

Dear Prime Minister,

The Safeguarding Our Standards campaign has been established by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) in response to the Government's proposed Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill. The announcement of the Bill on 23 September has sparked widespread concern among consumer protection experts, including members of the Trading Standards profession who are responsible for upholding and enforcing legislation designed to safeguard consumers, legitimate businesses and the economy.

Safeguarding Our Standards comprises a coalition of organisations and individuals with an interest in maintaining the protections that the people of the United Kingdom have benefited from for years. Rushing through legislation which could undermine these protections would have potentially disastrous consequences, and could ultimately put lives at risk.

Consumer protections underpin so many aspects of our society and economy including food safety, product safety, animal welfare and consumer rights. These protections are there to protect us all – and can help to contain outbreaks of disease in animal livestock; prevent people from being ripped off by rogue traders, scammers and illegal money lenders; and ultimately help to maintain consumer confidence in businesses and the quality and fair pricing of the goods we all buy.

Many of the pieces of legislation upon which Trading Standards Officers rely every day – as well as other crucial legislation that protects the environment, the rights of workers and public health – will be directly affected by the proposed Bill.

Under the Government's proposed timetable, thousands of pieces of complex and vitally important legislation will need to be reviewed, rewritten – and, potentially, scrapped – in a little over a year. Mistakes, omissions and contradictions are inevitable.

It was previously estimated that some 2,400 separate pieces of legislation would be affected by the Bill. It has since emerged that a further 1,400 laws will fall within its purview. The haste with which the Bill was seemingly conceived, as well as the speed by which it will need to be finalised if it is to meet its proposed deadline of 31 December 2023, raises very serious concerns. Even with a possible extension to 2026, this doesn't give a huge amount of time for scrutiny, particularly with a General Election which will also have an impact on the Parliamentary timetable afforded to consider the legislation.

As the country wrestles with a cost-of-living crisis which every day brings increasing levels of consumer harm, rushing to scrap the very laws which serve as a bulwark against the rising tide of threats seems at best short-sighted and, at worst, recklessly irresponsible.

We are writing to express our deep concerns that in its current form, the Retained EU Law Bill could cause serious harm to the people, businesses, environment and economy of the UK.

We are calling on the Government to amend its timetable for the implementation of the Retained EU Law Bill, and suggest a phased timetable with targets for specific areas of legislation.

We would also call on the Government to give a cast-iron guarantee that UK consumers will be no worse off if the Bill is introduced, with the highest standards for food, the safety of the products we use and the protections that safeguard so many of us being maintained.

We recognise the opportunities that reviewing legislation can bring and we appreciate that there are areas where divergence from EU law could benefit the UK. There is certainly potential to modernise and improve several aspects of consumer protection law. However, undertaking such a massive project, particularly during such a turbulent period, will require an appropriate amount of time and deliberation – otherwise it may end up doing more harm than good.



Including CTSI Vice Presidents: Baroness Christine Crawley, Alma Williams, Richard Thomas CBE, Paul Allen, Ron Gainsford and Robert Wright.