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Peter McGrath  
Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee  
The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP.

Dear Mr McGrath,

I refer to a meeting I had with Fiona Hyslop MSP last week, to discuss the current opportunities and challenges facing local authority trading standards services in Scotland, in my position as Chair of the Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland (SCOTSS). Part of our role is to engage with government and other policy makers on the operation of the consumer protection landscape, providing leadership and consistency to Scotland's local authority Trading Standards teams, through education, coordination and support.

We covered matters such as the demand placed upon us by Brexit and Covid and ongoing concerns over workforce number, the aging demographic, and a lack of trainees entering the profession. We also discussed the role we play in protecting consumers trying to cope with the cost of living crisis and Ms Hyslop advised that this may be of interest to the committee and suggested that we bring it to your attention.

One of the central duties of Trading Standards is the traditional role of weights and measures inspectors, ensuring that buyers – both consumers and businesses - get the quantity of goods declared, and are charged the correct price for it. Typical examples are motor fuel at filling stations, food in supermarkets and lorryloads of aggregates at quarries.

Reacting quickly to the sudden but very serious increase in the cost of energy, Trading Standards in Scotland has three current initiatives to help consumers and businesses:

- With a keen eye on the dramatically increasing cost of fuel, SCOTSS is leading an initiative to test petrol and diesel pumps at filling stations in Scotland to make sure they are accurate in terms of the quantity delivered and the price charged at the kiosk. Even small discrepancies in these instruments can cause significant unfairness to motorists and commercial drivers with fuel prices so high.

- With a similar eye on the cost of home heating oil, which has increased very significantly since the war in Ukraine began, Trading Standards is prioritising rigorous tests on the metering systems on tanker lorries which deliver heating oil. Again, the aim is to ensure that they are accurate in terms of quantity delivered and price charged.
- In a connected piece of work, Trading Standards officers are engaging with oil companies to ensure that prices are quoted and communicated to consumers in a fair manner, enabling householders to “shop around” and organise their finances. While we accept that price volatility makes it difficult for companies to provide price information in the same way as they did before the crisis, it is vital that buyers are fully aware of the price to be paid before they commit to purchase heating oil.

It is likely that Trading Standards is better known for some of our other work, which tends to be high profile during normal economic times, such as combatting scams, dealing with unsafe goods and tackling the supply of fake products. But recent events have shown that our more traditional compliance work is equally vital to providing fairness for consumers and reputable businesses, especially in challenging economic times. If Trading Standards do not do this work, problems arise. An example of this from the Covid period was over weighbridges, large industrial weighing machines which weigh lorries at quarries, factories, sawmills and similar industrial sites, and affect millions of pounds worth of transactions every day in Scotland. Covid safety restrictions prevented tests being carried out for some time and when Trading Standards officers returned to testing, many more errors than usual were discovered.

We would be very happy to provide more information for you on the activities mentioned in this letter, or of any other Trading Standards work in which you may be interested. For example, we could update you on the progress of this work outlined above. Please contact me if I can help in any way.

Yours sincerely

**David MacKenzie**  
**Chair SCOTSS**

The Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland (SCOTSS), is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SC047951). Our members are professional trading standards managers representing every Scottish local authority trading standards service.