



Safonau Masnach Cymru
Trading Standards Wales



Chartered Trading
Standards Institute
wales



Summary

Trading Standards Wales Manifesto 2026

Protecting Wales, Empowering Communities, Strengthening Our Economy



Contact Us

For more information about this manifesto or to discuss how Trading Standards can support your priorities, contact Trading Standards Wales via our website: www.tradingstandards.gov.wales

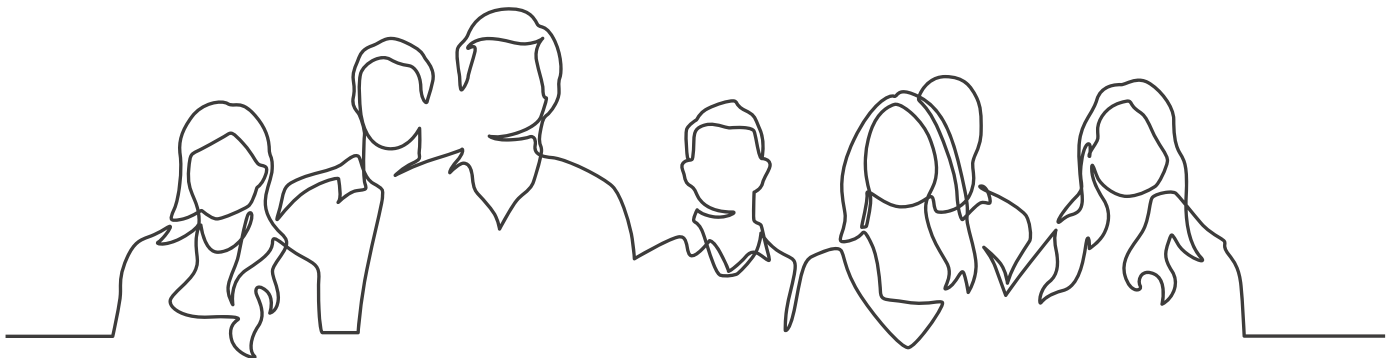
Published by Trading Standards Wales, representing the 20 local authority Trading Standards services across Wales

The Crisis Facing Trading Standards in Wales

What Political Parties Need to Know:

Trading Standards services across Wales are at breaking point. After a decade of budget cuts that have slashed capacity by over 50%, just 294 officers now protect 3.1 million people from scams, unsafe products, rogue traders, and organised crime. Despite operating on only £15.5 million annually, these teams prevented **over £43 million in consumer detriment** in 2024-25 alone. Yet this success conceals a service in crisis. With 31% of officers over fifty and only 7% under thirty, Wales faces imminent loss of irreplaceable expertise. While England received £10 million for tobacco and vapes enforcement - including £5 million for 90 apprentice officers - and Northern Ireland secured £1.4 million (increasing capacity by 30%), **Wales has yet to benefit from comparable dedicated funding**. This two-tier system leaves Welsh consumers with less protection than their UK counterparts.

Without urgent investment, Wales risks losing the protections that keep our communities safe, our markets fair, and our economy resilient.



The Evidence in Numbers



Current Capacity:



267 operational officers

protecting all of Wales



£15.5 million

annual budget across 20 local authority services



50%+ capacity lost

in real terms over the past decade

The Workforce Crisis:



31%

of officers are over 50 and approaching retirement



7%

of officers are aged 30 or younger



No sustainable pipeline

of new talent entering the profession

Proven Impact (2024-25):



£43 million

in consumer detriment prevented



835,413

illegal and unsafe products seized



7,080

scam victims received protective interventions



£295,319

in court compensation secured for victims

The Gap:

- Wales operates with **294 officers**; Environmental Health has 528 officers (double the capacity)
- England's £10 million investment in tobacco enforcement - **Wales yet to receive similar funding**
- Northern Ireland's £1.4 million capacity boost - **Wales yet to receive similar funding**





Our Asks for the 2026 Senedd Election

As Welsh political parties develop their manifestos, Trading Standards Wales calls on all parties to commit to four strategic priorities:

1

Restore Core Funding: £15 Million Over Five Years

What We Need: An additional £15 million over five years to restore approximately half the capacity lost over the past decade, enabling Trading Standards to move from crisis response to strategic prevention.

What This Delivers:

- Strengthened enforcement across product safety, public health, animal welfare, food standards, fraud prevention, and business support
- Workforce parity with Environmental Health services
- Prevention of up to **£335.5 million in harm** to Welsh citizens and businesses based on established return-on-investment ratios
- Proactive protection rather than reactive firefighting

2

Ring-Fenced Investment for Critical Enforcement Priorities

What We Need: Dedicated, protected funding for enforcement areas where Welsh consumers face the greatest harms:



Illicit Tobacco and Vapes (£1-2 million annually)

- Wales faces a public health crisis from illegal tobacco and vaping products
- Between 2022-2025, Welsh teams removed **over 6.8 million illegal cigarettes, nearly 2 tonnes of hand-rolled tobacco** and **376,500 illicit vapes**
- Funding supports test purchasing, court proceedings, secure storage, and intelligence-led operations



Ports and Border Controls (£0.5-1 million annually)

- Welsh ports serve as critical entry points - **45% of examined imports are unsafe or non-compliant**. A single Anglesey seizure in 2024 recovered **54,560 illegal vapes worth over £750,000**
- Enhanced port enforcement protects Welsh consumers from dangerous imports



Consumer Fraud and Scams (£1 million annually)

- Vulnerable adults face escalating financial exploitation
- Expands proven protection programmes like Carmarthenshire's call-blocking initiative (**prevented £184,554 in losses**) Supports collaboration with banks and illegal money lending enforcement

These funds must be ring-fenced and protected - explicitly designated for Trading Standards and shielded from absorption into general local authority budgets.

3

Workforce Development: Securing the Next Generation

What We Need: A dedicated Apprenticeship Fund of £1-2 million over five years to create up to 50 apprenticeship places across Wales.

What This Delivers:

- Structured pathway into the profession for young people in all regions
- Level 4 Regulatory Compliance Apprenticeship scheme tailored to Welsh needs
- Backfill and mentor resources ensuring quality training without depleting operational capacity
- Bilingual Welsh-English delivery strengthening Welsh language skills
- Sustainable workforce pipeline to replace retiring staff and maintain institutional knowledge

The Comparison:

- England invested **£5 million for 90 apprentice enforcement officers**
- Northern Ireland invested **£1.4 million, recruiting 24 staff and 16 trainees**
- Wales has received **no comparable dedicated funding for apprenticeships at this time**

4

Economic Integration: Supporting Growth and Fair Markets

What We Need: Explicit recognition of Trading Standards as a cornerstone of economic development within regional growth plans, economic strategies, and prosperity frameworks.

What This Delivers:

- Trading Standards representation in regional economic partnerships
- Enhanced collaboration between Trading Standards and Business Wales
- Expansion of formal business support partnerships (Primary Authority Partnerships) from 79 to 150-200 by 2030
- Additional £200,000-400,000 annually in cost-recovery income
- Wales positioned as the UK's leading regulatory support environment

Primary Authority Partnerships provide:

- Assured regulatory advice that must be respected by all UK local regulators
- Single point of contact for businesses expanding across Wales and England
- Proactive compliance support preventing costly mistakes
- Competitive advantage attracting investment to Wales

Why This Investment Matters

Proven Success When Funded

When Trading Standards receives targeted investment, the results are transformative:

Animal Licensing Wales Project (Welsh Government funded)

- National coordination across all 22 Welsh authorities
- 423 intelligence referrals generating 132 investigations, 787 inspections, 68 improvement notices compelling better animal welfare standards
- RSPCA Cymru Special Recognition Award 2024 for excellence in enforcement

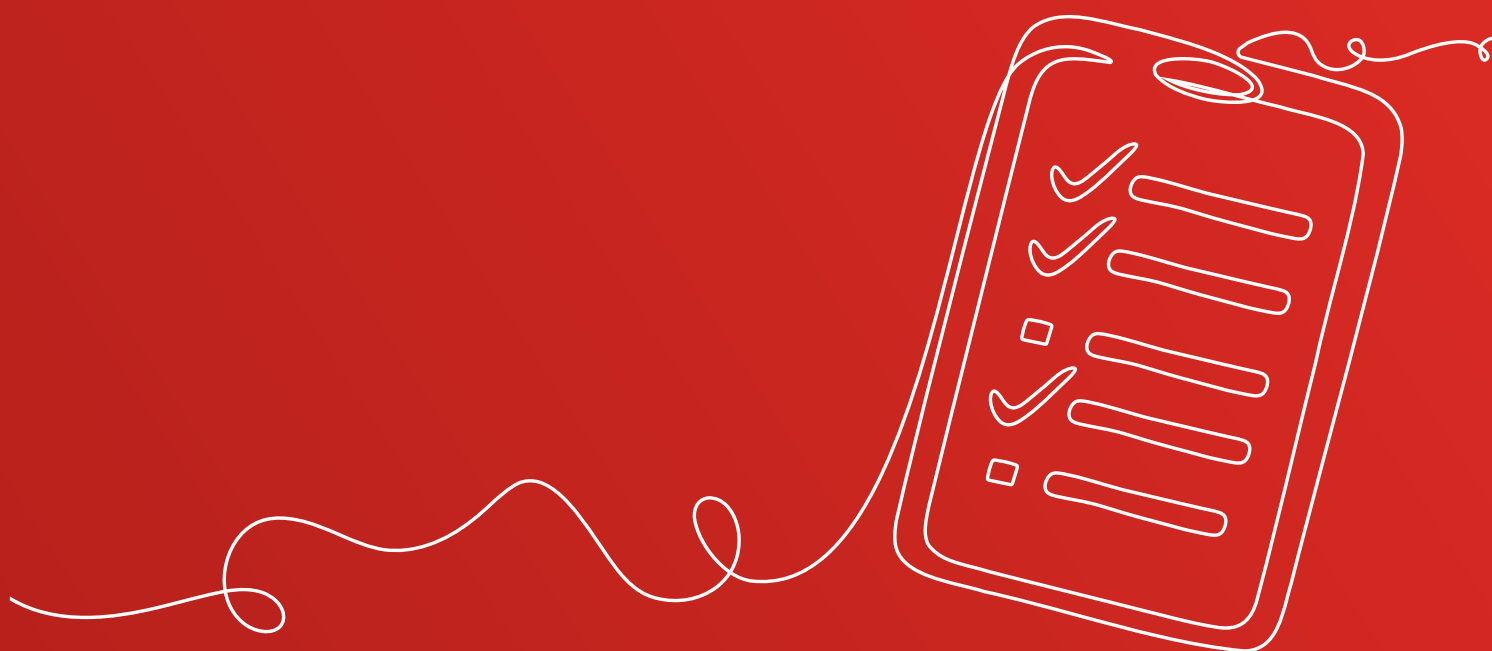
Operation CeCe (HMRC funded)

- Seized over 6.8 million illegal cigarettes, nearly 2 tonnes of hand-rolling tobacco (equivalent to over £3.1 million in lost taxes)
- Recovered 376,500 illicit vapes (£1.1 million+ street value)
- Dismantled criminal networks across Wales through multi-agency partnerships

Stop Loan Sharks Wales (UK Government funded)

- £2.5 million illegal debt written off since 2008
- 932 victims directly supported
- 347 suspected illegal lenders identified
- Specialised unit enables prosecutions individual services could not achieve

The Lesson: Strategic investment delivers measurable, transformative outcomes across consumer protection, public health, economic fairness, and community safety.





Multiple Welsh Government Priorities Supported

Trading Standards directly advances:

- **Public health** - protecting communities by removing unsafe products from the market, enforcing food safety and allergen laws, and tackling the supply of illegal tobacco and vapes. This enhances public safety, reduces health risks, and limits exposure to harmful substances through safer products, compliant food standards, and effective enforcement against illicit goods.
- **Economic development** - supporting businesses through formal business support partnerships and targeted advice, while protecting legitimate traders from unfair illegal competition. This helps create a fairer, more competitive marketplace that encourages compliant business growth, strengthens consumer confidence, and support sustainable, long-term economic development.
- **Crime prevention** - by disrupting organised crime, protecting vulnerable consumers from scams and rogue traders, we help build safer communities, reduce criminal activity, provide greater protection from those most at risk, and increase public confidence that enforcement agencies are effectively safeguarding communities.
- **Environmental sustainability** - by ensuring that products, chemicals, fuels and packaging placed on the market are safe, lawful and sustainable, and by preventing misleading environmental claims. This reduces pollution and waste, prevents environmental harm linked to unsafe products and illegal practices, supports a level playing field for responsible traders, and delivers tangible environmental benefits that support public health, and long-term environmental resilience.
- **Animal welfare** - through targeted inspection, early interventions, and robust enforcement against animal welfare breaches and illegal dog breeding. This prevents animal suffering, supports responsible farming, and safeguard public health by reducing disease risks and while improving welfare standards.
- **Social justice** - protecting low-income and vulnerable households from unfair trading, exploitation and inaccurate pricing, particularly in essential goods such as food and fuel. This ensures fair measurement, honest pricing and lawful trading practices, prevents overcharging and misleading practices, and delivers greater affordability and fairness in everyday purchases.

A Call to Action

To the Welsh Government:

- Recognise Trading Standards as a strategic investment able to deliver up to £12 return for every £1 invested
- Make the case to UK Government for Wales to receive fair share of ring-fenced enforcement funding
- Ring-fence Barnett consequential for priority areas to ensure funding reaches frontline services
- Invest in workforce through dedicated Apprenticeship Fund
- Embed Trading Standards in economic strategies and Local Service Board priorities

To Senedd Members:

- Champion Trading Standards in your constituencies - the service protects your constituents daily
- Hold Welsh Government to account on funding decisions
- Raise awareness of vital work and the crisis facing the service
- Support cross-party consensus on need for investment

To All Political Parties:

- Include clear commitments to invest in Trading Standards in your 2026 Senedd manifestos
- Commit to ring-fenced funding for priority enforcement areas
- Support workforce development through apprenticeships
- Recognise Trading Standards contributes to health, economy, crime prevention, and consumer protection

To Local Authorities

- Prioritise Trading Standards in budget decisions
- Collaborate regionally to maximise efficiency and capability Invest in apprenticeships to build sustainable workforce
- Measure and communicate impact using National Enforcement Priorities framework

The Choice is Clear

Invest now to restore capacity, build a sustainable workforce, and protect Welsh communities from harm.

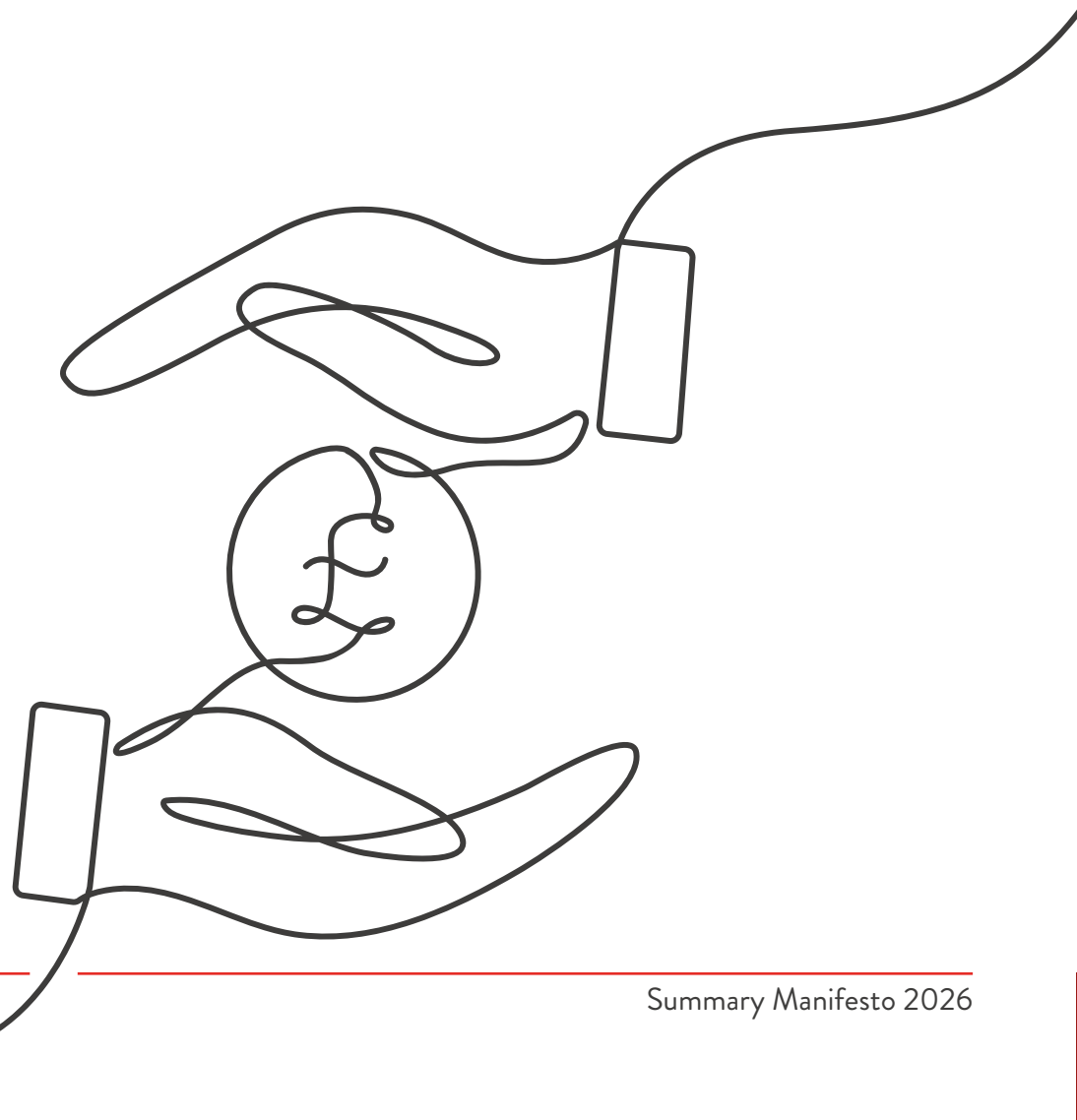
Or accept declining capability, loss of expertise through retirement, and increased risk to Welsh consumers and businesses.

With the 2026 Senedd election approaching, all parties can demonstrate commitment to protecting consumers and supporting fair markets. Wales can lead the UK in recognising Trading Standards as strategic investment in a well-being economy.

The time to act is now - before expertise is lost, before another crisis exposes enforcement gaps, before Wales falls further behind other UK nations.

Trading Standards protects Wales.

Now Wales must protect Trading Standards.





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