

We hold businesses to their responsibilities

We support responsible businesses

We join up product regulations

We focus on risk and the management of risk

We make decisions informed by science and evidence

We establish the right systems and relationships

We follow the principles of good regulation

We act promptly and target the right points for intervention

We recognise the different needs of different groups

We measure our impact

Delivering in partnership

OPSS works across government, with departments, with other regulators, with other market surveillance bodies, and with border control authorities. We work in partnership with local authorities, particularly in our role as the national

regulator for product safety, legal metrology, and construction products. We work with consumer and industry bodies to help inform our understanding of those we are here to protect and those we are here to regulate. We do this to inform our policies and practices, and to provide accountability to those we serve.

Product regulation across the product lifecycle

The product regulations enforced by OPSS, either alongside local authorities or as the sole national enforcement authority, encompass the full product lifecycle.



Product design

Requirements in product design and performance



Product approval

Oversight of the standards and accreditation systems



Product origin

Legal controls on the trade of products and materials



Product integrity

Accuracy of weight, measure, and metered supply



Product safety

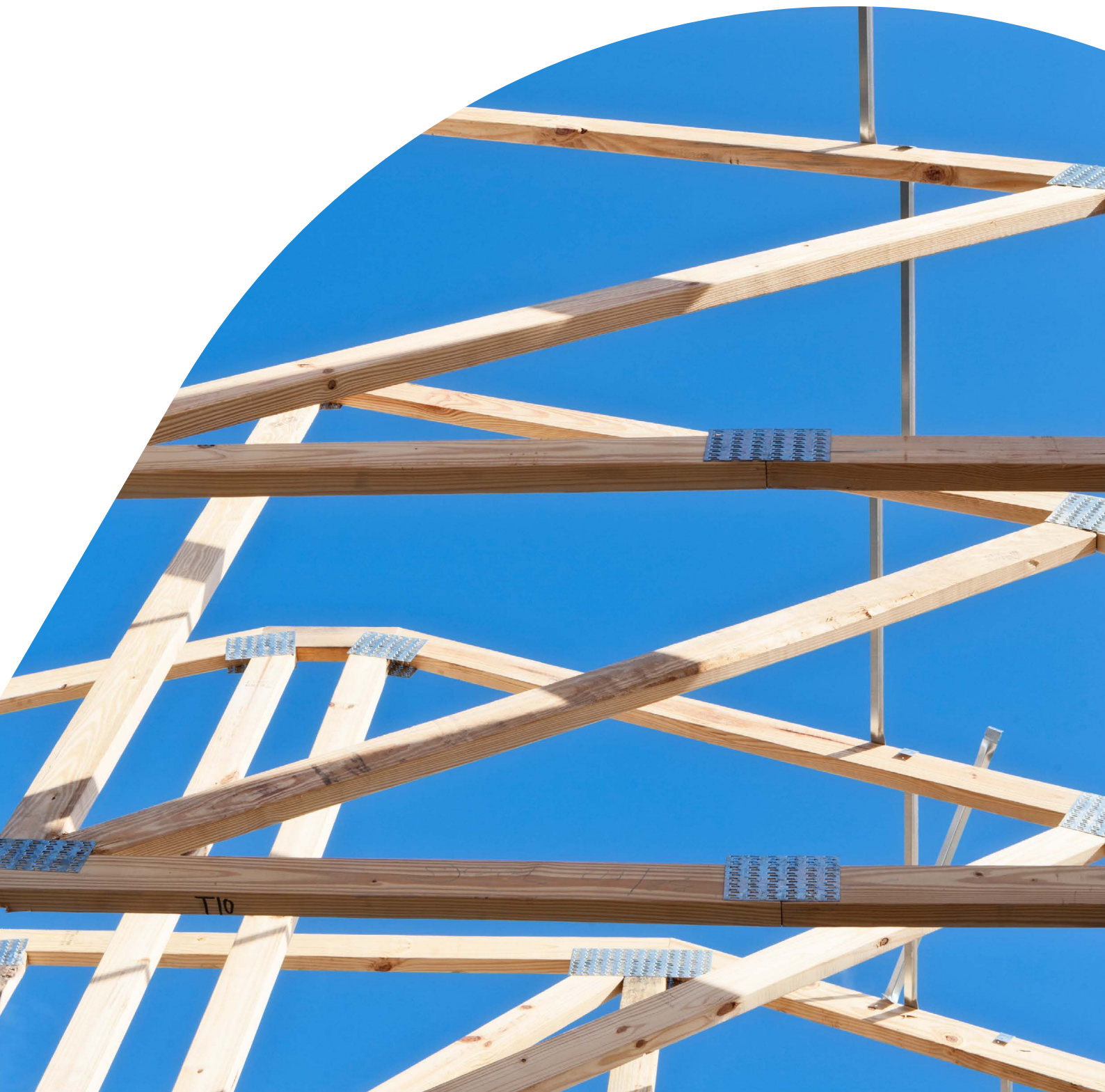
Safety of product design and performance



Product disposal

Responsible end-of-life processing

Section two: The role of product regulation in a strong, green economy



The presence of products in our lives

Products are all around us. We interact with them every day – from the toiletries and cosmetics we apply, the toys our children play with, the electrical items in our homes, the materials our homes are built with, the goods sold by volume or weight, to the equipment that measures the fuel and energy that power our cars and homes. We should be able to trust that these products are safe to use, that we are getting what we expect and what we pay for, and that materials used in their manufacture are recycled or disposed of with minimal harm to the planet.

Why product markets are regulated

Regulations are necessary for the proper functioning of societies. Well-designed and well-implemented regulations establish essential ground rules that protect the rights and safety of citizens, businesses, and the environment. Good regulation also provides the confidence that is needed to underpin markets and to support sustainable economic growth.

As a society, we regulate products to:

- ensure they are safe to use
- ensure they meet required performance standards
- minimise negative environmental impacts from their manufacture, use, and disposal
- ensure people get what they pay for – for goods that are sold by weight, volume, or metered supply
- ensure legal sourcing of raw materials used in product supply chains

Product regulations provide protections for citizens by:

- protecting their safety
- protecting the places where they live
- protecting them from short measure or fraud
- protecting their rights
- providing the means to remedy problems that come to light with the safety of a product they have purchased

Product regulations provide clarity and protections for businesses by:

- ensuring they know what is expected of them
- holding everyone to consistent minimum requirements
- protecting them from being undercut by businesses that wilfully evade their obligations

Product regulations provide protections for the environment by:

- providing frameworks for the safe use, recovery, disposal, and recycling of potentially harmful products and materials
- communicating the energy efficiency of electrical appliances
- supporting accurate metering of fuel supply and charging infrastructure for low-carbon and carbon-free transport
- supporting accurate metering for low carbon energy supplies
- helping to protect against illegal sourcing of products and materials

Strengthening the regulation of construction products



In January 2021, the government announced that OPSS would take on responsibility for the national regulation of construction products.

This followed a recommendation made by Dame Judith Hackitt in her review of building regulations and fire safety, and built on the role of OPSS as a national product regulator with established links to local authorities and UK standards and testing services.

Evidence given during the Grenfell Tower Inquiry demonstrates a clear need to confront poor practices in the construction products industry, to establish new norms, and to restore public confidence. We will encourage good practice, enforce the law, and educate the industry. However, the system cannot be fixed by regulatory intervention alone. All industry stakeholders must accept their responsibility to change outcomes, including manufacturers, distributors, product installers, warranty providers, standards makers, and conformity assessment bodies.

We have taken early steps to:

- develop the required evidence base to inform our activities
- recruit further specialist staff
- engage with stakeholders to build a shared understanding
- review the regulatory system to identify gaps
- liaise with the sector to set expectations
- support local authorities
- take enforcement action

Moving with the times

Product regulation must align with changing technology, evolving markets, and shifts in the needs of society. It must be informed by an understanding of the real world and real people to reflect differences of need and vulnerability. These factors inform our policy thinking, how we develop new product regulations, how we make changes to existing regulations and how we approach enforcement.

New products and new business models can bring greater enjoyment, efficiency, convenience, and connection to our lives. They can also present challenges if they test the boundaries of existing regulations. Responding to these changes in the right way helps to ensure that regulation remains fit for purpose, can mitigate new risks, and can support innovation and competitive advantage.

Future risks and opportunities: Horizon scanning



One of the challenges faced by regulators is to have an eye on the future while dealing with the demands of the present. Regulations, and their enforcement, need to keep up with the way markets are shifting, opportunities are developing and threats are evolving, to understand where protections need updating.

Our horizon scanning considers changing technologies, changing products, changes in supply chains and markets, changes in business models, changes in the environment and policy context, and changes in consumer behaviour. It seeks to identify emerging shifts and their potential impacts on regulated markets.

This insight enables us to encourage innovation, to safely examine better ways to regulate, to work effectively with partners, and to maintain consumer confidence in changing markets.

Economic context

Significant features of the economic context include the UK's new status as an independent trading nation, the continued shift to online shopping, changes in business models that have accompanied the growth in online sales, ongoing changes in product technologies, shocks that are disrupting supply chains, and associated cost of living pressures.

The UK's exit from the EU created the opportunity to review domestic laws and regulations to ensure they best support the interests of UK citizens and businesses. It also provides new opportunities for trade agreements across the globe. OPSS has taken on new functions to help realise these opportunities and is exploring the potential for beneficial reform.

OPSS is leading the government's consultation on changes to the EU-derived framework for product safety regulation, to establish an approach that is proportionate, innovative, and forward-looking, and that protects consumers from unsafe goods. UK product regulation and the supporting legislation has evolved over time as technologies and markets have changed to provide strong protection for citizens. But more recent changes in routes to market and purchasing patterns have created new risks to consumers, particularly in the online space. The Product Safety Review and changes to the way we enforce regulation will seek to address these.

Product Safety Review: Keeping pace with changing markets



The UK has some of the strongest product regulations in the world – but products and markets are constantly evolving, and regulation needs to keep pace. The Product Safety Review aims to update the legislative framework to provide a flexible foundation that can adjust more easily to change.

The review aims to:

- make the legislation easier to follow with clear business obligations
- reduce the availability of unsafe products in the online marketplace
- support safe, climate conscious product markets, including those for second-hand goods
- improve the effectiveness of data usage and risk assessments
- establish a consistent approach to product assessment and testing
- update enforcement powers
- ensure consumers always have a route to seek compensation

The government is also reviewing other aspects of product regulation. For example, the [Energy-Related Products Policy Framework](#), which seeks to ensure products use less energy, resources, and materials, and therefore contribute to the UK's transition to net zero. OPSS supports compliance with these regulations and provides enforcement for them.

The growth in online shopping is a long-running trend that was heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns. Online channels have created new opportunities for businesses and consumers, including the creation of global markets for some products that enable people to buy direct from suppliers around the world. While there are positive

opportunities here for consumers, there are potential risks and challenges around informed choices, effective enforcement, confidence in compliance and safety outcomes.

The significant growth in online trade has been accompanied by changing business models with new players and new roles appearing in many product markets. This includes the significant growth in online platforms acting as marketplaces for third-party sellers. Regulations and their enforcement must adapt to the new realities of the market, apply fairly to all operators, and provide the protection needed for consumers however they are making their purchases.

Online marketplaces: Protecting people wherever they shop



The regulatory framework for consumer goods is being tested by diversifying business models and the associated changes in supply chains. These include the increase in e-commerce, online marketplaces and third-party sellers that operate on those platforms.

The government intends to clarify roles and responsibilities for online sales to provide consistency with the requirements and protections associated with traditional retail trade. Alongside planned changes to the regulatory framework, OPSS is acting under existing regulations to improve outcomes. We have:

- challenged the arrangements that major online marketplaces have in place to protect their consumers from unsafe and non-compliant goods
- challenged platforms to improve their performance, and the performance of third-party suppliers, to ensure non-compliant items are delisted
- strengthened our investigation capability for online market surveillance and enforcement
- improved mechanisms for sharing information with other product regulators internationally

The pace of product innovation continues, fuelled partly by new technologies. Digitisation, internet-connected smart devices and artificial intelligence are just some examples of advances that are pushing the boundaries of how products operate, what they can do, and how they are defined. These are not the only areas of change – developments occur across all product types in response to consumer demand, technological possibilities and new ideas.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic and other shocks across the world economy, many households are facing significant challenges with the cost of living. For some, these pressures will affect how often they buy certain products, how much they can afford to spend on them, where they buy them and whether they buy new or second-hand goods. In these challenging times, we will ensure that businesses maintain their responsibilities to supply safe, legally sourced products, sold in accurate quantities, whatever price those products are supplied at.

Environmental context

The UK is engaged in an extraordinary economy-wide transformation to achieve clean growth and net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The impacts of this transformation will be felt in many aspects of our lives, including the types of products being developed, how they are produced, used, reused, recycled, and disposed of – and how those products are regulated.

Meeting the challenges of net zero can be expected to drive innovation in manufacturing techniques and materials as people seek less carbon intensive solutions. There is the chance here for UK industry to get ahead on the development of safe and effective products to meet new demands – with the right regulatory frameworks to support them.

Net zero: Helping to facilitate a sustainable economy



The government has enshrined its net zero ambitions in law, requiring a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions across the economy to reach net zero by 2050. OPSS will help to achieve this goal as a product regulator, as the lead for product safety policy, and as the government lead for standards.

We are working to enable businesses and consumers to play their part in achieving net zero and to embed net zero considerations into all aspects of our work. For example, we are:

- facilitating the innovation of eco-products and technologies
- supporting businesses in shifting towards more environmentally friendly modes of production and distribution
- supporting product repair, reuse, and recycling, while maintaining protections
- informing policy development and enforcement for energy-related products
- supporting the development of standards that help achieve net zero
- increasing understanding of domestic battery energy storage systems and the use of second-hand batteries
- supporting alternative fuels infrastructure and electric vehicle smart charge points – ensuring they are fair, accurate and compliant in their metering
- improving the sustainability of our operations

The government is seeking to drive up standards for product manufacture and to ensure consumers get better-quality products that last longer and are easier to reuse, repair and recycle. Since leaving the EU, the government has introduced or amended product regulations across a range of product categories aiming to reduce energy consumption and support the right to repair. OPSS will help support these policies, including through the enforcement of regulations on eco-design and energy efficiency labelling.

In the buildings sector, the government is trialling the use of hydrogen for heating. This supports the aim to phase out the installation of natural gas boilers, moving to make buildings more energy efficient, and supporting a move to alternative heating systems such as hydrogen boilers, heat pumps and community heat networks. OPSS will help support these policies by ensuring that metering and charging is accurate and can be trusted by consumers.

Legal metrology: Innovation and trade



OPSS leads the regulatory system for the trade of products by measured quantity. An estimated £600 billion of goods are sold by quantity in the UK every year.² A robust legal metrology system creates reliable and trusted measurement for the trading of these goods. It ensures people get what they pay for. It also protects businesses in the trade of these goods.

OPSS technical experts support policy teams in OPSS and across government. They contribute to the development of international metrology standards that enable UK business to trade with confidence and enable innovation. They also support the training, competency and capability of local authority regulators.

Our laboratory in Teddington maintains measurement capability which delivers statutory functions and enables us to conduct market surveillance.

We protect consumers by working with industry to ensure that energy metering is accurate. We are working with partners across government to support innovations in energy supply that could reduce costs for consumers and contribute to net zero. For example, we are working with partners on metering for the use of hydrogen and hydrogen blends in heating homes.

² 2009 estimate of £620 billion from [‘Analysis of the Economics of Weights and Measures Legislation’](#) (Deloitte, 2009).

In the transport sector, the government is taking forward plans to phase out petrol and diesel road vehicles, and to ensure the UK's charging infrastructure network is reliable, accessible and meets the growing demand of motorists. The government is also looking to accelerate the development of clean maritime technology, where OPSS enforces the requirements around shore-side electric charging installations. It will require effective and efficient regulation to facilitate this major transition to clean transportation in a way that works for consumers and suppliers. OPSS will be working to ensure that metering for new energy and fuel supplies is accurate, enforcing the regulations and working with industry to deliver compliance.

Societal context

There are a range of developments and pressures that impact on citizens, how they live their lives and interact with products and product markets. We know that these pressures will impact on different parts of society in different ways. Our job as a product regulator is to ensure that no matter where UK citizens live, no matter where they buy products, and no matter how much they are able to spend on those products, they can trust what they are buying, get what they pay for, and are kept safe.

Protecting citizens through product regulation is primarily about ensuring businesses are meeting their obligations, but there are occasions when it is necessary to promote safety-critical messages to the public. This requires a strong awareness of the diversity of our communities, understanding how different individuals and groups can be exposed to risk, where advice is sought and whose advice is trusted. Understanding this informs our messaging to citizens and the channels we use to reach them.

The diversification and fragmentation of media channels can increase the challenge of getting messages through to the public. Social media presents opportunities as well as challenges. It provides a communication channel that OPSS has made increasing use of, offering different ways of reaching people, with sharable content that can be passed on within target groups. It also provides a source of additional market intelligence. We will use these channels alongside our continuing work with partners, such as consumer bodies. We will explore with our partners how we can engage with committed and trusted community groups, to maximise the effectiveness of our engagement with citizens.

Product safety: Strategic intelligence assessments



Intelligence helps to inform policy development and to target enforcement activity. OPSS provides an annual strategic intelligence assessment, and quarterly tactical intelligence assessments.

The 2021 Strategic Intelligence Assessment identified the following key themes:

- models of supply for products sold online continue to present significant enforcement challenges
- there are persistent problems with the imports of some products, most commonly relating to electrical appliances, cosmetics, and toys
- chemical safety risks in relation to non-compliant products, in particular toys and cosmetics, are a matter of notable concern
- supply chain disruption and significant economic shocks may lead to some increased risk of non-compliant and unsafe products entering the UK

Section three: Delivery priorities



In this section we set out in more detail what each of our objectives mean, and some of the main activities we will be taking forward under each of them.

Objective one: Deliver protection through responsive policy and active enforcement

Our primary function as a product regulator is protection – protecting the rights and safety of citizens, the environment, the planet, and the places where we live. This objective covers our roles in enforcing regulations and in developing policy for product regulation.

We will set clear expectations for businesses, support compliance, and deal with non-compliance. We will work to ensure that businesses meet their obligations to bring safe and compliant products to market, and to ensure they

deal with any incidents that arise with products they have already placed on the market. We will work to ensure hazards and risks in product markets are understood and managed well by industry and that accuracy in measurement is maintained.

We will ensure regulations are up to date, effective, and fit for purpose – keeping pace with changes in society, markets, and products. We will advise and support ministers in putting in place effective policies, regulations, and legislation.

We will hold businesses to their legal obligations:

- dealing with non-compliance in a timely and proportionate manner
- ensuring businesses have access to clear information and guidance
- working with local authorities and other regulators to deliver active enforcement

We will ensure product regulations are fit for purpose:

- simplifying and modernising the regulatory framework
- carrying out the Product Safety Review
- supporting the development of construction product regulations³
- keeping technical annexes to legislation up to date

We will challenge major online marketplaces to play their part in protecting UK consumers from unsafe goods:

- building our enforcement capability, strengthening checks on the compliance of products sold online, and acting on non-compliance
- undertaking market surveillance of online supply chains and getting unsafe products taken down and off the market

³ As the regulator, OPSS is supporting the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in their role as the lead department for policy and legislation on construction product regulation.

We will develop our understanding of the opportunities and risks stemming from emerging technology and innovation:

- strengthening existing networks with academia and the research community to make best use of specialist advice and analytical tools and techniques
- carrying out horizon scanning analysis to understand upcoming technology changes and product innovation
- ensuring our regulatory approach adapts to these changes
- working with other nations and expert bodies, and participating in the development of up to date international standards

We will target our regulatory activity through timely interventions and a new risk methodology:

- using an improved methodology for product safety risk assessment and supporting local authorities in applying this in their enforcement role
- intensifying our intelligence and data gathering to provide an enhanced evidence base on emerging risks
- using accurate and detailed information to inform policy and enforcement decisions

Holding business to their responsibilities



Effective regulation requires effective enforcement if it is to deliver protection for people, for places, and for all the responsible businesses who are doing the right thing. We use the full range of tools and powers available to us to maintain protection, fairness and confidence.

Examples of our enforcement action include:

- detecting, deterring, and disrupting non-compliant goods at the border
- scrutinising product recalls
- investigating and addressing non-compliance
- investigating products of concern sold online
- agreeing business improvement plans where required
- prosecuting non-compliant businesses where appropriate

Objective two: Apply policies and practices that reflect the needs of citizens

This objective places the needs of citizens at the heart of product regulation – ensuring that the regulations work for them and for their protection. This means listening to citizens, understanding their needs and responding to them. It also means ensuring that the differing needs of different groups of citizens are taken into account. This applies to the framing of product regulations and how they are enforced, and to direct citizen-facing activity, such as safety campaigns.

We will use our research programme and our engagement with representative bodies to increase our understanding of what is needed and what works. We will

explore the scope to engage with panels of consumers, in addition to our existing work with consumer representative bodies. We will continue to look for ways to increase our insight, understanding, reach and accountability.

To help keep citizens safe we will inform them, where necessary, about product risks and the action they can take to mitigate those risks. OPSS will deliver safety information in relation to systemic and repeat risks, and when significant new threats emerge (as we have done on topics such as fireworks, button batteries, and small high-powered magnets being used in children's toys).

We will place citizens' needs at the heart of everything we do:

- continuing to develop our understanding of citizens' needs
- engaging with as wide a range of consumer bodies as possible
- seeking a diversity of voices and views to inform policy making
- ensuring that the impacts of economic shocks and cost of living pressures do not lead to a lessening of protection

We will deliver safety information and safety warnings to UK consumers on identified priority risks:

- ensuring campaigns are targeted appropriately to reach the widest audience, especially consumers who are particularly at risk, and those who are less well heard through traditional channels

We will diversify our approaches on consumer awareness to get information to citizens at points of vulnerability:

- working with local and national consumer bodies and businesses to assist us in distributing our messages
- ensuring that our messages on product safety reach all those who need them and address the specific needs of different groups

We will conduct research to inform our consumer-facing activity:

- drawing on relevant evidence and science and enhancing our ability to make informed decisions on policy and practice

We will ensure that standards take into account the safety and diversity of consumers and the protection of the environment:

- supporting a new approach to standards development that aims to reduce data biases so that standards better reflect diverse populations
- developing a new standard to support industry's transition to net zero and empowering consumers to make greener choices

**Meeting the needs of citizens:
Engaging, and incorporating what we learn**



Shaping policies and practices to provide better protection for citizens requires an understanding of their needs and preferences, and requires us to incorporate what we learn into what we do. Our main consumer engagement mechanisms include:

- the OPSS Consumer Reference Panel – which brings together a diverse range of organisations to explore topics through discussion
- consumer focused research – to inform our policies and practices with insight on experiences, attitudes, trends, and differences across demographic groups and protected characteristics
- partnering with organisations that have a shared interest in protecting citizens on campaigns and other interventions, to improve our reach and impact

Objective three: Enable responsible businesses to thrive

Protection comes first in all that OPSS does. But the protection provided by product regulation must be delivered in a way that enables responsible businesses to operate without excessive and unjustified costs and burdens.

OPSS applies a proportionate and targeted approach to enforcement in accordance with the principles of good regulation. We will be clear about how we carry out our regulatory role through our enforcement policy, to help businesses know what to expect. We will strive to make it as simple as possible to interact with OPSS and we will be accountable to businesses who have concerns. We will be clear about business obligations through our information and guidance, to support them

in achieving compliance. We will respond to queries from individual businesses, and we will work with industry bodies so that they can provide guidance and support to their sectors.

We will support business growth, innovation, and international trade by responding to new technologies and developments, supporting an up-to-date and responsive standards and accreditation infrastructure, and adapting domestic policy and regulations where necessary. We will work internationally with the lead government departments to facilitate UK trade and investment, and to build global capability to tackle shared regulatory challenges.

We will help to influence and develop a modern and innovative standards system:

- working with the British Standards Institution and United Kingdom Accreditation Service to ensure the supporting infrastructure for product regulation meets changing requirements and enables innovation
- reviewing the UK approach to standards and influencing standards activities across government, industry, and internationally
- leading the process of designating standards for regulatory conformity across government and making decisions on the designation of standards and the approval of conformity assessment bodies for our policy areas

We will improve the product safety framework by consolidating and simplifying product safety legislation:

- creating a new and proportionate approach to regulation which works for consumers and businesses and is adaptable to future technological change
- adopting a proportionate approach centred around risk, hazard and transparency

We will work with business to raise awareness of regulatory requirements, providing guidance and, where necessary, taking proportionate enforcement action:

- promoting greater understanding of regulations and directing our interventions at those demonstrably failing to control risk
- raising awareness among importers and other supply chain operators of their responsibilities
- maintaining an up-to-date enforcement policy to help all those we regulate to understand our approach
- detecting, deterring, and disrupting careless and criminal businesses and ensuring they receive sustained and escalating enforcement interventions
- embedding what needs to be considered before products are placed on the market, including for second-hand goods and innovative products
- promoting a consistency of approach at border points through renewed operational guidance

We will seek to foster a culture of compliance where those who create risks in the design, manufacture and supply of products own and manage those risks:

- engaging with industry to set the right expectations and to support initiatives to control risk
- running regular Business Reference Panels and taking steps to improve our links to under-represented business groups
- conducting research into the management of risk by industry to enhance the effectiveness of our regulatory activity
- delivering research and analysis to inform our understanding and segmentation of the businesses we regulate
- providing opportunities for discussion and accountability, including through our regular Business Reference Panels and our Business Accountability Forum

We will work internationally with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the Department for International Trade (DIT) to facilitate UK trade and investment:

- implementing product regulation requirements agreed in international trade deals
- advising DIT and others on domestic implications of trade negotiations for product regulation outcomes
- working with FCDO to support UK priority trade partners and to improve the international regulatory framework

Objective four: Co-ordinate local and national regulation

Some areas of product regulation are covered by multiple enforcement authorities. This requires effective collaboration between regulators to eliminate duplication and avoid gaps. We work with local authority regulatory services and with other local and national bodies to deliver joined up protection and support.

OPSS co-ordinates market surveillance of non-food products across national and local regulators, agreeing roles and responsibilities, sharing approaches and operational challenges, and joining up activities.

Local authorities carry out a critical role in the enforcement of product safety, hallmarking, legal metrology and construction product regulations. OPSS provides a range of tools and resources to support them, including training and development materials in partnership with the Chartered Trading Standards Institute and peer support, advice, and intelligence.

OPSS funds access to testing facilities through the Product Safety Sampling Protocol, operates the national Product Safety Database and weekly safety notifications, and provides frontline officers with free access to British Standards to assist in assessing cases.

OPSS co-ordinates product safety activity at borders with HMRC, Border Force and other surveillance authorities to support the joined-up use of intelligence and enforcement resources. We also collaborate with international product regulators to share product regulation intelligence and safety alerts.

OPSS operates Primary Authority, supporting local authorities and businesses in forming and delivering primary authority partnerships, including dispute resolution, and providing supporting regulator services to primary authorities for metrology and product safety.

We will streamline and simplify the way we engage with and support local authorities:

- providing guidance and responding to technical queries
- providing access to scientific and technical advice
- supporting product testing
- providing risk and intelligence support and intelligence assessments
- providing advice and training to build capacity, capability, and resilience in local authority regulatory services

We will foster strong and effective collaboration:

- targeting and co-ordinating regulatory activity, sharing data with other regulators and across government
- improving the functionality of the Product Safety Database to support co-ordinated local and national action
- sharing safety information nationally and internationally
- delivering statutory metrology functions for local authorities, industry, and other parts of government
- ensuring that non-compliant businesses receive co-ordinated interventions rather than one-off interactions with different bodies
- working with the British Hallmarking Council to protect UK businesses and consumers in the trade of goods made from precious metals
- working with international partners to facilitate the free movement of UK-hallmarked goods

We will provide protection at the border:

- strengthening the UK's approach to product safety market surveillance on imported goods by detecting, deterring, and disrupting non-compliant goods
- supporting delivery of the government's vision to have the best border in the world by 2025
- seeking to change business behaviour, mitigate risk, and disrupt distribution chains that facilitate non-compliance
- providing funding for local authority market surveillance activity on imported products, focussing on risk-based targeting
- integrating border activities and post-border market surveillance and improving information flows between regulators
- strengthening regulatory engagement with businesses before, during and after products are checked at a port

We will co-ordinate market surveillance:

- supporting co-ordinated market surveillance in the UK including through the cross-government Market Surveillance Governance Group and the regulatory Market Surveillance Network
- strengthening activity on the compliance and enforcement of online platforms and fulfilment houses, to adapt to the changing marketplace
- co-ordinating market surveillance policy across government and across the UK

We will operate Primary Authority, ensuring businesses can access assured advice on compliance:

- nominating partnerships, issuing guidance, resolving determinations, and managing the Primary Authority Register
- supporting local regulators to provide businesses with assured advice on metrology and product safety
- reviewing how Primary Authority is working in devolved nations, to ensure businesses can maintain access to assured advice
- assisting local authorities in forming Primary Authority partnerships for metrology and product safety

Co-ordinating local and national regulation



Local authorities have a central and long-standing role in the enforcement of product regulations for product safety, hallmarking, legal metrology (weights and measures), and construction products, and they provide Primary Authority partnerships enabling businesses to access assured advice.

OPSS provides a range of support for local authorities in these roles, including:

- funding access to product testing facilities and border surveillance activities
- providing support and training for regulatory officers
- providing support for expert practitioner groups
- providing advice on the application of legislation
- offering peer support to talk through incidents and cases
- providing intelligence to help support decisions on priority activities
- supporting Primary Authority partnerships

Objective five: Inspire confidence as a trusted regulator

The public need to be able to trust product regulation, trust that it is followed and actively enforced, and trust that OPSS is an objective, impartial and effective regulator. This requires us to have the right capabilities and to apply them in the right way. This objective covers everything we do to maintain and run the organisation to deliver on our purpose.

We will recruit, train, and lead the skilled staff we need across all our specialist functions. We will seek to retain, develop, and utilise our staff to maximum effect, supplementing this with external expertise

and resources where appropriate. We will maintain appropriate testing facilities and the capability to commission external testing where needed.

OPSS will constantly develop the required evidence base to inform our actions as a regulator and to inform our policy development. We will share knowledge with, and learn from, other regulators both domestically and internationally. We will apply the right governance mechanisms, and we will work with the transparency and accountability that is required to earn and sustain confidence in us as a regulator.

We will build and maintain the specialist teams and capability we need to regulate effectively:

- recruiting specialist technical and operational staff
- maintaining our commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce
- training enforcement officers through the regulatory compliance officer apprenticeship scheme

We will invest in laboratories and testing capability:

- updating the facilities at our Teddington Centre for Product Testing and Research
- providing testing capability across our regulatory responsibilities, including for metrology, construction products, product safety, and environmental product regulations
- developing our mechanical, flammability, electrical, and chemical testing capability
- investing in the knowledge and skills of our technical experts
- collaborating with other science, engineering, and lab-based institutions and networks to strengthen national product testing and measurement capability

We will strengthen our regulatory capability:

- implementing our data strategy
- establishing data sharing arrangements with partners
- enhancing internal systems and processes, such as case management
- investing in our digital services and supporting technology

We will continue building the evidence base to inform our actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using data and evidence to inform policy development and delivery, and to help us understand what works • using our horizon scanning evidence to inform approaches to regulating innovative products • strengthening our knowledge of product sectors and improving our understanding of consumer vulnerability and business segmentation • using behavioural science to inform messaging, including how we target specific groups to address vulnerabilities • receiving challenge and support on our evidence base and mechanisms for gathering evidence, from the BEIS Scientific Expert Group
We will share knowledge with, and learn from, other regulators:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborating and sharing data and intelligence on product-related complaints and accidents • collaborating internationally through membership of relevant organisations, networks, and working groups
We will measure and evaluate the impact of our work:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing appropriate activity measures and indicators • measuring the outcomes and impact of our work • strengthening how the beneficiaries of product regulation and those that we regulate can hold us to account

Strengthening protection through science



Since it was established in 2018, OPSS has built a significant science capability to inform policy development and regulatory enforcement – significantly enhancing the evidence base for product regulation.

We have the capacity to draw on in-house expertise and advice, research and testing, as well as access to external experts – including through our Science Advisory Group on Chemical Safety of Non-Food and Non-Medicinal Consumer Products (SAG-CS).

In-house capability includes specialisms ranging from analytical chemistry, toxicology, and materials science, to structural, mechanical, and electrical engineering.

We can draw on a growing register of external specialists to support work across our regulatory and policy responsibilities.

We are part of expert scientific and technical networks with other UK regulators, with government departments, and with relevant regulators globally. Our science capability enables us to support the government’s ambitions to become a science and technology superpower, building our understanding of emerging technologies to regulate effectively.

Section four: Governance



Our structure

We are a departmental office within the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). Within the department, we are part of the Market Frameworks Group – which is responsible for maintaining and developing the frameworks that underpin UK economic activity, providing confidence and trust for citizens and for businesses. We serve and support ministers in several departments across our portfolio.

Ministers set the strategic, policy, and legislative framework for our activities, and where OPSS has policy responsibilities we support them in that process. In our enforcement role, we are responsible for the day to day operational discharge of regulatory functions within the policy framework set by ministers. We aim to conduct these functions impartially, objectively, and consistently, in line with principles of good regulatory governance and in line with our enforcement policy. We operate in accordance with the Regulators' Code.

We are structured around the four functions of regulation, policy, evidence, and enabling.

Our resources

Our total operating budget for 2022/23 is around £64 million, including capital investment. Our two largest blocks of funding are for product safety regulation, which is funded by BEIS, and for construction product regulation, which is funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. We receive additional funding from BEIS for other aspects of our activities and from other government departments for the work we carry out on their behalf.

Accountability

We are accountable to ministers and through them to Parliament. We are accountable to the businesses that we regulate, and we are accountable to the public that we are here to protect and who fund us.

This year, we will further develop our business engagement by launching a quarterly Business Accountability Forum with membership drawn from those sectors and businesses that fall within our regulatory remit.

We will also further develop our work with consumer bodies, including through our Consumer Reference Panel, which brings together a diverse range of bodies representing the interests of citizens and recognising that different segments of society face different issues and have different needs.

Each year we publish a delivery report setting out what we have delivered with the public resources we are allocated.

External advice and challenge

In our first year of operation we established the OPSS Advisory Group to help provide an external perspective on our work, to challenge our thinking and our approach, and to provide support from people with significant experience of relevance to our functions. The group is based on the model of non-executive directors, with members bringing knowledge from similar delivery organisations and related non-governmental bodies. The group is not involved in operational decisions, such as those relating to specific regulatory incidents. There are six external members on the Advisory Group, and they typically meet quarterly.

In 2021 we created a specific Scientific Advisory Group on Chemical Safety of Non-Food and Non-Medicinal Consumer Products, chaired by Professor Shirley Price. The mission of the SAG-CS is to provide OPSS with scientific advice and risk assessment in the areas of public health and consumer safety. OPSS has used this group to help provide a high-quality scientific evidence base for our work on chemical risk in consumer products.

In June and July 2021, the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee published reviews into the product safety system. Both reviews noted the value of the work OPSS has begun, including in relation to recall programmes for domestic appliances and in relation to the supply of safe personal protective equipment (PPE) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both reviews made recommendations which we have accepted, and which have been incorporated into our strategy and into our planned programmes of work. We anticipate that the recommendations will all have been implemented by summer 2023.

Measuring impact

Measuring impact is critical to all that we do but it is a challenging task for regulators. The outcomes that we work towards are highly dependent on the actions of others, not just on what we do. They rely on our actions, the actions of business, the actions of other public agencies, and on the actions of citizens. Nevertheless, we are committed to understanding the impact of our work, understanding what works best, and to targeting our activity to achieve the greatest impact and best value for money. We have defined six key outcomes that we are working towards, relating to the impact that product regulation should have for citizens, businesses, and the environment.

Target outcomes

Intermediate outcomes

- Businesses comply with their legal obligations
- Product regulation supports the transition to net zero

End outcomes

- People are protected from product-related harm
- Consumers can purchase products with confidence
- The environment is protected from product-related harm
- Responsible businesses can operate with confidence

To support this, we are developing a suite of key performance indicators and delivery indicators that will provide us with snapshot data across some of our main activities, and which over time will provide insight on trends. These indicators will provide measures against activities such as engagement with our safety alerts and campaign messaging. We will look to develop measures on the support we provide for local authorities on activities such as testing, training, and enforcement cases. We also expect the indicators to cover the results of border inspections, including the identification of unsafe and non-compliant products, and actions taken to remove these from the market or bring them into compliance.

We are also reviewing the wider management information that underpins those indicators and which gives us a more complete picture of our regulatory activities and of what we deliver. To support this we are further developing our internal data management systems, to better enable us to capture, analyse, and deploy the key operational intelligence we have available to us.

We will also be exploring new ways to get a clearer insight into the impact and effectiveness of our work through monitoring and evaluation and other supporting analysis. We will examine the progress made against the outcomes we pursue and seek an evidence-based assessment of how best to target our actions to achieve them. We do this to make product regulation work, to provide confidence for citizens and businesses, and to protect people and places.



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