



Safonau Masnach Cymru
Trading Standards Wales

POSITION STATEMENT

Trading Standards

Contributing to the Environment & Climate Change

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Having declared a climate emergency in 2019, the Welsh Government has now committed to a target of Net Zero by 2050. Trading Standards services across Wales are well placed to contribute to this important agenda through their duties to enforcing a wide range of legislation that safeguards Welsh consumers and honest businesses.

GOVERNMENT AIMS, GOALS AND DRIVERS

Energy Efficiency:

In Wales, our 1.4 million homes are responsible for 27% of all energy consumed¹. Trading Standards authorities are tasked with enforcing The Energy Efficiency (Private Rental Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015, which aims to improve the standard of domestic and commercial properties within the private rental sector through the creation of a minimum standard of energy efficiency.

The aim of these Regulations and accompanying existing requirements is to make the energy performance of buildings more transparent for prospective buyers and tenants. Trading Standards enforce legislation that obliges estate and letting agents to include the energy rating of a property in its marketing information, enabling it to form part of the consumer's decision-making process. Additionally, large public buildings must have their energy performance displayed for consumers. Closer collaboration with Environmental Health and Housing colleagues, as well as Building Control Departments is a driver for successful enforcement and to raise standards.

Green Washing:

Consumer behaviour is long associated with driving change, but it is essential that people can have confidence in the claims associated with the products or services that they are purchasing. Our legislation is centred on fairness and transparency in a consumer's transactional decision. The Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 require businesses to provide clear, accurate and sufficient information, so that consumers can make informed purchasing choices. Environmental claims or statements can include, but are not limited to:

Organic status; recyclability of the product or its packaging, carbon offsetting, the environmental credentials of the manufacturer and any environmental endorsements for the product or company. Like any commercial statement, they should be capable of being substantiated and Trading Standards can investigate the accuracy and validity of such claims.

¹ Better Homes, Better Wales, Better World – Decarbonising existing homes in Wales July 2019 report to Welsh

Plastic waste:

The Environmental Protection (Microbeads) (Wales) Regulations 2018 ban the use of plastic microbeads in personal care products in recognition of the harm they cause to maritime life.

The introduction of The Single Use Carrier Bag (Wales) Regulations 2010 represented the first of the UK regions to legislate on single use carrier bags by imposing a five pence minimum charge. Additional record keeping and publication requirements are placed on larger firms.

The growth of Refill and No Waste Shops reflects the move away from prepacked items and the associated plastic waste. These shops receive support in order to comply with any legislative requirements; from ensuring that key safety information is made available, to the use of appropriate measuring equipment which guarantees that the environmentally minded consumer gets a fair deal.

Miscellaneous:

Along with its roles in raising standards in housing and ensuring consumers can have confidence in their choices, Trading Standards enforce a range of other legislation that has an impact on the environmental agenda, for example:

The Packaging (Essential Requirements) Regulations 2015 require that the volume and weight of the packaging must be the minimum amount to maintain necessary levels of safety, hygiene, and acceptance for the packed product and for the consumer. Packaging must be manufactured to allow for re-use or recovery in accordance with certain requirements and there are limits on certain materials and substances allowed in packaging with regards to their emissions, ash or leachate when incinerated or put in landfill.

The Passenger Car (Fuel Consumption and CO2 Emissions Information) Regulations 2001 oblige car dealers to clearly display fuel economy labels for cars in sales showrooms. It ensures consumers have key information on CO2 emissions and fuel consumption so that they can make informed decisions. Recent amendments mean this also applies to electric vehicles, electric plug-in hybrid vehicles and bi-fuelled vehicles.

Under The Energy Information Regulations 2011 certain domestic appliances and lamps must be sold with a declaration on their energy performance, enabling customers to take this into account as part of their purchase process.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE AGENDA

Trading Standards Wales (TSW) aims to provide all Trading Standards Services in Wales with advice, guidance and support on how to best contribute to the Environmental and Climate Change Issues of local authorities and further contribute to the Welsh Government's overall Net Zero objectives.

Trading Standards Services will follow best practice guidance and will strive to:

- Identify an environmental lead within their service.
- Make contact with key partners in Environmental Health, Housing, Building Control, Rent Smart Wales and the third and private sectors.
- Establish information sharing agreements with key partners where necessary.
- Promote a collaborative approach to undertake energy efficiency work, and investigate green washing claims. Identify appropriate training packages for all operational staff within the service

- Raise the profile of Trading Standards with Elected Members and Senior Management, so they are aware of the Net Zero carbon agenda and work of the service.
- Review practices and procedures and learn from colleagues in Wales to ensure best practice is further developed.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Welsh Government provides the funding that allows local authorities to support Trading Standards Services; Welsh Government has created a statutory responsibility in relation to the energy efficiency of buildings in the private rented sector, as well as statutory responsibility for misleading claims.

Environmental Issues and Climate Change remain of growing importance to the people of Wales and their Government. Trading Standards will continue to contribute to this agenda through the enforcement of important legislation to drive up housing standards and informed consumer choice.

For further information, please go to: <https://tradingstandards.gov.wales/en/home/>

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