



Office for Product
Safety & Standards

Delivery Report

2023/24





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Foreword

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) is the department for economic growth; supporting businesses to invest, grow and export, creating jobs and opportunities across the country.

Central to this is a regulatory system that supports innovation whilst prioritising protection for consumers and businesses, led by the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), the UK's national product regulator.

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

This report showcases the work OPSS has done in the year 2023-24 to ensure consumers can have confidence in the products that they purchase. Our work gives businesses the confidence to invest and bring products to market, and helps exporters trade on the quality of UK goods.

Product markets are constantly evolving. Over the last few years consumers and businesses have taken advantage of new products, new business models and new supply chains.

OPSS has adapted to these changes, using intelligence, consumer and scientific research, and techniques such as horizon scanning. The combination of insight and intelligence has informed both proportionate enforcement and appropriate policy work through the year.

Protecting citizens is at the forefront of OPSS activity, and this year we have seen many interventions, working with local authority Trading Standards, to remove unsafe and non-compliant products from the market. We worked with partners such as the Home Office, Department for Transport and fire and rescue services to review e-bike and e-scooter safety, issuing guidance and advice and taking enforcement action.

In another example, our engineering laboratory tested gas hob parts following a fire, enabling us to understand the underlying causes and work with suppliers to implement corrective measures for around 100,000 at risk hobs in the UK.

There is always more to do in this constantly evolving environment. Consumers need to have confidence in the products they purchase, and businesses need confidence to invest and bring innovative products to market. Export markets depend on trust in the quality of UK products, assured by our quality infrastructure. This 2023-24 Delivery Report demonstrates how OPSS has carried out its duty to protect people and places, making a positive impact on the lives of citizens and businesses.

Graham Russell

Chief Executive, Office for Product Safety and Standards



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

Introduction



Executive summary

Product safety policy

During the year OPSS published 2 major consultations, one looking at the UK's product safety framework, the other at furniture fire safety regulations. We worked rapidly on the Retained EU Law Bill, and helped stakeholders to understand the post-EU exit regulatory framework including the Windsor Framework.

Product safety regulation and enforcement

We declared a national incident in relation to a faulty elbow joint fitted to around 100,000 gas hobs. Our officers acted to stop the sale of affected products and required the suppliers to implement corrective measures.

OPSS initiated a programme of work to better understand the fire risks from e-bikes and e-scooters in the UK, working across government, with local authorities and fire services. We commissioned research from external experts, used our powers to stop the supply of dangerous e-bike batteries, and issued guidance to consumers on safe use of these products.

We set out our expectations for compliance and continued our programme of targeted purchasing and testing. All instances of non-compliance were followed up with appropriate actions to bring business into compliance. Online marketplaces and sellers were held to account through formal enforcement actions to remove unsafe products from the market.

We continue to be concerned about the availability of unsafe goods through online marketplaces and our regulatory action is continuing.

Standards and quality

We continued to provide assurance to consumers that they get what they pay for through the application of standards and our work on weighing and measuring instruments. We oversaw testing of the meters that bill customers for gas, electricity and water ensuring accurate billing. Through ensuring proper energy labelling of appliances we helped consumers make informed purchasing choices. Our oversight of the hallmarking of jewellery continued to give consumers and business confidence in the trading of precious metals.

We assured fuelling and charging infrastructure and heat networks were compliant with relevant legislation, acting proportionately to achieve positive outcomes.

Construction products

OPSS undertook active enforcement under the existing construction products regulations, whilst working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG, previously called the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) to help shape reform of the construction products regulatory regime. We revised our Memorandum of Understanding with MHCLG, and established a team to triage incoming reports and intelligence. We focused our enforcement efforts on a range of products we assessed as the highest priorities, these cases including insulation, plywood, and fire doors.

Environmental protection

Our work on supply chains helped ensure that in-scope businesses were properly registered where required. We ensured these businesses understood and were compliant with the relevant environmental regulations. We worked with business and trade associations to ensure businesses were able to properly deal with waste batteries and electrical equipment including vapes. We enforced regulations that restrict the use of hazardous substances in the manufacture of electrical equipment. OPSS assured timber imports through our administration of the relevant licensing scheme and undertook prosecutions where serious non-compliance was identified. We continued to implement the UK's commitments to equitable sharing of the benefits of genetic resources in line with the Nagoya Protocol.

International engagement

Our international delivery work continued with successful engagement with Indonesia and other ASEAN countries. We held an international conference, titled "Prosperity & Protection - effective regulation for growth, trade and innovation" in London. Four hundred delegates from 56 countries participated in this event to promote international co-operation, knowledge sharing and relationship building.

We continued our multilateral engagement working through forums including the OECD Working Party on Consumer Product Safety, and the International Consumer Product Health and Safety Organisation. Bilateral engagements included engagement with peer regulators from Japan, the United States, and Australia amongst other nations.

Understanding OPSS

Our purpose and strategy

OPSS is the UK's national product regulator. Our primary purpose is to protect people and places from product-related harm, whether that is physical harm, financial harm or environmental harm. By doing this we help consumers and businesses to buy and sell products with confidence, supporting trade, innovation and growth. We are part of the Department of Business and Trade.

Our 2022-25 strategy has five core objectives against which we report our activity and impact:

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

The UK has a global reputation for an effective and proportionate regulatory environment that delivers protection for consumers, underpins the supply of trusted products, and protects responsible businesses. As the UK's product regulator, we aim to ensure that product regulation is effective, clear, and proportionate.

We support the work of ministers to deliver effective policy and regulation, and use intelligence, science and evidence to help guide changes where appropriate. We work across government, with local authorities, public service organisations, private business, and business and consumer bodies to fulfil our responsibilities as described below.

Our markets

The combined turnover of companies within scope of our policy and regulatory work was estimated at £490bn for 2023 (with low estimates of £288bn, and high estimates of £693bn) including consumer electronics, household appliances, clothing, furniture. This is an estimated figure using Office for National Statistics (ONS) business size and activity data, and approximations of manufacturing and retail businesses that OPSS regulate. OPSS also has enforcement activity for Construction Products (estimated value

of £96bn), Hallmark Jewellery (estimated revenues of £9.5bn) and Metered Heat and Energy (estimated sales value of £59.8bn on electricity and £46.8bn on gas). Further details on methodologies for these and other OPSS-sourced data in this report and referenced publications are available in the Delivery Report 2023-24 Statistical Annex published alongside this document.

Product safety

- **National regulator for product safety:** We lead on all aspects from policy to delivery. We have responsibility for the legislative framework, and provide national scientific, technical, and incident management capability working with local authorities. Our enforcement activity includes nationally significant, novel, or contentious issues, as well as proactive investigations and risk-based enforcement driven by intelligence.



- Co-ordinating local and national regulation:** OPSS maintains the Product Safety Database that holds details of all product safety notifications, from our own work or reported by other agencies involved in product safety. We collect and share intelligence to help local authorities and border agencies in enforcement. We provide training for local authority officers, and fund their access to technical standards. We publish unsafe product reports and product recalls on GOV.UK.

Standards and quality

OPSS oversees the UK's National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) for standards and accreditation. NQI ensures that when buying products, businesses and consumers know what to expect. By promoting the use of recognised standards, OPSS helps protect UK consumers and the environment.

NQI aids the opening of new markets for UK businesses by supporting trade agreements.

- Standards and accreditation:** We lead government policy on market surveillance and standards and accreditation policy, working with the British Standards Institution (BSI) and the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS), providing benchmarks for the manufacture of safe products and assuring the quality of testing, calibration, and certification services.
- Conformity assessment and standards designation:** We ensure the ongoing delivery of regulatory responsibilities repatriated from the European Union within our areas of policy responsibility, including the approval of conformity assessment bodies and the designation of standards.

- National regulator for legal metrology:** We are responsible for policy and implementation, and provision of national capacity to ensure weights and measures are accurate, guiding and supporting the metrology work of local authorities.
- Primary Authority:** We enable businesses to easily access assured advice from specified local authorities, simplifying regulation, and avoiding duplication.
- Hallmarking:** We deliver confidence in the market for precious metals through our sponsorship of the British Hallmarking Council and through the work of local authority regulators.

Enforcement on behalf of other government departments

We are the enforcement authority for a range of product regulations where other government departments hold policy responsibility. In 2023-24 we delivered 17 aspects of product regulation for five government departments, and were preparing to take on an additional area for a sixth department.

- **Construction products:** As part of Government's response to the 2018 Dame Hackitt Review following the Grenfell Tower fire, OPSS agreed to take on responsibility for the regulation of construction products on behalf of the MHCLG. We oversee the construction products regulatory regime, and lead market surveillance and enforcement in this sector, coordinating and supporting local authority enforcement.
- **Energy standards:** We are the enforcement authority for standards and metering of energy supplies, whose accuracy is important to every household in the UK. Alongside metering we enforce energy labelling, energy efficiency and environmental standards for product design and performance on behalf of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ).
- **Environmental regulations:** We regulate product and supply chain environmental matters on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). We enforce regulations covering electrical equipment recycling, battery takeback regulations, and end-of-life vehicles. We also ensure due diligence in the trade of timber to reduce illegal deforestation, and enforce the UK's Access and Benefit Sharing regulations that meet the UK's obligations under the Nagoya Protocol.
- **Consumer connectable product security:** We enforce the UK's legislation setting baseline security requirements for consumer connectable products on behalf of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). These requirements came into force on 29 April 2024.
- **International:** We work with the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in partner countries to support the development of regulatory environments that enable international trade. We advise the UK government on product regulation matters relating to trade agreements and bilateral discussions on international trade. OPSS works multilaterally and bilaterally with other regulators and international bodies to achieve a common understanding on regulatory challenges and an agenda for coordinated action.

OPSS Strategy

The outcomes we seek

Regulation and regulatory outputs should never be a purpose in themselves. Our strategy describes the outcomes that product regulation is designed to achieve. These are that people are protected from product related harm and can buy and use products with confidence; that businesses comply with their legal obligations and responsible businesses can operate with confidence; that the environment is protected from product related harm and product regulation supports the transition to net zero. The following case studies highlight particular instances of how our work contributes towards the achievement of these outcomes.



People are protected from product related harm

Case study: Removing unsafe e-bike batteries from the market

OPSS took enforcement action to remove from the market 2 dangerous models of e-bike batteries manufactured by Unit Power Pack (UPP). These posed a serious risk to users, including potential fatalities. In early 2024 we issued 26 Withdrawal Notices to online marketplaces, sellers and manufacturers requiring them to immediately stop supplying the UPP battery. Suppliers were required to contact customers and alert them to the risks. Customers were told to stop using the products immediately, with advice given on how to dispose of them safely. As an example of the response, one online marketplace reported that it removed over 500 product listings, and contacted over 4,000 buyers as part of the UPP recall action. OPSS issued separate warnings to consumers to stop using the battery immediately and dispose of it safely, linked to cross-government guidance advising consumers how to decrease fire risks relating to e-bikes and e-scooters.

OPSS worked with consumer bodies including Citizens Advice, the Institute of Health Promotion and Education, and the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) to extend the reach of our communications. These stakeholders shared the news story through their social media and email channels. Trade associations also shared OPSS advice on e-bike safety and highlighted UPP battery safety issues to their members.



Consumers can buy and use products with confidence

Case study: Ensuring consumer confidence in the safety and compliance of cosmetics

OPSS research shows that 72% consumers agree that products sold in the UK are generally safe as there are regulations in place to ensure this. In the case of cosmetics, consumers rely on manufacturers to formulate products that are safe and meet all the relevant regulations.

Our intelligence indicated that a number of businesses were in breach of regulatory obligations and potentially importing cosmetic products containing harmful substances. We worked to build a technical evidence base, including understanding the particular risks associated with the products. Our officers collaborated with local authority trading standards to understand the extent of non-compliance and set out options available to regulators. As an example of the follow-up

work, we engaged with one major international cosmetics business to help them understand their regulatory obligations. These included having a responsible person within the UK. Our work with the business on the banned substance led to a reformulation of the relevant product, bringing it into compliance, with accurate information submitted to our cosmetics notifications database. This work was extended to other businesses identified by our intelligence, also working with the Cosmetic, Toiletry and Perfume Association (CTPA) to ensure that their members are aware of their obligations under the legislation, ensuring consumers can continue to buy and use cosmetic products with confidence.



Businesses comply with their legal obligations

Case study: Supporting manufacturers to invest in product development through use of enforcement undertakings

OPSS enforce the Electric Vehicles (Smart Charge Points) Regulations on behalf of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ). In November 2023 a charge point manufacturer advised us that their technical solution to meet one of the security requirements was not fully compliant with the regulations. We worked to

confirm that the non-compliance posed no risk to consumers, and accepted an Enforcement Undertaking from them. The undertaking enabled the manufacturer to continue to sell the products until June 2024, whilst they developed and implemented a software update. The manufacturer confirmed all products sold prior to June 2024 would be brought into compliance by the updated software. In August 2024, OPSS agreed to issue a completion certificate, on the basis the business had completed the actions to rectify the non-compliance within the agreed timeframe.

The Enforcement Undertaking illustrates our proportionate and pragmatic enforcement action to non-compliance risks. This supported the businesses and ensured they could invest in developing compliant products, kept existing charge points operational, supported EV adoption, and avoided unnecessary e-waste.



Responsible businesses can operate with confidence

Case study: Collaborating with local authority trading standards to ensure businesses have access to compliant weighbridges

Commercial vehicle operators rely on the accuracy and compliance of weighbridges in conducting their business, weighing vehicles and their contents to ensure safe loading, comply with weight restrictions, and to assess tolls, gate fees and waste levies. Trading standards brought an issue to OPSS' attention following a complaint regarding weighbridges supplied by one business. This business had operated under a manufacturer's conformity certification but lost this status in April 2022, however they placed 18 weighbridges on to the market that had not undergone conformity assessment nor had Declarations of Conformity.

Working with local trading standards services across the UK, instruments manufactured

and placed onto the market by the business were checked to for compliance as regulated weighbridges. Seven weighbridges missing conformity markings were being used for a regulated purpose (a breach of regulations enforced by Trading Standards), and four weighbridges bore illegally affixed conformity markings (a breach of regulations enforced by OPSS). Following the OPSS investigation the business accepted a caution for the four offences of placing non-compliant weighing instruments on the market. The business took corrective action at their expense for the affected weighbridges to be either scrapped, or refurbished by another manufacturer and placed on the market correctly with a new declaration of conformity.



The environment is protected from product related harm

Case study: Supporting business to increase consumer access to vape takeback bins

Research by Material Focus identified that 5 million disposable vapes are discarded each week in the UK. Their work showed in a sample across 13 cities and 764 stores nearly 90% of those retailers did not fully comply with the take-back requirements for vapes. OPSS officers held compliance meetings with several leading supermarkets, outlining their legal responsibilities and the actions required. As a result, 3 major supermarkets rolled out an additional 4,650 vape bins across the UK in their stores in 2023-24. Work with other supermarkets meant over 8,000 vape bins were available in supermarkets across the country by September 2024.

To support smaller retailers, OPSS released a video offering tailored guidance on the requirements for vape take-back. The video was hosted on YouTube, GOV.UK and LinkedIn, and received 14,000 views since its publication. The Association of Convenience Stores issued guidance on

‘Selling Vapes Responsibility’ to their 49,000 members which included links to take-back guidance and support. These interventions have significantly increased the availability of vape take-back bins across the UK, reducing waste to landfill, loss of recyclable materials, and reducing the fire hazard from vapes in municipal waste treatment.



Product regulation supports the transition to net zero

Case study: Helping an electric vehicle manufacturer into compliance

Electric vehicles (EVs) are a major component of the UK's net zero aspirations. In October 2023, OPSS received a self-referral notification from a vehicle manufacturer that has produced electric vehicles since 2017. The company sells on average 600 tonnes of electric vehicle batteries each year, with an expected life cycle of ten years. By 2023 over 4,800 tonnes of batteries had already been supplied by the manufacturer. Anticipating the continuing rise in volumes of end-of-life batteries, the company recognised the need to meet regulatory obligations and sought OPSS support. We assessed their business processes to ensure that they were fit for purpose in the present and adaptable to future waste volumes.



The company developed an action plan outlining a full commitment to achieving compliance. We undertook a site audit to assess the actions taken and the compliance levels achieved. With OPSS support and guidance the producer met the necessary requirements for placing their products on the market and the end-of-life waste requirements, helping this business to grow, whilst ensuring that raw materials are reused and will not create environmental harm in future.

Objectives



Objective 1: Delivering protection through responsive policy and active enforcement

OPSS is the UK's product regulator, enforcing product regulations at the national level for DBT and 5 other government departments. We work with local authorities and other agencies to optimise our impact.

We use our regulatory and enforcement expertise to shape policy and to develop new regulations where change is needed.

Our primary purpose as a product regulator is protection – protecting the rights and safety of people, the environment, the planet, and the places we live, and doing so in a way that is proportionate and supports economic growth.

Our enforcement work

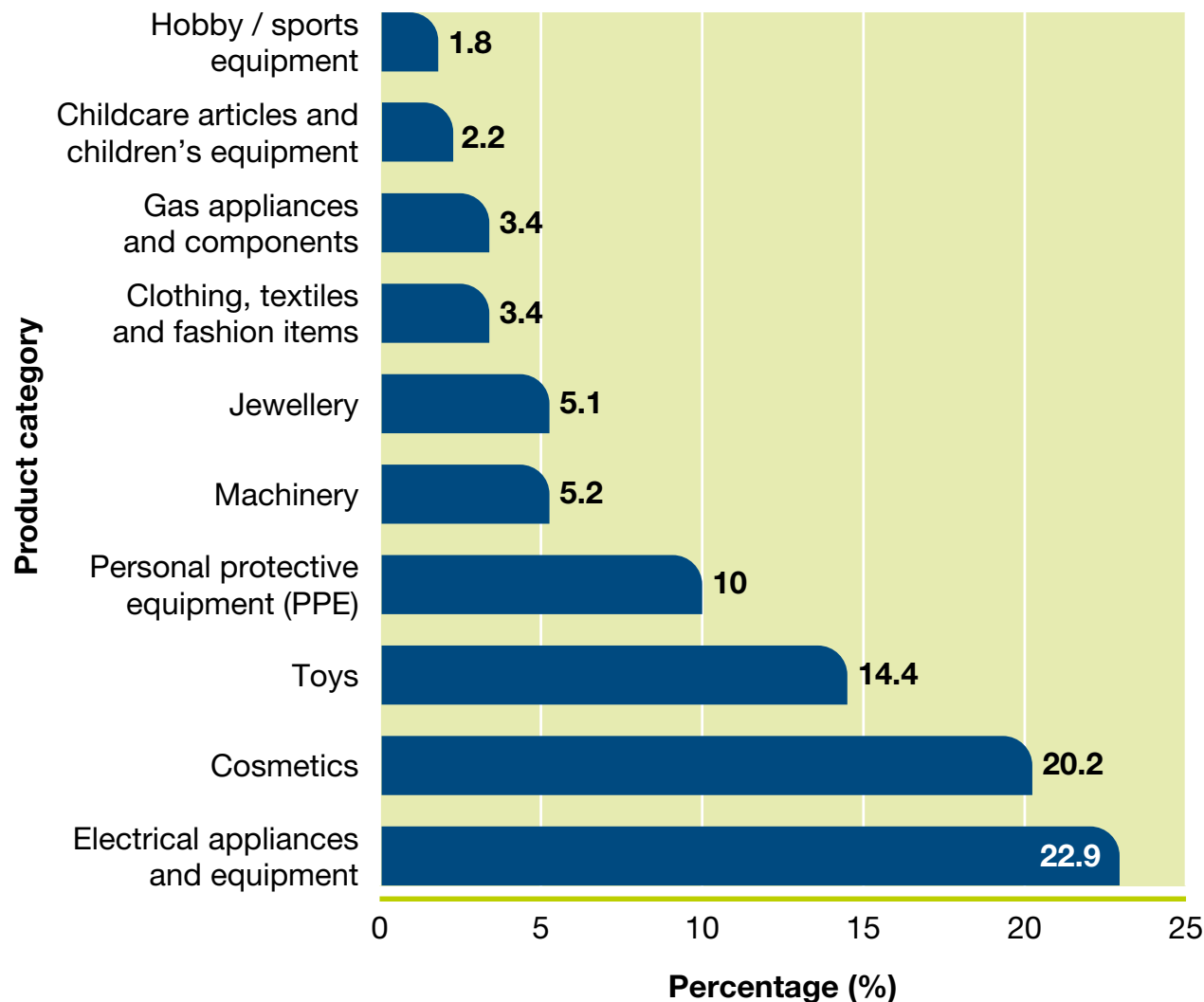
National risk-based prioritisation and incident response

During the year we opened one national incident, and triaged allegations and enquiries for 442 consumer products, and 59 construction products, undertaking appropriate actions based on the specifics of

each case. We also triaged 90 serious undesirable effect notifications in relation to cosmetics.

During the year we received and processed 2,258 product safety notifications via the Product Safety Database (PSD). We have published a report covering high level findings from PSD in 2023-24. Six hundred and eighty-eight product notifications were subsequently published on the UK's Product Recalls and Alerts website, providing information on unsafe products subject to a recall or other corrective action. Figure 1 shows the main categories of product notified on PSD during the year.

Figure 1: Most frequently notified product categories on PSD, 2023/24



We use product safety alerts to highlight product categories or sectors in the UK with risks of serious injury or fatality and where immediate steps are requested by OPSS from businesses, authorities and possibly consumers. This year we published one alert drawing attention to safety risks presented by magnetic reusable water balloons.

Gas hob elbow joints national incident response

In April 2023, OPSS were informed by a trading standards team of a fire at a caravan park that left one man with serious injuries. OPSS investigated the gas hob responsible and identified the cause as a faulty elbow joint. Our work identified that the same component was used in other gas hob models from multiple well-known manufacturers. The hobs were primarily sold to the UK leisure and holiday home market, as well as to residential property owners.

We obtained sample elbow joints and subjected them to testing. We served statutory information notices on the Chinese manufacturer of the joints and UK-based businesses using them in their hobs. The responses indicated around 100,000 hobs in the UK were potentially at risk. OPSS issued the UK-based businesses with Suspension Notices preventing further supply of the affected products. We additionally issued Compliance Notices requiring corrective measures to address the risks for affected products and requiring the businesses to provide data on the effectiveness and quality of their corrective action programme.

We issued Product Safety Reports on our website to coincide with the launch of the corrective action programmes for each of the UK-based businesses and supported with news stories and social media activity to help raise public awareness.

Product safety: E-bikes and e-scooters

E-bikes and e-scooters have significant potential to provide environmentally friendly transport. However, there are product safety risks related primarily to fire and explosion risk from the lithium-ion batteries used. In 2022 and 2023, there have been several hundred fires started by e-bikes and e-scooters in the UK, which caused the death of 13 people and injured 133. Our CEO met with people who have lost loved ones in e-bike fires to gain a better understanding of these tragic events and to ensure that their stories are heard.

OPSS carried out a multi-disciplinary safety study to better understand the risks and to target action to ensure that the products reaching consumers are safe. In addition, we commissioned new research from Warwick Manufacturing Group into batteries used in e-bikes and e-scooters. E-bikes, e-scooters,

their batteries, chargers and conversion kits are regulated under product safety laws and manufacturers must ensure they are safe and provide instructions for safe use and charging before they are placed on the market. The compliance and enforcement issues we have found are complex as products may be safe when used alone but not when used in combination or when adapted.

Consumer experiences

OPSS consumer research estimated that 7% of the UK population owned or had access to an e-bike, e-scooter or similar product in 2023. Research also found that, of those that own or had access to a relevant product, 21% experienced a safety issue with the battery or charger. The most common course of action undertaken by 37% of this group was continued use, following manufacturers' guidance for safe operation. Almost a third (31%) threw the battery or charger away or ceased using it without returning the product.

A further 31% reported trying to fix the problem themselves, with 18% having modifications undertaken by the manufacturer. The same research identified that 50% of e-scooters and 49% of e-bikes were being charged inside the home or in communal areas.

Enforcement and communication

Where appropriate we have taken formal enforcement action to remove unsafe products from the market, as described earlier in relation to UPP e-bike batteries. Working with the Home Office, the Department for Transport, fire and rescue services and the National Fire Chiefs Council ensured a joined-up approach across government. We produced advice for users of e-bikes and e-scooters, identifying steps consumers can take to reduce the fire risks of batteries. We publicised these through the press, social media, and the Home Office fire service portal. We also worked with key business stakeholders, including bicycle trade associations

and food delivery companies such as Uber Eats and Deliveroo. This enabled us to highlight our concerns around e-bike incidents and work with the food delivery companies to engage with their riders who are a large but often hard to reach user group.

Ecodesign and energy labelling

Consumers rely on products conforming to applicable regulations and being accurately marked in relation to energy use. During the year we targeted our efforts according to previous non-compliance as well as industry concerns. Visual examinations were undertaken on external power supplies and heating system circulators, with a 53% (16/30) rate of labelling non-compliance identified in external power supplies and 91% (20/22) in circulators. The businesses responsible for these products were notified of the non-compliance along with reminders of their regulatory obligations. Future projects will review their actions.

Technical file assessments were undertaken which identified non-compliance across laptops (20%, 2/10 products), range hoods (85%, 11/13) and vacuum cleaners (60%, 6/10). All the businesses were informed and have undertaken corrective action. Several products were sent for compliance testing over the course of the financial year, with that testing ongoing at year end.

The levels of non-compliance are a concern and will drive our future work, helping businesses understand compliance needs through a product-by-product approach, from basic technical file and labelling requirements, through to production controls and product performance.

Consumer connectable product security

OPSS enforce the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act 2022 that came into force in April 2024, on behalf of DSIT.



This was the first UK legislation to address the security of ‘smart’ consumer products. We worked with colleagues across government to finalise this legislation, and developed a new framework to consider risks unique to non-secure products. We collaborated with DSIT to raise awareness of the new legislation with stakeholders. We responded to over 200 stakeholder enquiries and participated in 24 OPSS stakeholder events, such as the Business Reference Panel, to outline business responsibilities and address high-level concerns. We have also been working with DSIT to deliver guidance in preparation for the legislation coming into force.

Legal metrology enforcement

OPSS has responsibility for regulating legal metrology in relation to weighing and measuring devices being placed on the market. As part of our market surveillance responsibilities,

we undertook visual inspections of 28 capacity serving and capacity (transfer) measures. These ranged from 25ml thimble measures to disposable plastic 2 pint glasses, of which 21 did not have the required declaration of conformity. Businesses were notified and directed to include the documentation in future product packaging. Of 16 water meters that were inspected 10 were found to be non-compliant upon inspection, with businesses notified of the issue and given advice on how to comply.

Similar visual inspections were undertaken for 30 Non-Automatic Weighing Instruments, of which 22 (73%) were non-compliant. These were removed from the online platforms from which they were purchased as they had not undergone any conformity assessment.

Profiling, intelligence and risk assessment

Border profiling

OPSS has worked with border authorities, and with local authorities, to protect consumers and support businesses by detecting, deterring, and disrupting flows of non-compliant and unsafe goods, whilst reducing or removing friction at the border. We continued to provide funding, intelligence, and co-ordination to dedicated local authority teams to maintain and extend checks on high-risk consignments at the border.

Increased funding enabled more proactive checks at key border entry points, coverage of more routes into the UK, targeted deterrent messaging, and new activity focused on construction products.

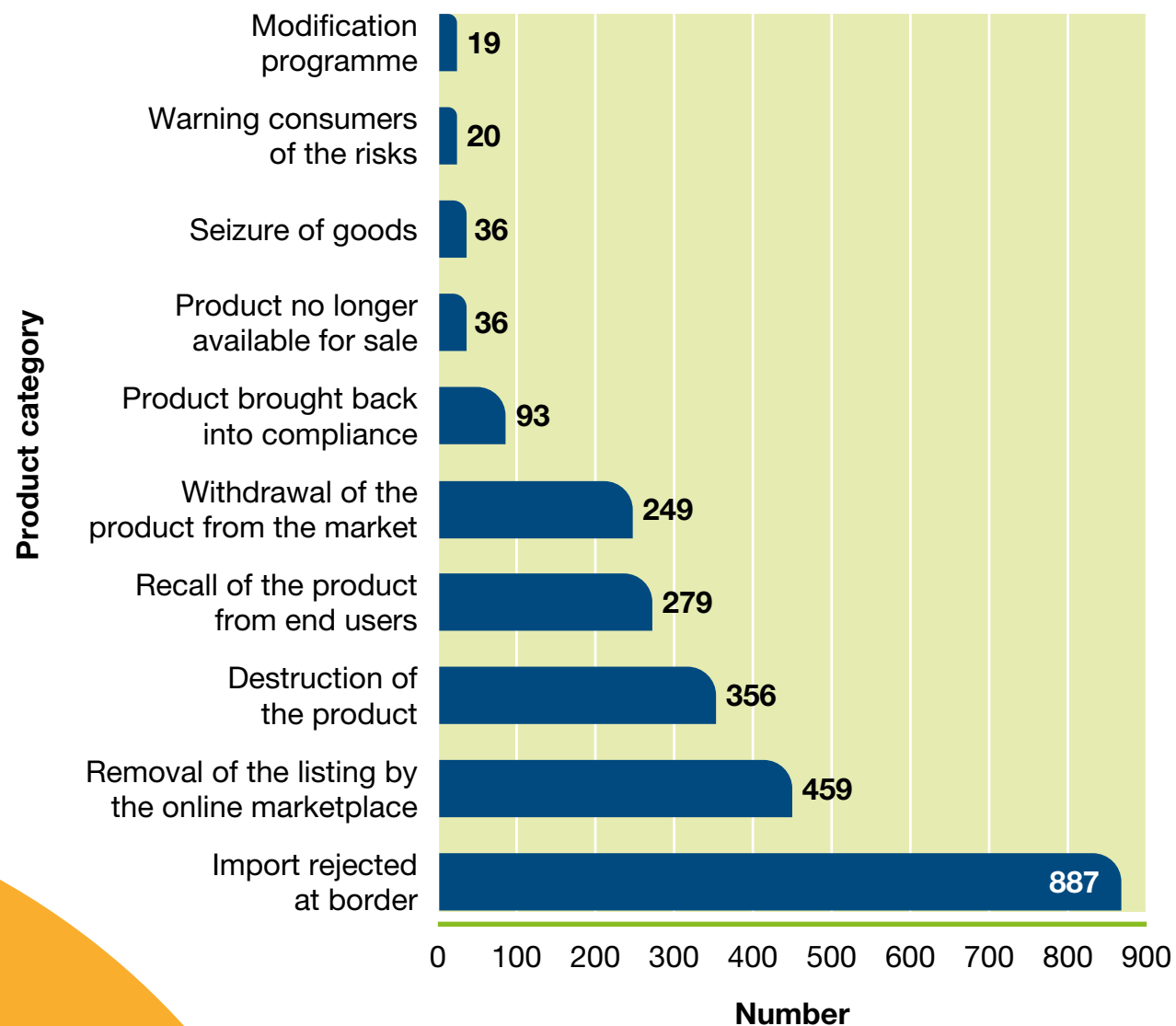
OPSS's Border Profiling Unit, working with HMRC, has provided risk-based, intelligence-led targeting to enable checks by local authority teams and OPSS enforcement officers. In 2023/24 their targeting resulted in checks on consignments covering over 15m goods at the border, with 2.4 million goods (16%) refused entry to the UK. These included unsafe e-bikes, toys, cosmetics, and electrical products.

A tangible example of the outcomes of profiling work was where Southampton Trading Standards, working with Border Force, inspected a mixed consignment of small household electrical equipment arriving from China in response to OPSS risk flags. The goods were all unsafe or non-compliant, and the first-time importer was found to be unaware of relevant UK standards.

The goods were refused entry, and Southampton officers worked with the importer's local trading standards team to ensure that the business was able to receive regulatory advice on relevant standards, and how to comply in future.

Figure 2 shows how significant borders activity is in keeping people safe, with rejection of products reported as a corrective action in 887 instances on the PSD.

Figure 2: Corrective actions notified on PSD, 2023/24



Regulatory intelligence and information

Market Surveillance Authorities continue to notify unsafe and non-compliant products using the OPSS Product Safety Database. This is a core dataset for OPSS, providing insight into the market surveillance activity of regulatory officers across the UK. It highlights which product sectors are generating the greatest levels of activity, and the most reported hazards and corrective actions taken.

We use an intelligence assessment to help assess developing risks and long term priorities. This is supported by tactical assessments which focus on specific actions, products or programmes. Tactical assessments completed during the year included online enforcement (quarterly); baby products and toys; electrical products; cosmetic products; button/coin cell batteries; construction products (six-monthly), and large domestic appliances.

We continued building collaborative relationships with stakeholders to share and apply data. These included local authorities, London Fire Brigade (LFB), other fire and rescue services (FRS), the National Fire Chiefs Council, other government departments, and agencies including the Intellectual Property Office and the Insolvency Service. Improved data sharing meant that fire notifications received by OPSS doubled on the previous year to 412 reports, including specific reports from LFB in relation to e-bike/scooter fires.

Risk based regulation

Underpinning the work and priorities undertaken by OPSS is the application of risk based regulation, using our Product Safety Risk Assessment Methodology, PRISM. We delivered a programme of in-person and webinar-based training sessions for regulators and businesses. Detailed monitoring and evaluation

ensures PRISM continues to drive the right outcomes through robust and transparent risk assessments.

Complex risk assessments were conducted in 2023-24 on a number of high risk products including faulty gas elbow connectors on hobs, gas boilers associated with fires, lithium-ion batteries used in converted e-bikes, magnetic water balloons, and ankle leashes used with stand-up paddle boards.

Construction products

2024 marks three years since the government announced that OPSS would take responsibility for regulating construction products on behalf of MHCLG as part of changes in response to the Hackitt review following the Grenfell Tower fire. OPSS continued to focus its efforts on bringing manufacturers and other supply chain operators into compliance, whilst undertaking a range of regulatory and enforcement

interventions to tackle current issues and remove non-compliant products from the market.

During the year, OPSS and MHCLG updated their Memorandum of Understanding, and agreed revised regulatory delivery objectives and activities, providing the framework against which progress is reported to MHCLG Ministers. On 2 September 2024, the government extended recognition of the Conformité Européenne (CE) mark, ensuring the CE mark will continue to be available when placing construction products on the market across the UK.

We established a team bringing together compliance, intelligence, incident, and technical teams to triage and effectively manage new concerns. This team examined 68 concerns, helping 18 local authorities on issues relating to structural steel, cavity wall insulation, fire retardant acoustic tiles, oak engineered wood flooring, aggregates and more.

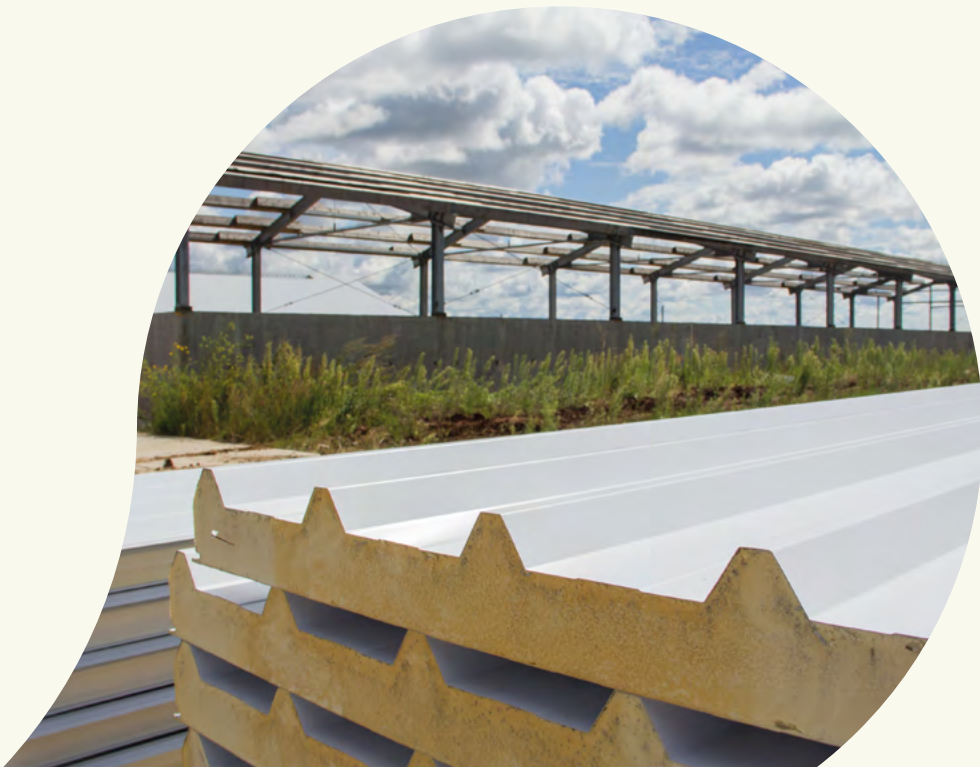
Case study: Insulation

Declarations of Performance for construction products are relied upon by architects and specifiers to ensure the products used in construction are fit for their intended purpose. It is essential that a declaration is accurate and can be trusted. OPSS investigated the Safe-R range of phenolic foam insulation products manufactured by Unilin Insulation UK Ltd. As part of the investigation a sample of Unilin's product was submitted to

an accredited test house to determine the fire classification of the product.

The test house results raised concerns, and further enquiries revealed that Unilin were utilising an incorrect performance assessment system. OPSS used statutory powers to require information from Unilin to assess the factory production controls in place, and to identify all parties in the company's distribution network that may have received goods with an unreliable Declaration of Performance. We served 6 Prohibition Notices, prohibiting the placing on the market of affected batches of material, and served Notices to Warn, requiring Unilin to inform customers of the unreliability of their Declarations of Performance for those batches. Unilin reclassified all the Safe-R product range to an appropriate lower standard.

Unilin adhered to the terms of the notices and wrote to 122 customers warning them of the failings with the Declarations of Performance on the 28th March 2024.



Other enforcement actions

We conducted inspections at 20 manufacturers of UKCA and CE-marked external fire-resisting doorsets across the UK using powers under the Construction Products Regulations 2013. Officers examined technical documentation and other information sources prior to conducting on-site inspections to assess factory production control. These inspections identified patterns of non-compliance in relation to technical documentation, Declarations of Performance and product labelling. Following each inspection, officers provided advice and guidance to businesses to remedy non-compliances and bring businesses into compliance.

OPSS has undertaken a programme of market surveillance in response to plywood products that declare an enhanced fire performance. This work included a programme of product testing. One plywood product type returned testing results which

indicated that it did not meet the declared performance classification. Working with the Polish manufacturer we established that the product was unable to consistently achieve its declared performance in response to fire. This posed a potential risk to buildings and building occupiers in the event of fire. Following our engagement, the product manufacturer voluntarily recalled the product from the UK market. OPSS worked with the UK importers and UK distributors to eliminate the risk posed by the product, warning those supplied with the product and sharing intelligence with other regulators of the built environment.

Supporting construction compliance

OPSS supported industry-led initiatives that help businesses meet their obligations in law, such as the launch of the Code for Construction Product Information (CCPI). The CCPI helps ensure that construction product information provided to users is clear,

accurate, up-to-date, accessible, and unambiguous. The work has been carried out in direct response to Dame Judith Hackitt's review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety set up in the wake of the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

OPSS convened the first Joint Regulators Group for fire doors to agree our analysis of how the regulation of fire doors might be more connected and improved. The Group agreed our analysis of issues to address and the need for industry to lead on producing guidance for manufacturers. We are actively supporting the industry as this work is taken forward.

OPSS continued engagement with businesses, trade associations, industry leaders and other regulators to support business compliance and to influence industry decision making. We have grown our presence at industry events and conferences as panellists and exhibitors to explain our role across industry.



Online marketplaces

Online Marketplaces Test Programme

We monitor and target unsafe products sold via online platforms and marketplaces through an intelligence led and targeted test purchasing programme as well as through referrals from other regulators, stakeholders and consumer organisations. Products are purchased, analysed or visually examined via OPSS testing facilities or through external laboratories to assess statutory compliance and safety.

Where products are found to be non-compliant or unsafe, proportionate enforcement action is undertaken, through guidance and working with businesses, through statutory enforcement notices, and if appropriate prosecution.

During the year we continued our programme of targeted test purchasing, which included baby products, cosmetics, electrical and electronic equipment, and fancy-dress costumes. Our work showed that non-compliant products are too readily available from online marketplaces within these known risk categories.

Our first priority is always protection, but there are times when removing a product from online marketplaces is not enough. We tested a battery powered musical cot mobile intended for use by young children, supplied by a third-party seller on an online marketplace. The product was tested against the designated standard for toy safety and failed testing for multiple reasons. We assessed the product as high-risk due to choking hazards presented by small parts.

We requested that corrective action was taken and the business recalled the product from UK consumers. Due to the level of risk, we considered it proportionate to undertake a prosecution where the business was found guilty, incurring fines and costs of over £16,000. The judge highlighted the reckless culpability of the company for its failure to have in place the systems that could have avoided bringing a dangerous product to market.

Online marketplace engagement

We continued our regulatory engagement with senior representatives from several online marketplaces, providing evidence of the ease with which we were able to purchase unsafe products sold on these platforms. These meetings enabled us to share data, hold marketplaces to account, and outline our expectations of online marketplaces for keeping consumers safe.

Energy and alternative fuels

Electric vehicle charge points and alternative fuel labelling

OPSS is supporting the transition to net zero by enforcing on behalf of other government departments the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulations (AFIR), Public Charging Points Regulations (PCPR), the Electric Vehicles (Smart Charge Points) Regulations (EVSCPR), and the Alternative Fuel Labelling Regulations (AFLR).

AFIR apply to public charge points. We inspected 252 public charge points from 35 operators, covering a range of city centre, urban and rural locations. A total of 9 non-compliances were identified, 3 have been raised with the relevant operators, and the remainder are undergoing further investigation.

PCPR came into force in November 2023, although some of the requirements do not take effect for two years. These regulations cover the customer experience at public charge points including contactless payment, reliability, and pricing transparency. We attended a variety of trade exhibitions and conferences to raise awareness of these regulations and had meetings with 15 individual businesses, along with inspecting 43 charge points from 11 operators.

OPSS also enforces EVSCPR, working with online retailers to prevent the sale of non-compliant private charge points and 96 listings, representing 4,865 individual charge points, were removed in 2023-24. Thirty-nine sellers of private charge points proactively offered Enforcement Undertakings to bring their products into compliance, and 29 completion certificates were issued.



Applying OPSS' technical expertise, we reviewed the assurance documentation provided to ensure that businesses had taken the necessary action to make their products compliant.

AFLR require combustion engine motor vehicles and refuelling points to be correctly labelled. Alternative fuel provides a partial substitute to fossil oil and reduces the environmental impact of transport. Correct labelling facilitates ease of access to alternative fuels and provides consumers with a clearer understanding of their availability. We inspected 2,614 fuel labels at 67 infrastructure operators covering a range of city centre, urban and rural locations. A total of 397 non-compliances were identified, all of which have since been resolved.

Heat networks

OPSS enforce the Heat Network (Metering and Billing) Regulations covering heat networks which supply

heating, hot water and/or cooling from a central source to final customers. Heat networks form a small but fast growing part of the UK's heating requirements. They have the potential to reduce carbon emissions through enhanced efficiency or the use of low carbon heat sources. The regulations require heat suppliers to submit a notification including relevant information on the size and nature of the network at least every four years. This year we processed 408 notifications and responded to 490 enquiries.

OPSS enforce aspects of the Energy Bill Discount Scheme, introduced in April 2023 in response to rising energy prices. These regulations required heat suppliers to apply for financial support and pass on benefits to their customers. Four hundred and seventy five priority cases were referred to OPSS under this scheme.

Gas and electricity meters

OPSS protects energy users from economic detriment by ensuring the accuracy of gas and electricity meters used for billing purposes. We organise the annual In-Service Testing (IST) scheme, a statistically based scheme to verify the in-service accuracy of meter populations. Meters are sampled at regular intervals throughout their life and OPSS collates the results nationally and assesses performance. In service testing was undertaken on 30 different meter types. Some 2,470 meters representing an installed population of 6.7 million meters were removed from service and tested at an approved IST test station. This provides continuing confidence to consumers and suppliers that they will be billed accurately for the quantities of gas and electricity supplied.

The majority of electricity meters approved before October 2006 are also required to be certified. OPSS undertakes an annual survey of energy

suppliers in relation to the compliance of these legacy meters. As of 31 December 2023, suppliers reported 1,860,000 uncertified meters, with consumer reluctance to facilitate the meter exchange being cited as the main reason for this. Where meters are uncertified, this does not mean they are inaccurate and we worked with energy suppliers to extend the certification period for meters where there is evidence they are still accurate. This year we extended the certification period of 5 meter types. This avoided the burden of unnecessary replacements, whilst still ensuring consumers are billed accurately.

Where consumers are concerned about meter accuracy, OPSS provide the statutory disputed meter testing service. Meters are tested by meter examiners appointed by OPSS, and this provides an independent means of resolving disputes between energy suppliers and their customers.



A total of 1,286 meters were tested in 2023-24, and the overwhelming majority of these tests found that the meters were operating within the prescribed accuracy limits. The results of dispute tests are notified to the customer, the energy supplier and the meter owner. Where a meter is found to be outside the legal limits, the energy supplier is obliged to rebill the consumer accordingly.

OPSS approve the design of industrial electricity meters for use in Great Britain, and 5 new meter types were approved during the year.

Reducing environmental impacts

On behalf of Defra, OPSS is responsible for the enforcement of a range of product related regulations. These aim to reduce pollution and support recycling of electronic and electrical equipment, batteries and end-of-life vehicles.

Battery supply regulations

OPSS enforces the Batteries and Accumulators (Placing on the Market) Regulations on behalf of Defra.

The legislation places limits on the use of certain materials and imposes labelling requirements. During the year we resolved 221 cases in relation to the applicable legislation.

We worked with a major manufacturer of lithium-ion cells who had identified issues concerning incorrect selling and use of a particular type of cell by other businesses. The cells concerned were not faulty, but can become unsafe if not used in their intended applications in accordance with manufacturer guidance. OPSS assessed non-compliance on a case-by-case basis and investigated 37 cases. 31 cases were resolved, and 6 cases remained live investigations into the following year.

We undertook test purchasing of automotive batteries from 2 companies during the year. We identified a suitable supplier for the specialised testing work required. Test results were due after the reporting year end, and any enforcement actions will be driven by our investigations and the testing results.

Waste batteries and accumulators, industrial and automotive batteries

These regulations place requirements on manufacturers and importers to provide takeback and recycling schemes to avoid batteries and accumulators being incinerated or going to landfill. There were 125 cases in relation to waste batteries and accumulators.

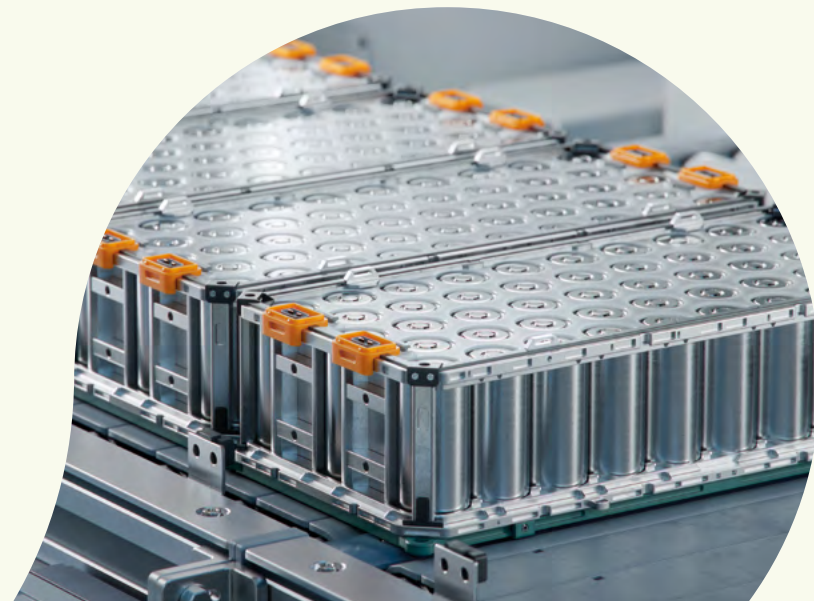
OPSS reviewed the National Packaging Waste Database (NPWD) to identify industrial and automotive battery producers who had failed to submit data for the last compliance period.

Five hundred and eighteen battery producers were registered on the database at the start of the year, and we undertook 475 submission reviews. We issued 80 warning letters and 73 producers were brought into compliance. At the end of the year, 543 producers were listed on NPWD with 97% now compliant, the highest level that has been achieved.

The Environment Agency referred 51 companies to OPSS in relation to industrial and automotive batteries regulations. Forty six warning letters were issued and 5 companies contacted directly. Fourteen additional companies have been identified through intelligence received because of this work. As a result of the above activity 54 cases were resolved as the companies concerned implemented corrective actions. Eleven cases remained under investigation into the subsequent year.

Case study: End-of-life vehicle batteries

OPSS received intelligence from a waste treatment operator, concerning allegations of incorrect take-back processes in place by manufacturers for end-of-life EV batteries. We commenced a review of waste battery takeback within the sector. Investigations initially involved 4 manufacturers who in 2023 collectively placed over 40,000 tonnes of EV batteries on the market. Although fewer than 0.25% of EV batteries in service are currently entering the waste stream from these manufacturers, the rapidly rising volumes of batteries in use marks this as a significant emerging risk. The initial 4 manufacturers have been reviewed and with OPSS support and guidance brought into compliance. As part of this work a further 43 businesses have been identified for review of take back compliance, with work continuing in the following year.



Restrictions on Certain Hazardous Substances (RoHS)

OPSS enforces the Restriction of the Use of Certain Hazardous Substances in Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations 2012 (RoHS) on behalf of Defra. The regulations govern the levels of hazardous substances contained within electrical and electronic equipment.

During the year OPSS handled 232 cases in relation to RoHS, along with 65 RoHS enquiries and 1 End of Life Vehicle enquiry. We received 94 alerts of intelligence from other market surveillance authorities. Fifty one cases were investigated in relation to products being sold online and resulted in takedowns by the relevant online marketplace, involving approximately 6,400 products.

Following previous interventions by OPSS, a further test purchase exercise was commenced with 2 major

high street retailers selling low-cost goods across more than 1,000 stores nationwide. 31 products were tested with 14 failures on hazardous content and 28 on technical documentation. Both companies were the subject of on-going enforcement actions into the following year.

Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE)

OPSS enforces the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations 2013 (WEEE) on behalf of Defra. Specifically we enforce the labelling obligations placed on producers and takeback obligations placed on distributors and retailers. This can be achieved by businesses running their own takeback scheme, or where permitted by joining a compliant distributor takeback scheme.

We offered advice and guidance to businesses using our networks to inform distributors and retailers of their obligations and the measures they

need to take to comply. We undertook business visits, and handled 322 cases in relation to WEEE.

Distributor takeback

Valpak Ltd operate the Distributor Takeback Scheme (DTS) Phase 6 scheme on behalf of eligible businesses. They shared data of 466 businesses that were not registered for Phase 6 DTS, potentially indicating non-compliance. OPSS conducted checks to establish whether these businesses were still trading. We issued 371 warning letters and 218 follow-up letters. As at the end of the year, 176 of these businesses offered their own take-back schemes and 161 joined DTS. The outcome was that 90% of the businesses referred now comply. Thirteen compliance visits resulted in 12 businesses being brought into compliance, with the remainder the subject of ongoing investigations.

In this period, OPSS undertook a significant amount of work to raise the profile of WEEE takeback responsibilities, whilst supporting other government departments and agencies in their work relating to vapes, as described earlier in this report.

Timber supply chain environmental compliance

On behalf of Defra, OPSS enforces timber legislation across the UK. We are also responsible for verifying Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) licences under the Voluntary Partnership Agreement with Indonesia.

We verified 4,429 FLEGT licences during the year with a service level agreement standard of 94% over the year. OPSS ran 2 timber stakeholder workshops in October 2023 to raise awareness of the UK Timber Regulations and business compliance requirements.

We commissioned work to assess the size of the UK timber import market to identify trends to inform our enforcement work. We investigated plywood supply chains concerns in relation to high-risk tree species, country of origin and other supply chain matters. This work is separate to OPSS work in respect of plywood as a construction product. We issued 5 Notices of Remedial Action, investigations continue and further action will be taken where necessary.

We successfully prosecuted a company who pleaded guilty to 11 imports of teak from Myanmar, which is subject to sanctions. A further case involved a major supplier of self-assembly furniture who self-reported due diligence failures. This resulted in the seizure of 26,767 items of furniture.

Vietnam's exports of furniture and timber products have been steadily increasing. These products sometimes use timber from neighbouring countries without legality of harvest documents. We undertook a project to identify if illegally harvested timber was entering the UK supply chain. We found generally good compliance amongst larger businesses, with some areas of non-compliance amongst smaller businesses. We issued one Notice of Remedial Action and one warning letter. OPSS continues to provide compliance support and guidance for business, including on the need to evidence legality of harvest.

Case Study: Supporting sustainable teak use

OPSS officers identified a consignment of teak imported from Indonesia via Italy and then Spain by an internationally renowned UK yacht manufacturer. The company is a major exporter with turnover of hundreds of millions of pounds, and several thousand employees. Teak is a high-risk timber as it can legitimately be sourced from countries including Indonesia, or sourced illegally from non-compliant or sanctioned countries such as Myanmar.

The company had imported the teak from Indonesia under the FLEGT licensing system, but had not performed risk assessments for trans-shipping in intermediate countries where mixing of legal and illegal timber has been found in the past. We worked with the company directors to explain and clarify their obligations under UKTR. In line with OPSS enforcement policy an advisory letter was sent to the company highlighting the issues in the case.

The impact of this intervention enabled the company to make their due diligence systems more robust and fully compliant. This reduces the risks of deforestation or sanctions breaches, meeting international commitments whilst still enabling this successful exporter to thrive.



Regular meetings took place with Kew Gardens, World Forest I.D and Defra, with a view to intelligence sharing around teak imports from Southeast Asia, using this to inform our investigation strategy.

Access and benefit sharing (ABS)

OPSS enforces the UK'S Access and Benefit Sharing Regulations (ABS) on behalf of Defra. These regulations implement the UK's commitment to equitable sharing of the benefits of genetic resources in line with the Nagoya Protocol.

We supported and intervened with 22 entities to ensure they were compliant with the ABS Regulations. We reviewed research covering 9,120 projects and the due diligence connected to 59 was examined in detail. This improved our understanding of the work, and compliance levels in the academic sector, and helped the institutions involved improve their due diligence systems. We answered 41 enquiries,

helping to support users and stakeholders dealing with ABS issues. As part of our awareness raising work, we presented at the World Congress of Basic and Clinical Pharmacology.

We continued our compliance activities based on data shared by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, allowing us to identify more in-scope entities than in previous projects. As a result, we issued 2 advisory letters in response to non-compliance identified. We received positive responses from both organisations that were given advisory letters and were invited by one of them to address their key compliance staff.



Objective 2: Applying policies and practices that reflect the needs of citizens

OPSS puts protection first and works to place consumers at the centre of product regulation, listening to them, and ensuring their different needs are accounted for, particularly those that are most vulnerable.

From policy through to enforcement, and through engagement and communications, we aim to make regulation work for all consumers.

Consumer Research

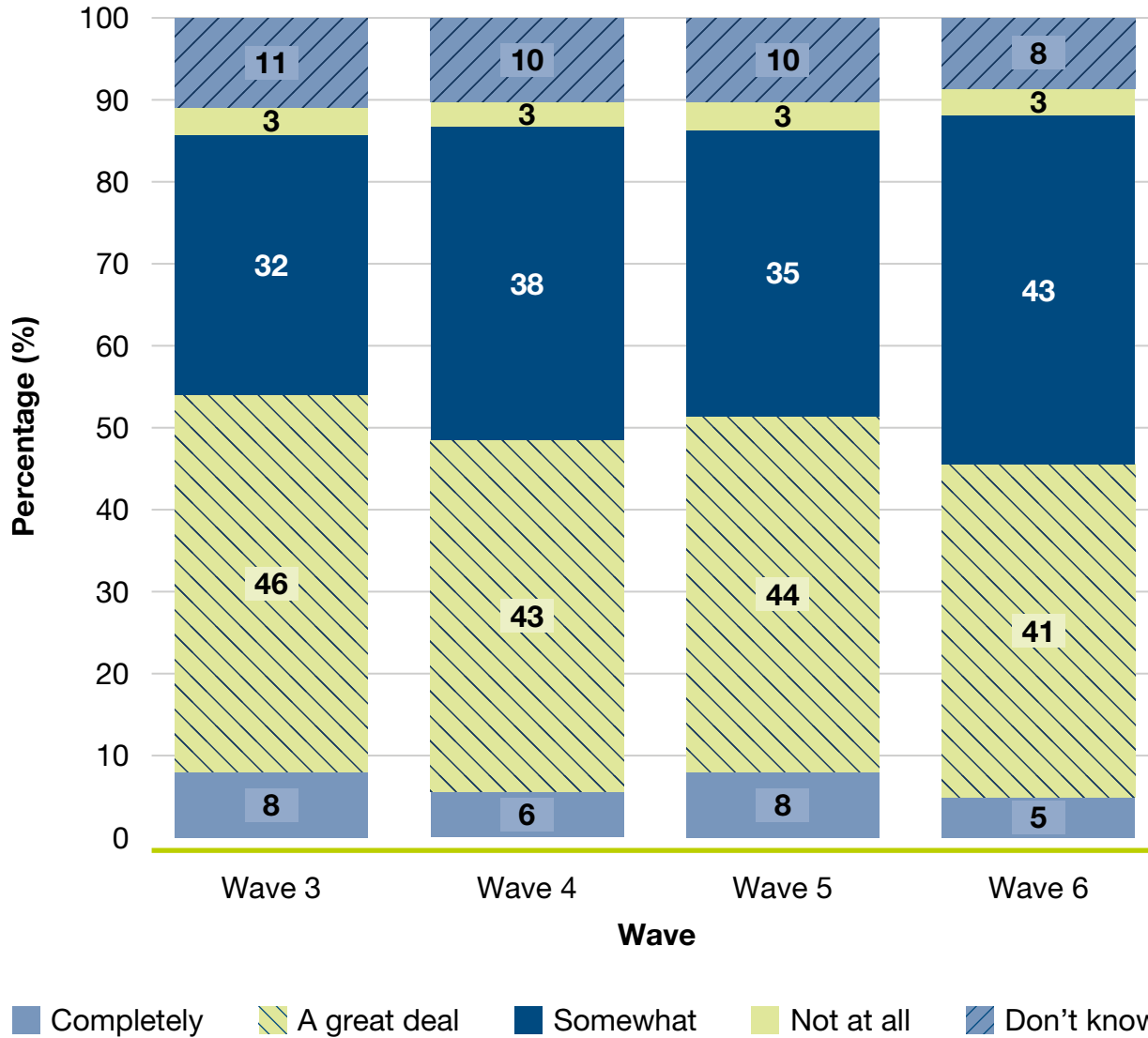
Trust in the UK product safety system

OPSS conducted ongoing research on consumer attitudes to product safety. Our most recently published research highlighted differences in perception of product safety matters across different groups. It showed under half (46%) of the UK public feel that the current system of product safety regulations ensures that products they purchase are 'completely' or 'a great deal' safe. This has dropped to lower levels than previously recorded.

The proportion of people saying they feel that the regulations 'somewhat' ensure safety (43%) is higher than previously recorded. The proportion who feel that the current system does not ensure safety at all is stable at 3%.

Younger people are more likely to feel that the UK system for regulating product safety can ensure product safety 'completely'. Those aged 65 and over are the least likely to feel that the UK's product safety regulation ensures that products are 'completely' safe (3%).

Figure 3: Public perceptions of the extent that the UK’s regulatory system ensures that products are safe



Q: To what extent do you feel that the UK’s system for regulating the safety of products ensures that products you purchase are safe?

Base: All respondents

W3 = 10,187

W4 = 10,156

W5 = 10,182

W6 = 10,216

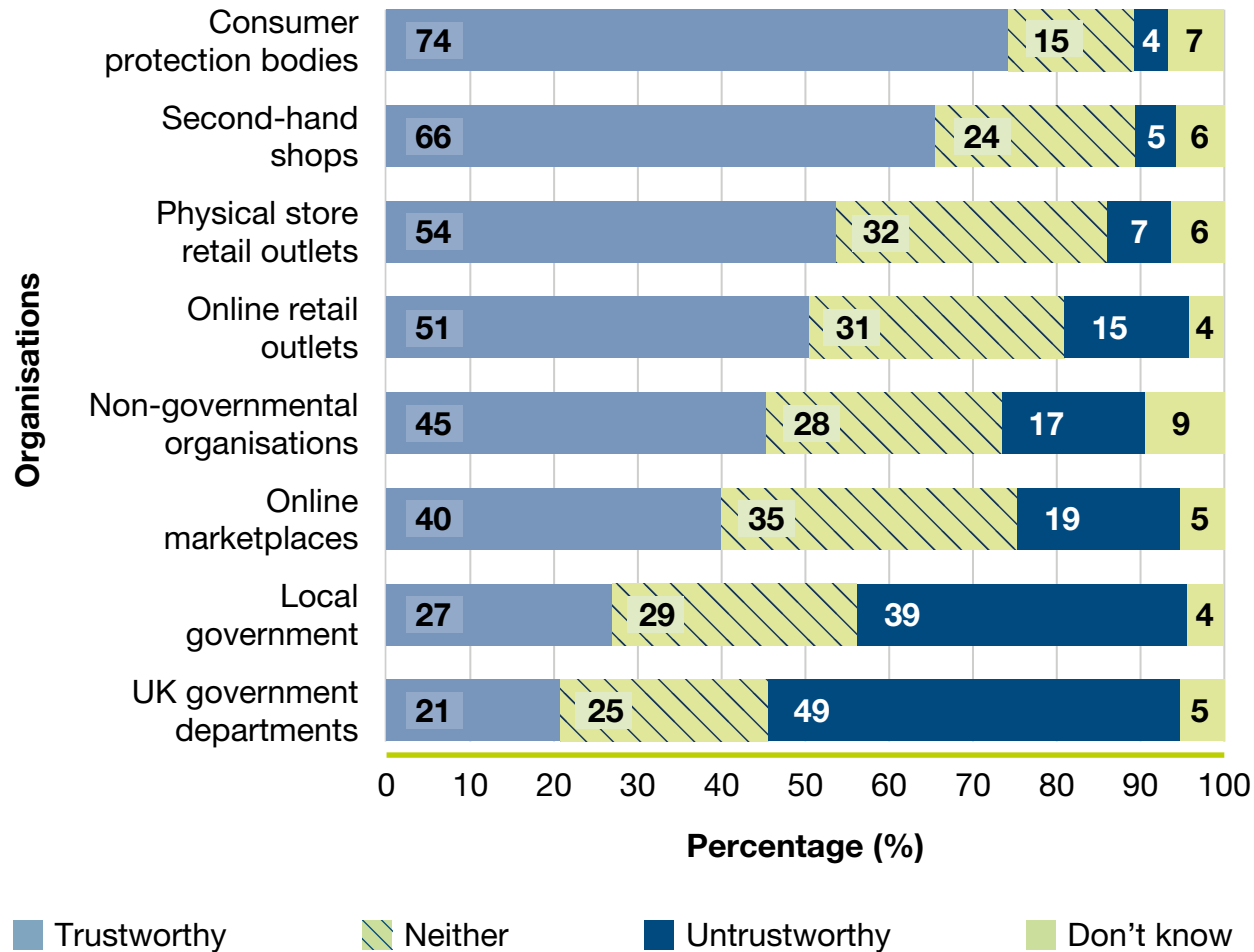


Trust in organisations associated with product safety

Trust is highest for consumer protection bodies (74%) compared to all other organisations (see Figure 4 on next page). This is maintained from the last wave (74%) after dropping down from its highest point in wave one (79%). Retail outlets have a high level of trust, with second-hand shops most likely to be seen as trustworthy (66%). Over half of the UK public feel that physical store retail outlets and online retail outlets are trustworthy (54% physical outlets, 51% online outlets). Online marketplaces are seen as less trustworthy than other retailers, with just 40% of UK adults saying they are trustworthy.

Those aged 18 to 29 are least likely to trust online marketplaces (22% consider them untrustworthy), and are also most likely to use them, compared to other age groups. Across all ages, there are lower levels of trust in governmental bodies, compared to other organisations including local government (27%) and UK government departments (21%) and both are a reduction on the proportions seen in wave 5 (33%, 27% respectively).

Figure 4: Public Perceptions of trust in different organisations



Q: Of the following types of organisations, in general how trustworthy or not do you think each are in how they operate towards you?

Base: All respondents

W1 = 10,230

W3 = 10,187

W4 = 10,156

W5 = 10,182

W6 = 10,216



Product safety remains a factor which is not generally considered a priority by the majority when purchasing a product, with around one in ten reporting they consider this (8%). It continues to be a more common consideration for baby products (31%) and toys (14%) than other categories, consistent with previous surveys. The key factor driving trust in a product being safe remains previous experience (44%), now at its highest level since polling began.

Most frequent types of product harm notified

In this context, it is important for OPSS to understand the main potential harms to consumers from different products, which can be identified from PSD figures for 2023-24. Figure 5 outlines the frequency of the notification of different harm types on the PSD. The list of harms aligns with the EU's RAPEX system as part of post-EU Exit continuity.

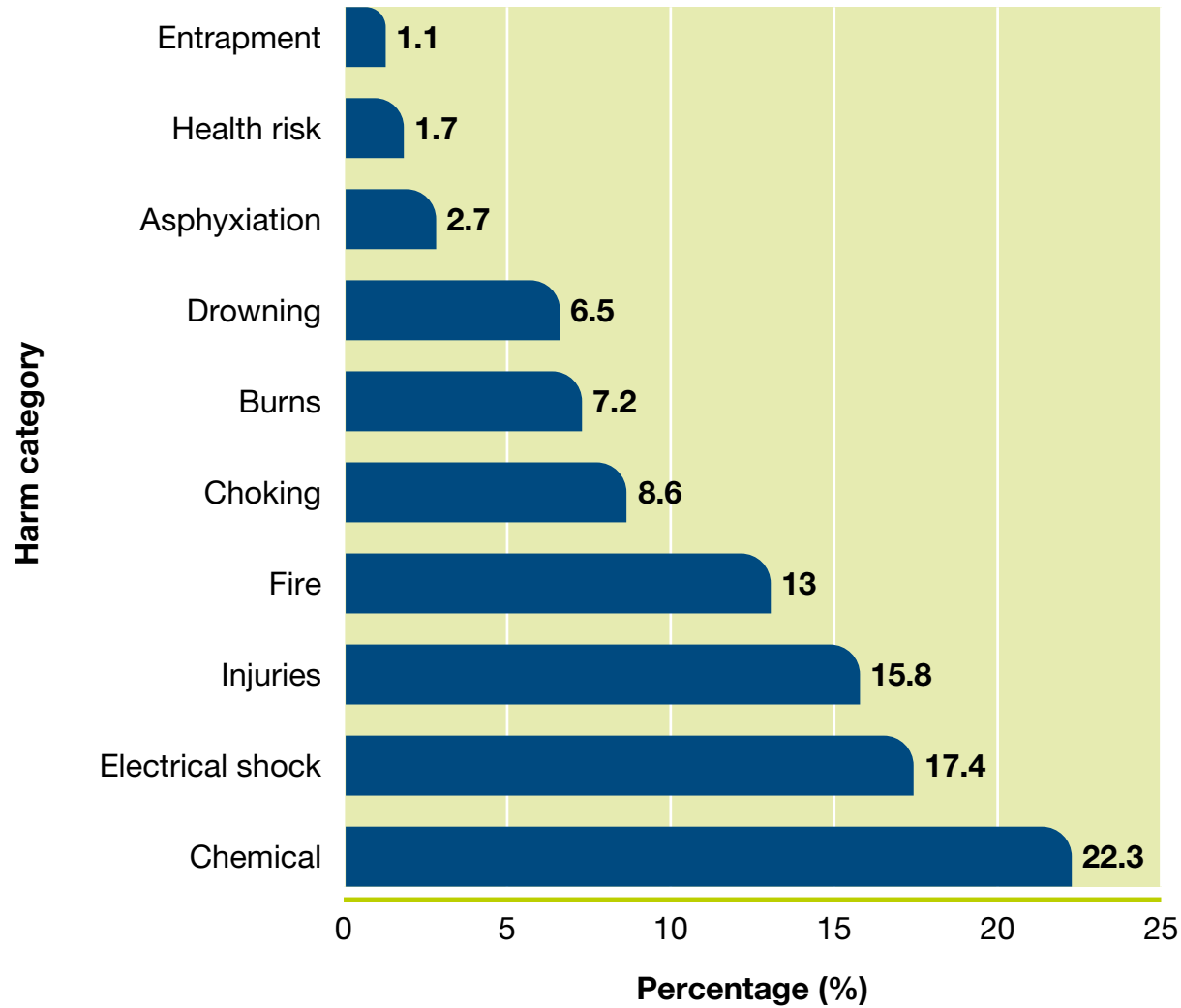
Engaging with consumer organisations

Consumer Reference Panel

OPSS' Consumer Reference Panel meets quarterly, bringing together a range of consumer bodies to gain insight into the consumer perspective and challenge to the work that we do. Membership includes the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), BSI Consumer Forum, CAPT, Citizens Advice, Consumer Council Northern Ireland, Advice Direct Scotland, and Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI).

The panel discussed a wide range of OPSS policy and regulatory matters impacting on consumers, including the product safety review, cross-government e-bike and e-scooter activity, and online marketplaces.

Figure 5: Ten most frequently notified harm types on the PSD, 2023/24



The most frequently notified harm was chemical (22.3% of the unsafe products), followed by electric shock (17.4%) and injuries (15.8%).



Working with our partners, delivery through engagement

We continued to work with and fund partner organisations to support and expand the reach of consumer messages via tailored approaches. This enabled us to better reach consumers who may be more vulnerable to risks, including those with protected characteristics or disproportionately affected by the cost-of-living crisis. We funded 21 organisations as part of our community contracts programme to deliver consumer awareness campaigns. Campaigns included the dangers of electrical heating items and risks associated with button batteries among pre-school children. The campaigns used community arenas, such as family and multi-faith centres, to deliver product safety messages to digitally excluded groups.

We provided grant funding to RoSPA, Citizens Advice and CTSI for longer term initiatives and consumer support. A particular feature has been the use of social media to broaden outreach. For example, in the final quarter of the year, CAPT social media posts on dangerous baby products were seen 600,000 times. CAPT's social media followers are well placed to be targeted with these messages, as they include health visitors, family hubs, Home-Start and other community outreach programmes, as well as parents, grandparents and carers. CTSI and RoSPA focused on messages and guidance about product safety over the festive season, including what consumers should look for when buying toys and products with batteries. We continue to see great benefit in our partners' close links, strong reputations, and effective communication channels with consumer audiences.

Using OPSS grant funding, Citizens Advice created a campaign on e-bikes and e-scooters safety. Social media posts reached over 8 million people. Facebook and TikTok videos were successfully targeted to specific groups including e-bike and e-scooter users (2.3 million views) and parents who had either purchased or were considering purchasing an e-bike or e-scooter (3.6 million views).

The Button Battery Ministerial Subgroup on Consumer Awareness and Education, agreed shared, consistent messaging on button battery safety. This group is chaired by CAPT with OPSS providing the secretariat. Members include major online marketplaces, MPs, medical professionals, and trade bodies.

Case study: Baby bath seats

The National Child Mortality Database published data in 2023 that showed a significant increase in the number of children drowning in the bath over the previous three years. In 5 cases, baby bath seats were being used. OPSS established a stakeholder group, involving consumer bodies, trade bodies, and representatives of the retail, manufacturing and health sectors. The group aimed to educate consumers on the risks associated with bath seats, which can give parents a false sense of security. The group agreed key messaging around the need to keep babies within arm's reach at all times. OPSS funding enabled RoSPA and the CAPT to develop and run social media campaigns and newsletters.

The British Retail Consortium hosted an event for members to collaborate with RoSPA to improve labelling on baby bath seats. Major retailers, including John Lewis and Asda, asked to be part of the working group to see how they might contribute. BSI joined the group, and are considering whether relevant standards can be improved.



Delivering our messages

OPSS ensures its communications are clear, consistent and transparent, to inspire confidence as a trusted regulator and protect people from product related harm. We dealt with 79 media enquiries, with the highest number being on e-bike fires, with carbon monoxide alarms another notable product category. Our Gas Hob Suspension Notices were picked up by national titles including the Mail, Mirror, Telegraph, Express, and 13 regional titles. We prepared information for product safety recalls presenting serious risks to consumers including a warning on magnetic water balloons.

We regularly shared information about product recalls on social media, helping keep the public safe by informing consumers to take the right actions with unsafe products. Our '#ebikeandescootersafety' campaign earned a reach of 1.7 million from its first use in October up until the end of March.

OPSS also delivered a range of events to deliver our messages including the International Conference, Business Reference Panel, Consumer Reference Panel, and Timber Expert Panel meetings. We exhibited at the CTSI Conference, BSI Spring and Autumn Conferences, Local Government Association (LGA) Conference, Appliances 2050 Event, Parkex hosted by the British Parking Association (BPA) and the International Consumer Product Health and Safety Organisation (ICPHSO) Annual Meeting and Training Symposium.

OPSS GOV.UK website

On the GOV.UK website, we clarify what we do and provide guidance specific to consumers, businesses and regulators. We extended our content for consumers to new subjects. This included fireworks, weights and measures, and battery recycling. Our consumer pages receive around 2,500 views each month.

OPSS published 19 news stories in the last year on a range of topics from the Gas Hob Corrective Action Programme to highlighting a range of unsafe Halloween products, to our enforcement action on UPP batteries. We managed the publication and media handling of 2 major consultations: Smarter Regulation: UK Product Safety Review and Smarter Regulation: Fire safety of domestic upholstered furniture. We published a range of statistics, reports and research, including the updated OPSS Enforcement Policy: guidance for business we regulate; Official Statistics: Section 70 reports on Weights and Measures and Product Safety Database Annual Reports.

Objective 3: Enabling responsible business to thrive

OPSS continues to strengthen its relationships with business and with industry organisations across our policy and enforcement remit and continues to explore further opportunities to collaborate more widely.

Business engagement

Business Reference Panel

OPSS has far-reaching powers to intervene in markets and supply chains to deal with compliance concerns as they arise. We focus our work on the areas posing the greatest risk and deal with issues in a proportionate manner, but it is vital that we enable those that we regulate to hold us to account, provide feedback and challenge, raise concerns, and inform our approach.

To facilitate effective accountability we host a range of events, including our quarterly Business Reference Panel and ad-hoc 'mini-Business Reference Panels'. Over the year we hosted 4 of each, with over 600 delegates in total and topics ranging from updating our Enforcement Policy to our role in the implementation of new regulations, such as the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure regime.



Accountability to business

Our Business Accountability Forum (BAF) was established in 2022, and provides a route for businesses to hear about, inform, and scrutinise OPSS' approach to enforcement. At each meeting we test our thinking and seek opinions as we evolve mechanisms and procedures to improve our performance and the service we provide to business. We held BAF meetings in July 2023 and January 2024, focusing on Incident Management and Delivery Report respectively. In the most recent session over 70 business stakeholders discussed issues including on the level of detail OPSS provides about the nature of non-compliances, and how we prioritise and allocate resources.

Transparency on enforcement

During 2023 we reviewed our Enforcement Policy. The policy articulates our approach to non-compliance with the legislation

that OPSS enforces. It sets out the framework for our decision making on enforcement and provides transparency to those that we regulate about how and why decisions are made. The review took account of lessons learned since our inception in 2018, and the roles and responsibilities that OPSS has since taken on.

We published a draft in November 2023 to gain views from our stakeholders, and we received helpful feedback from business and other organisations. The updated Enforcement Policy was published in April 2024 and reflects our Product Regulation Strategy. It provides greater clarity on our approach to financial penalties and reflects a move to a more timely approach to publishing details of our enforcement actions.

National Quality Infrastructure

Standards, accreditation and conformity assessment, market surveillance and measurement are the core components of the UK's National Quality Infrastructure (NQI). OPSS oversees the government relationship with both the UK national standards body BSI (the British Standards Institution) and the UK national accreditation body UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service). OPSS is the government lead for Legal Metrology; we worked with the National Physical Laboratory and local authority partners to ensure the accuracy and consistency of weights and measures.

Throughout 2023/24, OPSS has been working with NQI institutions to consider how to maximise the collective value of the whole NQI system. This has focused on digitalisation and greater cross-system coordination. This work will help ensure the UK's well-established NQI system continues to drive consumer protection and confidence,

while reducing costs and improving compliance for business. More widely it supports innovation, trade and the transition to net zero.

Standards

The British Standards Institution is responsible for the development of, quality and technical adequacy of UK standards. The Secretary of State has powers to designate standards for regulatory conformity purposes and, since 2021, coordination of product safety standards has been led by OPSS. This year we implemented changes to our standards designation processes, to improve speed and efficiency while maintaining levels of scrutiny and oversight. These changes reduced the average time from receiving a standard for assessment to formal designation on GOV.UK from 247 days between 2021 and 2023 to 42 days, including a formal 28-day proposal period.

Nearly 40 percent of the 500 standards we designated in the last three years were focused on machinery regulations. Recent designated standards include an electric toy safety standard containing guidance on coin and button batteries safety, and an e-bike standard.

We supported BSI's membership of international standards bodies, the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC).

Accreditation

Accreditation is intended to ensure that those who carry out conformity assessment, testing, certification and inspection are competent to do so. OPSS leads the government relationship with the UK national accreditation body UKAS who are the sole national accreditation body for the UK.

We lead the cross-government working group on accreditation, with membership from twenty government departments and organisations.

We supported UKAS to accelerate their efforts to digitise their systems and processes. We also assisted their international activities to ensure the UK retains a strong and influential voice on accreditation and conformity assessment globally. We continued to implement a mutual accreditation body recognition agreement with Switzerland.

Some regulations require manufacturers to undergo a third-party conformity assessment by an approved accreditation body to provide external scrutiny to assure the ongoing compliance of that product. OPSS reviewed recommendations regarding the suitability of new or existing bodies, with 37 new appointments made in 2023-24, and maintaining a further 140 appointments.

Standards and accreditation in trade

International standards support trade policy while helping to maintain the UK's flexible and pro-competition regulatory model. Standards and accreditation play a key role in trade negotiations. We contributed to Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) negotiations, including with the Gulf Cooperation Council, Turkey, Switzerland and Israel and with the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) which the UK formally agreed to join in July. In addition we contributed to the Enhanced Trade and Investment Partnership (ETIP) with Nigeria.

International collaboration

During 2023-24 OPSS worked closely with other national and international regulators to better understand

the operational, legislative and regulatory challenges that impact on consumer protection.

We hosted the Chief Regulator's Insight Forum, bringing together regulatory leaders from jurisdictions where products, labelling and instructions use a common language and can easily cross between jurisdictions. Senior leaders of international peer regulators were invited to London and shared consumer protection strategies, explored key issues in regulating online marketplaces, and examined the data sets we have access to and how we can further share information. We described our PRISM risk assessment tool, and other methods for risk assessment and how our respective intelligence models operate.

We undertook a pilot international exchange with Japanese regulators. OPSS staff went to Japan to learn from their practice and meet trade representatives and the Japanese standards organisation.

This generated new ideas for product incident inspection, accident data recording and consumer communication for product related risks.

OPSS took an active role in the ICPHSO's conferences in 2023-24, meeting with over 1,000 international consumer product safety delegates. We undertook meetings with other regulators and explored the potential for future cooperation and data sharing to prevent inter-jurisdictional regulatory avoidance practices.

Multilateral engagements

The International Strategy team engages bilaterally and multilaterally to support OPSS officials in their roles within international organisations. These positions include chair of the OECD Working Party on Consumer Product Safety, chair of the OECD Regulatory Policy Committee, chair of the Expert Group on Risk Management, and member or representative roles on

ICPHSO, International Organisation of Legal Metrology, and Interpol (in respect of illegal timber).

OPSS International Conference 2023

In September 2023 we hosted the sixth OPSS International Conference, entitled "Prosperity & Protection – effective regulation for growth, trade and innovation". Four hundred delegates from 56 countries were welcomed for 4 days of discussion, debate, presentations, interactive workshops, study visits, networking events and opportunities to share and learn from colleagues around the world.

We also held 2 networking receptions, one at the House of Lords, specifically designed to promote international co-operation, knowledge sharing and relationship building.

International policy engagement

OPSS engaged internationally to improve our understanding of global approaches to inform our own policy development, as well as to share OPSS's approach and successes. We presented proposals for online supply chain regulation at a World Trade Organisation (WTO) Thematic Session in Switzerland. We met with international partners such as the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to better understand international approaches to dealing with emerging risks, hazards and novel products.

International delivery

Outside our International Conference and multilateral activities, OPSS continued to work closely with colleagues across DBT and FCDO to ensure that our expertise effectively supports the Government's broader international objectives.

OPSS led the regulatory reform pillar of the ASEAN - UK Economic Integration Programme (EIP). We co-led and delivered an online marketplace project in collaboration with the government of Indonesia, as well as contributing to a Trade Centre of Expertise project in the country. OPSS led workshops in Indonesia during the year with nearly 450 participants.

ASEAN regulatory reform

The EIP aims to foster economic growth across the ASEAN region by tackling development barriers within member states and the broader economic community. OPSS staff members participated in eleven scoping missions, drawing on our expertise to support the programme's design and assess the needs of ASEAN Member States. The regulatory reform pillar is led, designed, and managed by the OPSS international delivery team. The programme's design has helped EIP to achieve formal accreditation by the

ASEAN Secretariat, setting up OPSS as a trusted and close working partner over a four-year life cycle.

Indonesia regulatory capacity building

OPSS's strong relationship with the Government of Indonesia has included multiple visits by OPSS experts to run workshops and training events supporting regulatory reform, focusing on online marketplaces.

One standout success story from the capacity-building workshops in Indonesia was the effective utilisation of the PRISM risk assessment tool. Through hands-on exercises and real-life case studies, participants gained practical insights into identifying hazards, assessing risks, and implementing corrective actions. This interactive approach deepened their understanding of product safety and equipped them with the skills to navigate regulatory reforms effectively.



**ASEAN
INDONESIA
2023** 

ASEAN MATTERS:
EPICENTRUM OF GROWTH

Construction products international engagement

OPSS led an Agile Nations project, working with colleagues from across the globe (Canada, UAE, Denmark, and Singapore) to identify common challenges in assessing and regulating product performance for new and emerging 'green' construction products. The group brought together expertise in the fields of regulation, policy development, behavioural science and engineering, science, and technology. Work focused on sharing knowledge, through workshops and external speakers from each member nation. It looked at current practice concerning risk assessments of construction products, including the assessment of risks arising from new, innovative 'green' construction products.

International timber cooperation

OPSS officers met European counterparts to share best practice and review emerging trends. Europol and Interpol gave presentations on intelligence relating to timber trade from Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. In separate meetings coordinated by Interpol, we engaged with 16 other countries to tackle forestry crime across Europe.

Our officers attended the Tree Regulation Enforcement Exchange meeting in Florida, to improve knowledge and understanding of global timber supply chains. There was significant interest in the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), which OPSS will enforce in Northern Ireland.



Objective 4: Co-ordinating local and national regulation

The OPSS Local Authority Unit (LAU) was launched in April 2022 as the single point of contact for local authorities covering four key policy areas: Product Safety; Legal Metrology; Construction Products; and Primary Authority.

Closer working with local authorities

Throughout the year OPSS has provided training, access to product safety testing, technical advice and other services to local authorities (LAs) to support them in delivery of their statutory duties and delivery of local and national priorities. LAU manages the single entry route for LAs to contact OPSS through a dedicated mail inbox. In managing over 1,650 incoming enquiries this year, we have built a picture of issues LAs are dealing with, helping to shape development of policy, tools, advice and training.

LAU liaison facilitated an improvement in the quality of the data on the Product Safety Database by supporting LAs in reporting safety concerns and non-compliance through training, guidance and face to face roadshows on the use of the system. LAU has continued to provide targeted messaging to LAs and primary authorities on OPSS actions, incidents and specific product recalls, engaging with appropriate LA contacts to ensure that prompt action can be taken.

Local authority engagement and communications

OPSS engages and communicates with LAs through a variety of activities. At national level OPSS engages through representative groups on Product Safety and Legal Metrology to share information with the specialist trading standards officers and to get feedback on specific policy or implementation challenges faced at local and regional level. LAU also facilitates the quarterly Local Authority Reference Panel which provides opportunities for strategic conversations with regulatory services across the UK.

LAU's communication channels include weekly Heads of Service email bulletins. These included information on policy and legislative developments, businesses seeking Primary Authority partners, OPSS consultations and funding opportunities.

The bulletins are also shared through other networks such as the national groups on Product Safety, Primary Authority, Legal Metrology, and regional Trading Standards Coordinators and uploaded onto the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) Regulators Companion website. LAU delivered 4 online briefings to local authority regulators, allowing those in attendance to ask questions, and recorded and shared via Regulators' Companion to ensure a wider reach and reference point.

Primary Authority

Primary Authority (PA) has enabled businesses to receive assured and tailored advice on meeting environmental health, trading standards or fire safety regulations from a single local authority with that advice then applying nationally.

The PA sector panels continued, bringing together PA providers and some of the biggest industry players in key sectors. The sector panels provide an opportunity for PA leads within a sector to think through, discuss and debate matters of interpretation and implementation of legislation and guidance leading to a consistent approach to providing advice to business within that sector. Twenty four expert panels chaired by local authority PA leads were held, covering activity including warehousing, distribution and food manufacturing; vehicle sales; hospitality; and construction products.

Primary Authority Regional Groups (PARGs) provided a platform for PA providers to share their knowledge and experiences. Twenty six group meetings, chaired by LA officers and supported by LAU, were held during 2023-24.



Product safety

We continued to support local authorities in the delivery of their statutory duties on product safety, for example by providing LAs with free access to the BSI online catalogue of standards. We also provide grant funding to Local Authority laboratories for the testing of samples sourced by local authorities from local businesses responsible for placing products on the market. Nearly 700 products were tested as part of the sampling protocol. This was a significant increase of 47% compared to the 2022-23 figure of 477 with the majority being cosmetics, toys and electrical goods.

Grant funding enabled local authority officers to increase their capacity to identify potentially non-compliant and unsafe products and to remove them from the market. It has also enabled conversations to take place between the local authority regulators and businesses to drive up levels of compliance. We also made grant funding available to district councils in Northern Ireland to help them implement market surveillance to meet the terms of the Windsor Framework.

Case study: Local authority border co-operation

An example of our engagement with local authorities was our close cooperation with Suffolk County Council. OPSS intelligence had highlighted certain goods being sold through a major online marketplace by a non-UK based business. Suffolk County Council staff then intercepted a container of 1,400 toys and nursery goods at Felixstowe. This was found to include unsafe baby walkers, non-compliant children's balance bikes, unsafe baby rocking chairs and dangerous toy guns. The goods were detained at the border and subsequently destroyed, and the relevant online listings removed.



Construction products

OPSS participated in sector events, such as the Local Authority Building Control conference, to raise the profile of our work with those working in the building control profession. We adopted a co-ordinated approach with other regulators to engagement at industry events. For instance, alongside MHCLG, BSR and the Construction Leadership Council, OPSS collaborated in a series of industry webinars, to educate and inform stakeholders involved in the wider built environment about the fundamentals of the Building Safety regime. One webinar was attended by over 200 attendees representing 169 organisations and all the webinar recordings were made available on the BSR YouTube channel.

We undertook a programme of hybrid regional engagement events with Local Authority Building Control, engaging with 6 regional groups across England and Wales.



This work raised awareness of OPSS market surveillance activities and the establishing of the OPSS Building Control communication protocol. The protocol enables Building Control professionals across the UK to be alerted to construction products that OPSS has found to be non-compliant.

Regulatory coordination

OPSS continued its joint programme of work with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) to coordinate on key industry matters to ensure that regulation of the construction sector is functional and cohesive. We established an MoU with the BSR in August 2023 that outlined joint areas of collaboration on topics including information sharing, communications and campaigns, intelligence sharing and regulator activity.

Furthermore, OPSS' Incident Management team and BSR collaborated on developing a joint regulator 'incident response protocol'

involving multiple regulatory agencies, which guides how OPSS, BSR and other bodies would work together when responding to a fire or structural safety incident in a higher-risk building.

Legal metrology

OPSS experts carried out on-site work in the autumn to calibrate local standards in Scotland and the Scottish islands, with other local authority standards calibrated at our Teddington laboratories. This equates to the calibration of 18 mass standard sets, 21 length standards, and 30 volume standards.

Training and seminars

OPSS awarded a three year learning and development contract to CTSI which will see training and development opportunities provided for Trading Standards officers across a range of topics. The content of this programme is being informed by a needs assessment of LA officers.

In addition, OPSS continued to support the development of tools and events to upskill and build capability in LAs. LAU provided training to support local authorities' work in Product Safety regulation, risk assessment (PRISM), Legal Metrology and Primary Authority. Most local authorities, including fire and rescue services, took advantage of OPSS' upskilling offer including shared learning days with nearly 1,200 training attendances at a range of workshop activities.

OPSS continued to fund the CTSI Legal Metrology Module, which is part of the CTSI Professional Competency Framework. Our testing laboratories delivered the practical and oral parts of the legal metrology qualification. This is the qualification for trading standards officers to act as Inspectors of Weights and Measures or Chief Inspectors of Weights and Measures under section 73 of the Weights and

Measures Act 1985. Exams were run in June and October with a total of 40 candidates.

Market surveillance policy and co-ordination

OPSS is responsible for UK market surveillance policy and co-ordination. We continued to work closely with other government departments and their delivery partners on market surveillance activities. This included national and local regulators across Great Britain and Northern Ireland, including the Health and Safety Executive, the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency, local authorities, and Trading Standards Northern Ireland.

Over the last 12 months OPSS have set the strategic direction for UK market surveillance policy and supported the implementation of the Windsor Framework. We run the UK Market Surveillance Governance Group to enable coherent and practical delivery

of market surveillance policy across the UK. OPSS continues to support the development of the UK Border Strategy, ensuring consumers safety remains a key priority in this programme.

National policy co-ordination

OPSS carries out a dual role as both the national regulator for most consumer products and the central government policy lead for the product safety framework. To support this, we built strategic relationships across other government departments to ensure two-way communication where policy is being developed that could impact on product safety, whether the policy is owned by DBT or another department. We work collaboratively to create the best outcomes for government, business, and consumers, so that policy is delivered to meet its intention, proactively looking for potential connections and across priority areas for OPSS.

Objective 5: Inspiring confidence as a trusted regulator

The public and other stakeholders should be confident that OPSS is an objective, impartial and effective regulator. This requires us to build and maintain our organisational capabilities and ensure we have the processes, systems, capacity and expertise to deliver across all our objectives.

Regulatory design and governance

OPSS supports consumer and environmental outcomes across a wide range of regulations and supports regulations on behalf of 6 government departments. Our Regulatory Design and Governance Team oversees the adoption of new roles, working in partnership with policy officials across government. Over 2023-24 the team finalised the adoption of new duties under legislation to make smart products more secure; and supported policy developments across environmental standards and energy systems, covering

products from timber to batteries and electric vehicle charge points, amongst others.

Digital services

Our Digital, Data and Technology function continued to support internal and external OPSS functions through modernised, efficient and manageable digital services. This included new features across our digital service portfolio for businesses, consumers, and wider government, and advancing our capability to manage and store data.

Continued development of our internal Enquiry Case Management (ECM) service enabled replacement of older services, for example replacing the legacy FLEGT system. Our PSD was developed to integrate product risk assessments to the related product notifications, as well as creating a national picture of product safety notifications.

The Submit Cosmetic Product Notifications (SCPN) service was enhanced to improve accessibility for users. The Find a UK Market Conformity Assessment Body (UKMCAB) service saw the incorporation of GOV.UK One Login, improvements to the Conformity Assessment Body approval process, and an upgraded search capability.

Data strategy

OPSS is committed to using the power of data to deliver our organisational purpose. This year we published our first strategy on data. This sets out our

ambitions, approach and priorities in respect of data, as well as providing transparency about our approach to the partners we work with, to those we regulate and to those on whose behalf we act, consumers and the public.

Statistics and data

OPSS's data transformation programme aims to equip OPSS with improved data insights to support decision making. The focus for the programme in 2023-24 was putting in place foundations to enable rapid transformation in future. One of the main programme objectives is to make it easier for our staff to find, share and use data OPSS holds. A practical example of this was in relation the gas hob elbows incident; we developed a data pipeline that takes weekly data provided by suppliers and feeds it into a dashboard that can be accessed by all OPSS staff working on the incident, ensuring that staff have access to the most up to date information.



We published OPSS's first Official Statistics outputs and our annual Section 70 Weights and Measures report, along with a new annual summary of Product Safety Database notifications.

Social research

Through a portfolio of research projects, we built an evidence base to inform short and long-term decision making in OPSS. We have delivered 8 waves of consumer surveys over the past four years, and 2 waves of business surveys. These have helped OPSS understand consumer and business confidence in product regulation, and the impacts over time of product regulation.

This year we undertook work to evaluate the impact of our ports and borders programme. Initial interviews with border officers provided insights into how OPSS's funding was being used to deliver desired outcomes.

The research highlighted gaps in evidence and we have engaged with LAs to understand what additional information can be provided. This will support greater operational insight as well as more effective evaluation of the funding.

Monitoring and evaluation

Last year we launched a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework within OPSS. This year it was published as part of our public commitment to evaluation. We developed and rolled out an M&E toolkit that enables teams to produce robust and consistent outputs. Over 70 projects and programmes were identified for M&E support, including the OPSS International team's ASEAN programme. The toolkit is an important component of our wider M&E plan to ensure our activity is effectively monitored and evaluated, in line with government ambitions.

Technology team

We established a team to keep pace with the introduction of new technologies, either in consumer products themselves or the supporting and enabling processes, systems and supply chains. We are also exploring the use of new technology by OPSS to improve policy and regulatory outcomes. We produced OPSS' first horizon scan that looked at technologies emerging in the two-to-seven-year window, and how they might impact consumers, business and regulatory stakeholders. Seventy-one technologies were identified and ranked using criteria including ubiquity, potential harm and hazard posed, impact and benefits, and the market readiness of the technology.

We commissioned a hydrogen refuelling project to support the government's commitment towards Net Zero. OPSS sought to understand how the supply chain currently ensures the quality and quantity of hydrogen. We worked with the Department for Transport and industry bodies to take their views into account. Collaborating with colleagues including the National Physical Laboratory and the National Engineering Laboratory, we designed and delivered this project evaluating hydrogen dispensed from 6 sites across GB.

Engineering

Our engineering team delivers high quality, specialist evidence, advice and support in investigations and enforcement. We investigated the risks posed by e-bike and e-scooter battery failures and fires. In support of our role regulating construction products we continued testing and building our technical understanding of construction plywood, thermal insulating products,

vapour membranes and electrical cables. Construction research topics included repair, maintenance and improvements; reuse reclaim recycle; cross-laminated timber; 3D printed construction; and risk assessments.

Testing commissioning

Due to the range of products and sectors within OPSS' remit, our testing needs are extensive, and met by a mix of internal capabilities and external expertise, sometimes involving international suppliers. We increased testing with internal expertise at our Teddington laboratories, with a total of 34 projects being delivered via this route.

In 2023-24 we commissioned 60 individual testing projects, which ranged from proactive, exhaustive testing under the Eco-design Regulations to the testing of high volumes of products purchased via online marketplaces, which was product risk led. Over 1,000 products have been identified, sourced,

catalogued and submitted for testing and have varied in type from tumble dryers to baby sleeping bags.

Testing laboratories

We continued to upgrade our laboratories, bringing new product testing capabilities in flammability and chemical testing, complementing our long-standing expertise in testing and calibration in legal metrology. Items tested included expanding water beads that can cause intestinal blockage if ingested by children; baby boxes to assess risk of injury to infants; and reusable water balloons to assess the accessibility and strength of attached small magnets which can be harmful if ingested.

The annual Trial of the Pyx was delivered in February along with the calibration of coin standards for the Royal Mint. Our accreditation for high level mass calibration was reinstated in October by UKAS.

Our accreditation for lottery ball testing was maintained enabling us to assure fairness in each lottery draw.

Science capabilities

We continued to broaden our scientific evidence base to further OPSS' understanding of hazards and risks related to consumer and construction products. Our research included a detailed study into the use, prevalence, and safety of nanomaterials in consumer products, a project to identify the hormone analogues in certain cosmetics, and projects relating to cosmetics, textiles and toy testing in the online marketplaces arena. We also published our first Science and Analysis Review showing how we identify the best evidence to support our policy development and enforcement activities.

Through our Scientific Advisory Group on Chemical Safety of Non-Food and Non-Medicinal Consumer Products (SAG-CS) we obtain independent

scientific advice and risk assessment in the areas of public health and consumer safety. SAG-CS worked on several focused risk assessments, with one opinion published during the year, and several others in the final stages of preparation. These opinions inform the risk management process and regulatory decision making for cosmetic ingredients.

Through our Registers of Specialists on chemicals, materials and toxicology and construction products we can rapidly contract ad hoc advice for incidents or research projects, provide specific pieces of work and research, and form advisory groups comprising external experts. We have also been involved in cross-government work on chemical risk assessment.

Economic analysis

We use economic analysis and advice to ensure OPSS makes the most effective decisions with the best information. We

developed economic appraisals for a number of policy interventions, including proposed changes to cosmetics regulations, proposed amendments to the Furniture and Fire Safety Regulations and technical changes to Pressure Equipment Regulations.

We undertook economic analysis of data on construction products and the market for timber imports, to identify market trends and enforcement needs. We updated our estimates for the number of businesses within OPSS policy and regulatory remit. We also initiated work to produce baseline estimates for the number of consumer products within UK households, and estimates for the extent and degree of short measure in pre-packaged consumer goods.

Governance and accountability

OPSS Structure

OPSS is part of the Competition, Markets and Regulatory Reform Group within the Department for Business and Trade, reporting to the Minister for Employment Rights, Competition and Markets. The nature of our work links to many other government departments, and we work closely with the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This report covers the delivery activities of OPSS. Audited financial statements, notes to the accounts and disclosures on staffing and environmental matters are reported at departmental level in the annual reports of the Department of Business and Trade.



Appointment of an external reviewer

Businesses need to be confident that they can challenge or ask for an explanation of OPSS decisions or advice. In this context we appointed an External Reviewer of our complaints, challenges and appeals processes. If businesses feel that our approach or actions result in disproportionate costs or undesirable outcomes, they can seek redress through processes we have in place. The External Reviewer is not an adjudicator, but advises how we can improve these processes, to give assurance to businesses that concerns will be given fair and careful consideration.

Primary authority determinations

OPSS exercise powers on behalf of the Secretary of State to issue a determination if questions arise in

respect of Primary Authority advice relating to proposed enforcement action. This can be at either business or local authority request. Through facilitated discussions between Primary Authorities and Enforcing Authorities generally an agreement is reached without the need for OPSS to issue a determination on appropriate action. As a result, only one determination was required and published during 2023-24.

OPSS Finance

Our total budget at the start of 2023-24 was £62 million; most of this funding came from DBT, MHCLG, and Defra.

OPSS Leadership

OPSS CEO Graham Russell is responsible for building the capacity of the OPSS team to upgrade the UK's product safety system and to improve the delivery of product regulation in the UK. Our Leadership team reports to DBT ministers and to the DBT

Executive Committee. We report to MHCLG Ministers for construction products regulation.

OPSS delivers its work through 4 impact areas: Enabling, Policy, Regulation and Evidence. Each area is overseen by a Deputy Chief Executive Officer (DCEO), reporting to the CEO.

OPSS Advisory Group

The OPSS Advisory Group typically meets once a quarter and its role is based on the model of non-executive directors. Members bring knowledge from similar delivery organisations and related non-governmental bodies, acting as critical friends, without formal governance responsibilities. The group provides external challenge and brings fresh perspective and ideas to OPSS, ensuring we are best prepared to deal with current and future challenges. The group is not involved in operational decisions, such as handling individual regulatory incidents.

For the period 2023-24 members were:

- Jason Feeney, former Chief Executive of the Food Standards Agency
- Neil Gibbins, Fire Risk Consultant and former Senior Fire Officer
- Cathryn Ross, Director of Strategy and Regulatory Affairs at Thames Water
- Rachel Sandby-Thomas, Registrar at Warwick University
- Errol Taylor, former Chief Executive of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
- Professor Shirley Price, Academic Director University of Surrey

Recent discussion topics have included different elements of OPSS’ role as a product regulator, creating a regulatory environment that places the protection of citizens at the heart of the system, and how our response to incidents has matured.

Organisational structure for 2023-24

Graham Russell Chief Executive Officer			
Kate Alderney Deputy CEO, Enabling and Strategy	Rebecca Bradfield Deputy CEO, Policy and Partnerships	Sarah Smith Deputy CEO, Regulation and Market Surveillance	Will Creswell Deputy CEO
Stephen Davies and Zen Cho Chief Legal Officer (Maternity Cover)	Craig Watson Deputy Director, Borders, Accreditation, Measurement and Standards	Emma Waite Deputy Director, Products and Sector Regulation	Adrian Hanratty Deputy Director, Targeting
	Tony Thomas Deputy Director, Product Safety Policy	Caroline North Deputy Director, Online Supply Chain Enforcement	Wendy Middleton Deputy Director, Science and Engineering
		Duncan Johnson Deputy Director, Construction Products	Rebekah Eden Deputy Director, Analysis
			Jonathan Eatough Deputy Director, Operations and Governance



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