

**NATIONAL  
TRADING  
STANDARDS**

Protecting Consumers  
Safeguarding Businesses

# **ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2019-2020**

## Foreword

I am pleased to present the National Trading Standards (NTS) Business Plan for 2019/20. NTS has been in operation since 2012. The NTS Board is made up of senior heads of local government Trading Standards from England and Wales with an independent Chair. We aim to protect consumers and safeguard legitimate businesses by tackling serious national and regional consumer protection issues and organised criminality and by providing a “safety net” to limit unsafe consumer goods entering the UK and protecting food supplies by ensuring the animal feed chain is safe.

In addition, the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) funds NTS to provide lead Teams for Estate Agency and Lettings Agency<sup>1</sup> issues. NTS will also complete its programme of work to tackle underage sales of knives, funded by the Home Office. NTS works with other Government partners such as HMRC, the Home Office, DCMS and Defra on specific projects that relate to Trading Standards work, utilising our commissioning model with local authorities.

The BEIS grant is £13.23 million, an increase of £500,000 from last year. We have £2.1 million funding from the FSA to deliver our feed programme, the same level as last year. I am very pleased to say that we have received an increase in funding from MHCLG to £560,000 an increase of 68% for Estate Agency work and £300,000 for lettings.

I have no doubt that 2019/20 will continue to be a challenging year for NTS. We will be working with partners to address any issues arising from EU Exit. We are looking forward to the expected Consumer White Paper and the potential changes that may bring for NTS. We also fully recognise the ongoing problem with stretched resources in local authorities meaning increased demand and expectations of NTS. I would like to extend my thanks to all those organisations and individuals, and in particular to the local authorities, that NTS has worked with, for all their support.



Lord Toby Harris  
Chair

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<sup>1</sup> Assuming relevant legislation is passed by the House.

## Strategic Objectives

Our strategic objectives remain similar to those in 2018/19, as they were all long term objectives and functions of NTS. The underpinning activities for each objective change as progress is made.

Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3	Objective 4	Objective 5
Provide a framework for the effective sharing of intelligence in order to identify and tackle emerging threats, and support Trading Standards across England and Wales.	Ensure effective delivery and coordination of enforcement in relation to serious consumer protection crime (including eCrime and business to business fraud) and mass marketing scams.	Provide and coordinate a network of controls at key border points to identify and tackle the importation of unsafe consumer goods and animal feed.	Deliver a programme of animal feed hygiene enforcement to help ensure the safety of the food chain and protect the UK export market.	To deliver a programme of national enforcement, advice and support for local authorities in relation to the property market, in particular the activities of Estate and Lettings Agents

**Figure 1 – Strategic Objectives 2019-20**

All work is underpinned with effective governance arrangements, which also enable us to demonstrate the importance and effectiveness of NTS to our partners and to Government. This will include:

- Engaging effectively with Government to influence them and raise the profile of the work of Trading Standards and to offer the NTS model for the commissioning of those elements of Trading Standards' work that are best delivered regionally and nationally.
- Working closely with the Local Government and Welsh Local Government Associations to ensure we support their activities where appropriate and to reinforce the message that NTS does not affect the local democratic accountability for local Trading Standards services.

- Ensuring very close working relationships with regional Trading Standards groups who are crucial to the success of NTS' work.
- Maximising the support for and benefits of membership of the Consumer Protection Partnership (CPP).
- Creating a comprehensive national picture of the achievements of NTS and communicating these effectively.
- Providing appropriate access to NTS' information via a public website and via a secure website for local authority officers.
- Being open to scrutiny via agreed mechanisms and reporting against agreed performance outcomes that are set by our funding partners.
- Being responsive to external factors when developing policy and approach.

NTS welcomes the 2018 Serious and Organised Crime Strategy. NTS will continue to work with the Government, law enforcement and other agencies to help protect consumers and businesses (following the '4Ps' framework of Prepare, Protect, Prevent and Pursue).'

A national Strategic Assessment was undertaken and using the evidence provided from that, and the work specifically commissioned by Government, the Board agreed that key priorities for 2019/20 would be:

- Doorstep Crime
- Fair Trading issues
- Mass Marketing Scams
- Product Safety at Ports and Borders
- Intellectual Property
- Integrity of the food chain by ensuring the safety of animal feed
- Estate Agents and Lettings Agents regulation
- Tackling underage sales of knives

Detailed actions to address the priorities are contained in our National Control Strategy which determines how NTS funds will be allocated to deliver specific outcomes and activities.

For 2019/20, the Office for Product Safety and Standards has taken the functions of providing referrals to NTS Ports and Borders Team in house and amalgamated it with their other safety related intelligence functions. NTS will continue to provide the operational Ports and Borders Teams this year. All other tasking of work, where the core purpose relates to product safety, is now the responsibility of OPSS and now falls outside the scope of the NTS grant.

A full breakdown of funding is shown in Annex 1.

NTS hopes the National Strategic Assessment and Control Strategy will assist Regional Trading Standards Groups and local authorities when they are determining their own priority areas for the year.

NTS will respond positively wherever appropriate, to requests from Government Departments and Agencies should they want new areas of Trading Standards related work undertaken and where the NTS model would be effective.

Whilst NTS operates in England and Wales, we will continue to work with our counterparts in Northern Ireland and Scotland and with other enforcement partners across the UK to ensure that the consumer protection regime is as effective as it can be.

We have developed a series of objectives that underpin our 5 strategic objectives.

## **Objective 1 - Provide a framework for the effective sharing of intelligence in order to identify and tackle emerging threats, and support Trading Standards across England and Wales.**

We will do this by:

- Making informed decisions by capturing, analysing and using all the information and intelligence that is available to us and promoting the use of the Intelligence Operating Model, nationally regionally and locally.
- Actively share intelligence sharing with CPP and other partners.
- Ensuring that information sharing is carried out in accordance with the expedited processes agreed for CPP partners to monitor EU Exit related matters.
- Identifying emerging threats and gaps in consumer protection enforcement and work with partners to address them.
- Providing an NTS intelligence network that includes our National Intelligence Team, a network of Regional Intelligence Analysts and ensuring each local authority can have direct access to a Trading Standards intelligence database.
- Use the intelligence provided by OPSS to inform work at Ports and Borders.
- Producing a National Strategic Assessment and Control Strategy ready to be used to plan NTS' work for 2020-21.
- Ensure NTS Teams and regions can access the Police National Database.
- Use Organise Crime Group's mapping to effectively target and tackle criminals engaged in consumer protection crime.

## **Objective 2 - Ensure effective delivery and coordination of enforcement in relation to serious consumer protection crime (including eCrime and business to business fraud) and mass marketing scams.**

We will do this by:

- Providing a network of NTS Regional Investigation Teams and resourcing other enforcement activities to tackle regional and national consumer and business detriment and ensuring those engaged in criminal activities are punished and/or their activities disrupted.
- To support a programme of enforcement activities in relation to used cars, energy scams, supply of illicit goods in key markets, and doorstep crime.

- In partnership with the Intellectual Property Office, to undertake research into the volume and type of counterfeit goods available in key markets.
- Providing a NTS eCrime Team to tackle consumer and business detriment caused by eCrime, in particular carrying taking down unlawful websites.
- Working with the CMA on issues relating to the secondary ticket market with a focus on key high volume sellers.
- Providing national expertise in the investigation and prevention of eCrime and a national digital forensic capability to support trading standards related cybercrime enforcement.
- Develop options for increasing the capacity at local level to undertake e-crime related investigations.
- Providing a NTS Scams Team to tackle consumer detriment caused by mass-marketing scams by working with local authorities and other partners to support safeguarding of victims and to disrupt the supply of scam mail.
- Expand the “Friends Against Scams” initiative.
- Progressing the Home Office Joint Fraud Task Force, Victims and Susceptibility work to improve practices amongst financial institutions, law enforcement and Government to better protect those most vulnerable to becoming fraud victims.
- Providing an NTS Estate and Lettings Agency Team to fulfil the statutory functions under the Estate Agents Act 1979 and to tackle consumer and business detriment caused by unacceptable practices in the sector.
- Providing the Advertising Standards Authority with a backstop enforcement regime to ensure the continued success of their self-regulation model.
- Supporting the regional Trading Standards’ infrastructure to enable them to co-ordinate Trading Standards’ activities at a regional level.

### **Objective 3 - Provide and coordinate a network of controls at key border points to identify and tackle the importation of unsafe consumer goods and animal feed.**

We will do this by:

- Providing resources at key ports to prevent consumer and business detriment by reducing the amount of unsafe and non-compliant consumer goods entering the UK market.
- Providing resources at key ports to protect the integrity of the food chain by undertaking surveillance on the quality and safety of imported animal feed.

## **Objective 4 - Deliver a programme of animal feed hygiene enforcement to help ensure the safety of the food chain and protect the UK export market.**

We will do this by:

- Overseeing a programme of animal feed inspections and sampling to ensure compliance with standards across the animal feed supply chain.
- Overseeing the collection and analysis of compliance data from feed and official controls to support the FSA assessment of the effectiveness of the control system.
- Supporting local authority expert panels on feed to develop guidance and help ensure consistency and best practice in feed enforcement.
- Deliver a number of improvement and intelligence projects to support the FSAs policy aims.

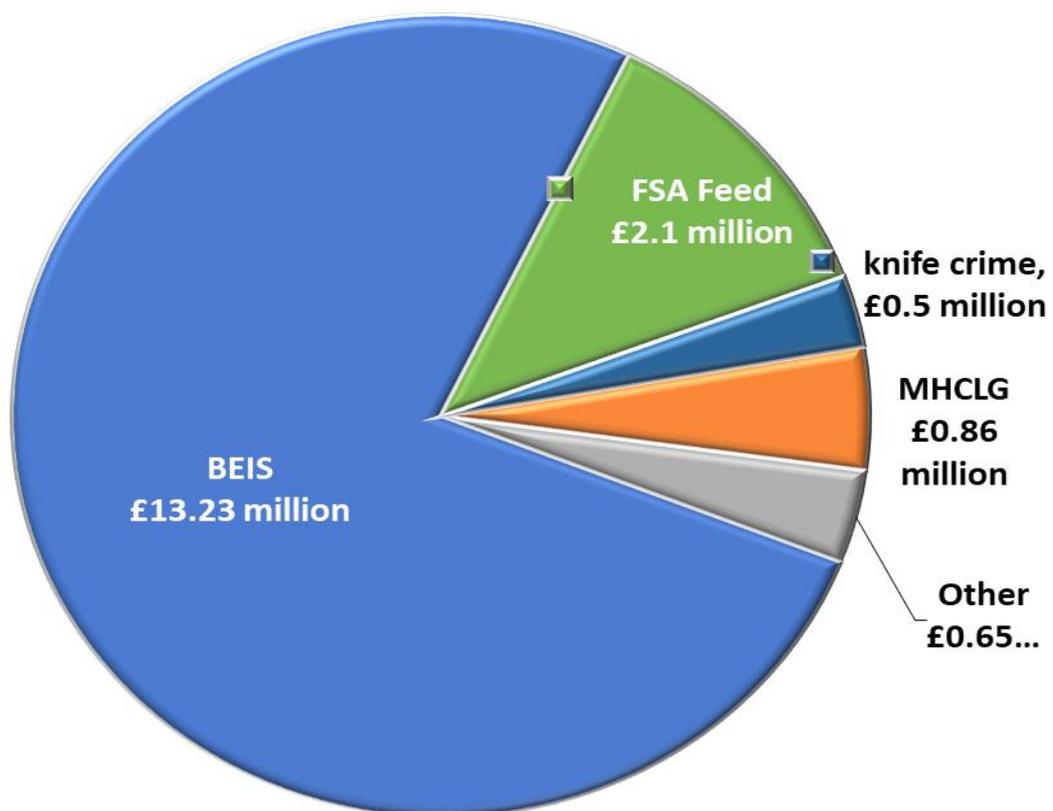
## **Objective 5 - to deliver a programme of national enforcement, advice and support for local authorities in relation to the property market, in particular the activities of Estate and Lettings Agents**

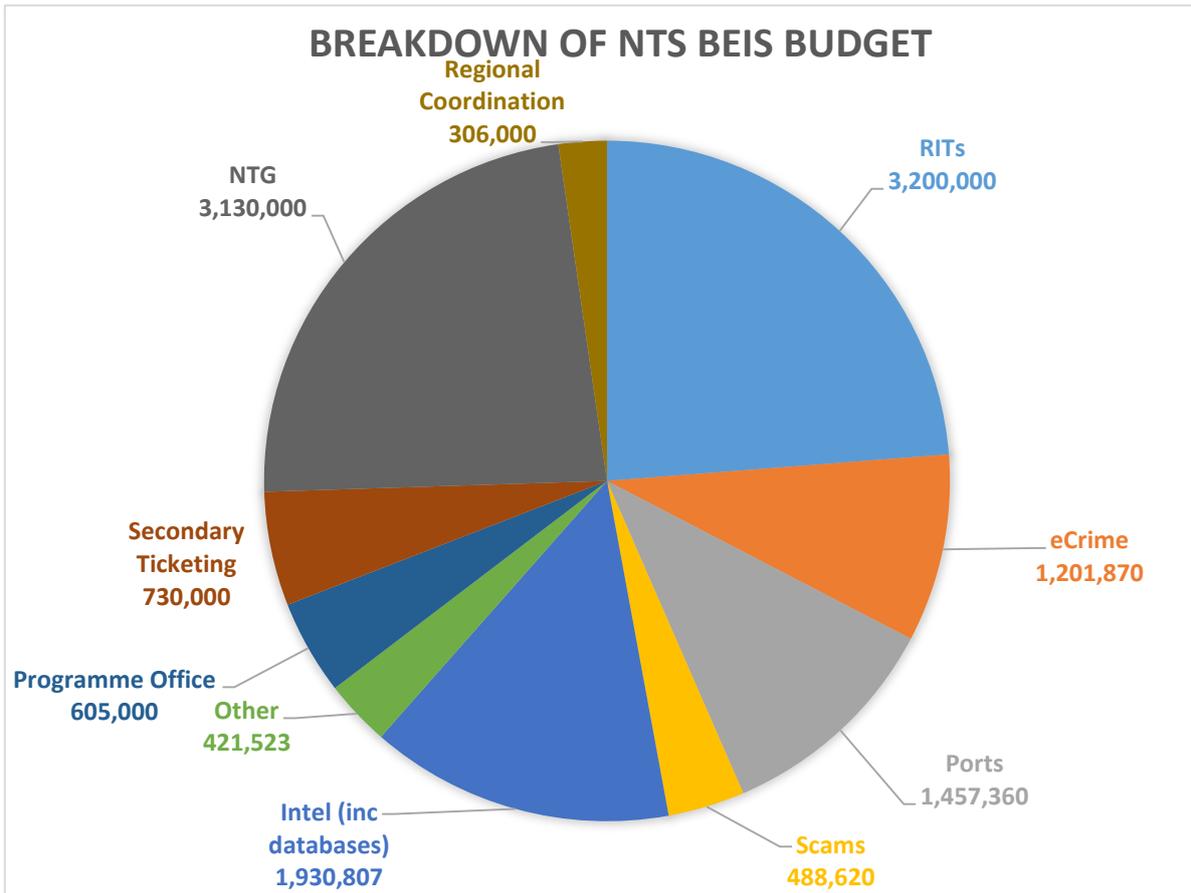
We will do this by: -

- Providing NTS Teams to provide support and advice to local authorities in relation to this work.
- Ensuring the fulfilment of statutory obligations under the Estate Agents Act
- Work with the Estate and Lettings Agents Industries to improve standards in the sectors.
- To take enforcement action where required to tackle serious consumer and business detriment in this sector.
- To provide a programme of training to local authorities.

## ANNEX 1 – FUNDING

Overall Funding to National Trading Standards 2019/20





It should be noted that the Board has overallocated the BEIS budget by 2%.

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