

Business and Trade Committee

Oral evidence: Consumer protection, HC 130

Tuesday 23 June 2026

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Members present: Liam Byrne (Chair); Antonia Bance; Chris Bloore; John Cooper; Sarah Edwards; Alison Griffiths; Justin Madders; Charlie Maynard; Mr Joshua Reynolds.

Questions 105 - 167

Witnesses

[II](#): Dr Thomas Bell, UK Lead for Product Safety External Relations, Amazon; Leonard Klenner, Executive Assistant for Corporate Affairs, Temu; Wolfgang Weber, Associate General Counsel, Regulatory and Criminal Investigations, eBay.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Thomas Bell, Leonard Klenner and Wolfgang Weber.

Chair: Welcome to this second panel in today's hearing on consumer affairs. Thank you very much indeed to our witnesses for coming along to talk to us this afternoon. We have not been able to bring together every online marketplace in the country, but we are grateful to you for sparing us this afternoon.

Q105 **Alison Griffiths:** I want to get some facts on the table as we kick off, so I am going to ask the same question of each of you. I will go sequentially down the line, starting with Wolfgang from eBay. How many products are currently for sale on your marketplace, and what systems do you have in place to monitor their safety?

Wolfgang Weber: I am happy to provide more information, particularly after the interesting session we had before. There are more than 2.5 billion listings live on the eBay site at any given time. When it comes to product safety in particular, our approach is not only about technology, but about policy.

Let me explain the background. I joined eBay in 2003, and I am in charge of regulatory issues, including working with law enforcement. I have had a global role in this area since 2010. When I took over this position in 2010, product safety was already a huge concern, and the key question was how we could address these issues effectively and efficiently while managing a global marketplace. Our first step was to decide if any of our partner regulators, such as the ACCC, which was mentioned before, or the CPSC, and the US, EU Commission and German product safety authorities—

Alison Griffiths: We have a lot of questions to get through, so I will ask very specific questions to set the framework. I am asking you specifically about the systems you have in place to monitor safety. I would also be interested to know the number of people employed in your product safety teams and your total spend on these systems. We are trying to get facts rather than narratives at this stage.

Wolfgang Weber: The fact I wanted to share is that we ban products globally. For example, if we get to know from the OPSS that a product is unsafe, we do not only ban it in the UK; we will also ban it in Australia, for example. That makes a huge difference. Only last month the ACCC banned a product that the OPSS told us about in 2022.

Q106 **Alison Griffiths:** Were there systems in place to identify this product? I hate to say it, but I would strongly expect that if you found something that was not compliant, you would ban it completely.

Wolfgang Weber: Yes, we have systems in place. As was mentioned before, we are using AI to identify unsafe products. The AI and algorithms are looking for unsafe products that are listed in the OPSS



database. We are looking not only at that database, but at the CPSC, OECD, and EU Commission databases as well, and that adds up to roughly 80,000 known unsafe products that we are monitoring. We are preventing listings being sold; our algorithms caught 21 million listings potentially offering unsafe products in the last year.

Q107 **Chair:** How many people are working on safety, and what is the budget for those people?

Wolfgang Weber: I do not have the budget or the number at hand; it is a metrics organisation with many teams involved. I am part of the legal team, but this is not only about the legal team; it is about the compliance team and the product team. These teams work cross-functionally, so it is hard to provide a concrete number—I am sorry.

Q108 **Alison Griffiths:** There has to be one owner. You will have heard in the previous session that people with much smaller budgets are able to identify products that have slipped through the net. Whoever is responsible for this globally should consider that.

Wolfgang Weber: I was on the panel at the OPSS security conference earlier this year with someone from Which? and they mentioned their AI efforts to identify listings. I felt this was important, relevant information, and a little disturbing, so we followed up with Which? and the team. It said it had found similar products to those that were likely to be unsafe. That is the key question; if something is similar to a known unsafe product, it does not mean it is the same product. When we take down listings, we take down identical listings, but when it comes to similar products, we have a process in place that we call the CE audit programme. In those cases, we contact the seller and request that they provide us with the safety documentation. If they do not provide that information within two weeks, the listing is removed.

Q109 **Alison Griffiths:** Mr Klenner, could you answer the same question for Temu? How many products are currently on sale on its marketplace? What systems does it have in place to monitor their safety? How many people are employed in its product safety team, and what is the total spend on these systems?

Leonard Klenner: Temu is an international marketplace that connects consumers with traders. A UK consumer coming to our site would find hundreds of thousands of active product listings being sold by over 100,000 traders, thousands of whom come from the UK.

Q110 **Alison Griffiths:** Are you able to share specific numbers with us after the Committee concludes?

Leonard Klenner: Yes, I would be happy to do that. Our approach to compliance begins with digital control through trader onboarding and product listing processes. What sets us apart are the physical checks that we have instituted. We carry out systematic inspections of physical products in warehouses. In addition, laboratory tests are performed on



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those products in our in-house laboratories, as well as in conjunction with external partners. This way, throughout our compliance process, we do not need to rely on digital information alone.

With regard to the figures you asked about, an important metric to share is that our efforts are resourced through a team of over 4,000 content moderators who support our in-house teams in areas such as trust, safety and platform governance, which is a significant spend for our company. I do not have a specific figure at hand.

Q111 **Alison Griffiths:** Are you able to share that after the Committee concludes?

Leonard Klenner: Absolutely.

Q112 **Alison Griffiths:** Thank you. Tom from Amazon, could you share the same information?

Dr Bell: I have been in product safety for over a decade, so it really is a privilege to talk about this. In terms of numbers, we have over 250 million products on our UK store at any one time. We spend around \$1 billion globally on product safety and on preventing forms of abuse, such as anti-counterfeit and scam prevention. We employ thousands of people, including scientists such as myself, investigators, risk managers and so on. In terms of controls, we strongly believe that proactive up-front controls—before a customer can ever purchase a product—are a top priority. We do that initially through seller verification, and 100% of our third-party sellers go through that process.

Q113 **Alison Griffiths:** So, 100% of your sellers would get caught if they did not—

Dr Bell: Of our third-party sellers, yes. They go through a process, and actually, half a million bad actors did not get through our seller verification process last year. We look at things such as ID and business information. For reference, around 100,000 legitimate small and medium UK businesses sell on Amazon.

Q114 **Alison Griffiths:** If you purchase from a foreign seller and have not been able to find their details, do you assume the best or the worst?

Dr Bell: This is very much about ensuring that bad actors do not get on our store, while allowing legitimate sellers through. That is why we look at the data up front; it is very much a safety-first approach, because safety is obviously a priority for our customers.

Q115 **Alison Griffiths:** So, if you cannot find information about a potential seller, you do not let them on the site?

Dr Bell: Yes. We need to be confident in the sellers we have on our store. After seller verification, we offer education to our sellers about the latest regulatory standards they must comply with to sell in the UK. We also work with partners such as Electrical Safety First. It provided us with



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useful information so that we could educate our sellers in China; we also work with others on that.

For high-risk product categories—by that I mean e-mobility products, carbon monoxide alarms, toys, batteries and so on—at the product level, we ask for compliance documentation up front from laboratories before the seller can list. Apart from entry, we continue to monitor our store as we go through. We have around 90 million customer interactions a week, either through our customer service centre or on our listings page, where customers can enter information. They have a dropdown if they think an item is unsafe or they have concerns. So, we have that mechanism, and we also have our own data that we are constantly looking at automatically in the background as well.

Q116 Alison Griffiths: Turning to the metrics, you have talked about the number of people. Do you have details of the total spend on these systems, both in the UK and globally?

Dr Bell: Globally, we spend around \$1 billion on these systems.

Q117 Alison Griffiths: Do you have UK data?

Dr Bell: I do not, unfortunately. Product safety is a global issue, so a lot of the concerns are global. The bad actors are often global, so we very much look at this with a global approach.

Q118 Mr Reynolds: Wolfgang, you said earlier that if eBay gets a notification from the OPSS about banned products, it will stop them. However, in 2022, the Office for Product Safety recalled a plug-in 500-watt heater, very similar to ones I have a picture of here. You have been selling them on your website multiple times over the last several years, to the point that Which? managed to successfully list some itself. When Which? told you about this, you took that specific product down. But I went on to eBay last night, and I found nine identical products to that heater, all banned in the UK. I bought four of them. You have said that if you get a notification, you will stop the product, so why could I buy four of them last night?

Wolfgang Weber: I am very sorry to hear this. One unsafe product is one too many.

Chair: There were four of them.

Q119 Mr Reynolds: I bought four, and there are nine examples on your website—there were many more.

Wolfgang Weber: I would like to follow up on these concrete cases and see why we have not detected them. We are constantly improving our detection.

Mr Reynolds: But if I can detect this via 30 seconds of Googling, why can eBay, with all its resources, not detect this itself?



Wolfgang Weber: We are detecting things. As I mentioned, we are blocking; last year, we blocked 21 million cases where sellers tried to list unsafe products. That is happening in the background. If we block a listing, it will not be seen by the public, and that is why we are publishing these metrics. A total of 244 million listings for prohibited items are blocked per year, so these are enormous efforts. The problem with unsafe products is that often it is not about the branded product; it is about unbranded products. The heater you just showed is probably not a branded product; they are very hard to detect and to distinguish.

Q120 **Mr Reynolds:** They are not that hard to detect. There is a very simple piece of AI software, that Which? spoke about earlier, where you can do a reverse Google image search. That is how I found them. If, as a member of the public, I can find a product that the safety standards say is a fire risk, with a risk of shocks and burns, and not compliant with UK electrical safety standards, why can't you?

Wolfgang Weber: We are finding them. The challenge with these products is to identify what is the known unsafe product that is listed in the OPSS database and what is only a similar product. We cannot simply take down a similar product because then the seller would say, "Why are you taking down my product?" We are talking about small and medium businesses. We do not take this lightly. Of course, if there is enough evidence that a product is unsafe and we have identified it, we block it or take it down later when we have heard that information.

Mr Reynolds: I am not sure that the Committee is convinced by that.

Q121 **Chair:** Mr Weber, let me just check something. You are taking down 21 million items, and you are listing 2.5 billion. The implication is that 99.2% of items that are listed on eBay are good and you are asking us to believe that 0.84% of items listed are bad. That just does not sound credible.

Wolfgang Weber: My metric is 98.2%. I am not saying that the 98.2% are automatically good, but in terms of filter technology, we have identified unsafe products that are true positives, and those have been blocked. It might be that there are products in other listings that we have not identified yet, but that is definitely where we constantly want to improve our systems. It is the right thing to do, but it is also in our business interests, because eBay needs to provide its users with a safe place to shop. If we fail here, consumers will lose trust in the eBay marketplace and go elsewhere.

Q122 **Chair:** If you are making \$2 billion net profit a year, are you asking us to believe that you are spending the right fraction of your profits on product safety?

Wolfgang Weber: Maybe it would help if I referred to the conversation I had with Which? on its investigation. It used Google Lens, which is AI.

Q123 **Chair:** I am asking you a different question. Do you think that eBay is spending enough on policing product safety on your platform today?



Wolfgang Weber: It is not a question of spending. It is a question of implementing the right technology. AI can only be as good as the prompts, the systems and the modelling. If we are not looking for the right things, we cannot find them. That is not only a question of investment, but about applying technology rightly. There is a lot of promise in AI, and that is a huge step change: now we can do image detection, native language processing, natural language processing and things such as that. That has huge advantages, but it still requires a lot of intelligence and background. That is why we are working closely with OPSS, ACCC and other regulators to get this intelligence.

Q124 **Mr Reynolds:** I want to move on to a different product. It is a power-saving device that, again, was the subject of a Which? investigation in 2025. You plug it into your wall and it is meant to save you electricity by regulating the current. That means absolutely nothing; it does not work—it is completely fake. The product description is, “White energy-saving UK plug-in device with bright green strip at the bottom.”

In the end, you took that product down. However, I went on eBay last night and found another eight of the exact same power-saving strips that do not do anything. They are completely pointless, but they are scamming people out of their money, and they are dangerous to the public. I bought another four on your website. How is it possible to buy products that you know are completely fake and a fire risk?

Wolfgang Weber: I am sorry to hear that; our detection obviously had a gap there.

Q125 **Mr Reynolds:** There have been two such gaps in the two products I looked at. That is a 100% failure rate so far, from my understanding.

Wolfgang Weber: I am very sorry about these cases, but, looking at the total universe of more than 80,000 unsafe products that we are monitoring out there, they are not representative of our efforts.

Q126 **Mr Reynolds:** By the end of the week, will you be able to pledge to this Committee that there will be no more power-saving devices that do not work and dangerous heaters on eBay?

Wolfgang Weber: I pledge to increase our efforts, but eBay is a third-party marketplace. Sellers create their item description, and they can create a description that they best think will sell their products.

Q127 **Mr Reynolds:** It is not about whether it is best or not. These are fake products; they do not work.

Wolfgang Weber: That is correct, but because the sellers are not listing against a catalogue, it is not easy to simply de-list an item. We need to understand first what the seller is listing, and secondly whether it is prohibited or not. Technology-wise, that is a challenge. I promise that we will further tighten our efforts here, but there is no such thing as a hit rate. Even if you apply a filter or do a search on the search engine, you will never have a 100% hit rate. It is a technology that requires you to



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scale down your search. If you narrow it down, you might miss items, but if you do not narrow it down, you will have too many false positives and too many dolphins in the net, if that makes sense.

Q128 Mr Reynolds: Tom, here is the same product from the Which? website on Amazon. It is apparently endorsed by Elon Musk, but he has never endorsed these products. Here is an example of exactly the same product that I bought on Amazon yesterday. How can I buy these fake products on your website too?

Dr Bell: Please send those directly to me afterwards, and I will get the team to investigate them immediately. We have controls in place to prevent listings where the claims are not substantiated, such as in this case, or—for example—with eco claims. These two items appear to have slipped through that net. If you can send them to me immediately afterwards, we will investigate.

Q129 Mr Reynolds: That does not really answer my question. How have they slipped through your very sophisticated net?

Dr Bell: No system is perfect: we understand that, but it does not mean that we do not keep learning and improving our systems. Every example such as this goes back into our product controls up front, because ultimately this is about stopping dangerous or unsafe products reaching consumers. With anything such as this, send it directly to me and we will take immediate action on it.

Q130 Mr Reynolds: Will you be able to pledge that once I have sent this to you, you will not have any more of these voltage control things that do not work and dodgy heaters listed on Amazon by the end of the week?

Dr Bell: Yes, we will investigate immediately.

Q131 Antonia Bance: Mr Klenner, you were in the audience for the previous panel. You will have heard Mr Mackay from Electrical Safety First say that this morning, his team found a three-in-one floor fan with water and electricity too close to one another at a 220 voltage that was not compliant with British safety standards. It has now sold out; thousands of British families have bought this product from your online marketplace. How are you going to tell these families that they have bought a dangerous product?

Leonard Klenner: I heard the concerning statements about that product from the representative earlier. If we identify a product that is unsafe on our site, we will initiate recall procedures. The product will be removed from our site, and we will notify consumers that it is unsafe and needs to be disposed of. Consumers will be refunded and we will use the information from that product to strengthen our proactive monitoring. As I mentioned, we want to prevent these listings being made available on our site from the get-go.

Q132 Antonia Bance: So you will tell everyone who has bought it that you are



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removing it from sale and that it was dangerous—is that what I hear from you?

Leonard Klenner: Yes, that is our standard procedure. If we confirm that a product is unsafe, of course we will step in to initiate recall procedures. The product will be removed from the site, and consumers will be notified and instructed to dispose of the product.

Q133 **Antonia Bance:** What happens to the untrustworthy seller who cannot be trusted to sell products appropriate for the British market? Do they stay on your site selling other untrustworthy products?

Leonard Klenner: We do not want untrustworthy, non-compliant sellers on our site, so we have a system in place to hold sellers accountable. If we find sellers repeatedly selling non-compliant products, we remove them and add them to a blacklist. That blacklist contains not just the seller's store name, but the identity information of the key legal representatives. It contains business registration, documentation and other information. Every time a new trader seeks to onboard on to our site, we screen that trader's onboarding application—which, again, contains legal information, business registration documents and financial information—against the information that is in the blacklist. If we identify a match, we block that trader and prevent them from re-onboarding on to our site because we do not want these bad actors on our platform.

Q134 **Antonia Bance:** Dr Bell, the British Safety Industry Federation says that 82% of PPE from non-registered suppliers fails safety and compliance tests. We are talking about safety helmets that fail impact tests and fire-retardant clothing that is nothing of the sort. They say that the online marketplaces are a significant route for unsafe and falsely certificated items to get to UK customers. What steps are you taking to prevent the sale of non-compliant or even dangerous PPE on your platform?

Dr Bell: We have proactive controls in place. We offer documentation for PPE, ladders and the like. When anything is reported to us, we investigate and take action against the sellers. Every seller has an account health rating at Amazon. That can be impacted by minor policy errors or by abuse and things such as that. They are then taken off the store. We investigate, take down the store and then look at the proactive controls on PPE.

Q135 **Antonia Bance:** What proportion of PPE listings are checked for valid certificates before they are on your platform? How do you verify that documents and CE markings are genuine? Will you meet your new responsibilities under the Product Regulation and Metrology Act?

Dr Bell: I will have to take the question about PPE away as I am not familiar with that area.

In terms of responsibilities, we believe that every actor in the value chain has responsibilities. Amazon is a store. We sell our own products directly, and we are then the retailer and have full current legal liability. For third-



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party listings, we are neither the manufacturer nor the importer, so we do not fall within that legal category. However, we take our responsibilities incredibly seriously.

As I said at the start, we already vet our sellers, and that is in the new proposal. We have compliance checks for high-risk products. If I may give an example, we recently strengthened compliance for toys. In the past, compliance documentation was sent to us, and our teams checked it. Now that we work with third-party test labs, the compliance documentation goes to them, and they do the testing and let us know if the toy complies with the requirements. It is an extra-strengthened test across the whole toy category, and we are widening these extra-strengthened checks across other categories.

Q136 **Antonia Bance:** Is PPE a high-risk product on your marketplace?

Dr Bell: I will take that back and look into it.

Q137 **Antonia Bance:** Will you write to the Committee to tell us exactly how you check that PPE documentation and certification is genuine? I am tired of tradespeople coming to me about faulty, unsafe PPE.

Dr Bell: We will come back to you on PPE.

Q138 **Antonia Bance:** If Amazon is serious about product safety, why will you not recognise the GMB Union at BHX4 Coventry so that workers can raise concerns about unsafe or non-compliant goods on sale in your marketplace without fear or disadvantage?

Dr Bell: I am here as a product safety expert today. We take what happens in our performance centres incredibly seriously, including the safety of our staff. Again, I will have to take that specific point away and come back to you, if that is helpful.

Q139 **Antonia Bance:** Amazon representatives should know that if they are coming before this Committee, they need to answer why they do not recognise a union at their warehouses.

Chair: That is a question we will pursue when we visit Amazon's warehouses in the midlands on 16 September.

Dr Bell: Of course; we are looking forward to you attending.

Q140 **Chris Bloore:** Mr Klenner, you have recently been fined €200 million for selling illegal goods to EU consumers, breaking the record €120 million for Mr Musk's X. How likely is it that you are doing the same thing in the UK?

Leonard Klenner: We share the objectives of the Digital Services Act. Beyond our legal requirements, we want to protect consumers proactively. With regard to this decision, as you can imagine, we are reviewing it carefully at the moment and considering our options. We may disagree with the specific decision, but we agree with the broader



point of ensuring that consumers are safe when they shop online, and we are taking proactive steps towards that goal.

Q141 **Chris Bloore:** To follow-up on that question, why do you think so many vendors selling counterfeit and dangerous products choose to use Temu to sell those products? Are you unlucky, or do you think those vendors have decided that your safeguards are not fit for purpose?

Leonard Klenner: I do not think that is an accurate characterisation of our platform. Let me take the opportunity to explain our standard marketplace compliance processes, and where we go beyond what is expected of marketplaces. We have trader onboarding processes in place—as I described earlier—to verify and ensure that only trustworthy traders are allowed to do business on our site.

Separately, before any product listing goes live, we have a dedicated product listing process. As part of that, we require compliance-related information and product-related information from the trader. That happens in the digital realm, and it is what you will see many other marketplaces doing as well. However, we have taken this one step further into the physical area: we are conducting physical inspections on the products as they go through the warehouses to ensure that there is a consistency between the digital information submitted to us by the trader and the physical product itself. We have augmented this with in-house laboratory checks, as well as laboratory checks performed by our external partners. That last piece is an industry-leading initiative; it is best practice that we have undertaken with significant resources. At the moment, we are in the process of having our in-house laboratories audited to accredited European standards by a third party. Hopefully, this demonstrates our serious approach to protecting consumers online.

Q142 **Chris Bloore:** I read the Temu response to the European Union's fine and review of Temu procedures and of how many European customers were receiving counterfeit or dangerous goods. The Temu response was clear: this investigation was done a couple of years ago when the Temu operation was very different. But I believe it has yet to appeal to the European Commission on the verdict and the fine. Would you not have put an appeal in the next day if you could say, "Well, that's not what we do anymore"? You have listed all the things that you say you are doing now, but why would you not put your appeal in? It has been four or five weeks since the appeal window started. The August deadline is fast approaching. Would you not have put it in straight away and said, "This is absolutely not right, this is not what is happening now"?

Leonard Klenner: Again, we share the objectives of the Digital Services Act, and we want to proactively—

Q143 **Chris Bloore:** With respect, Mr Klenner, I do not have a huge amount of time. If you think that the European Commission decision was, *prima facie*, wrong because it was based on practices that do not exist in your company anymore, why has a strong appeal not yet been made?



Leonard Klenner: There are two points. First, we take the decision very seriously and we are carefully reviewing it. You will understand that this process takes time, and we want to use that time to ensure that we engage in the right way with the European Commission on this important matter.

Secondly, the decision by the Commission refers to an incident that—as you rightly point out—was in the past. Since then, we have taken measures to further strengthen our product compliance measures across many areas, including through the introduction of the best practice that I have described: the physical checks and in-house laboratory tests that we are conducting in the warehouses.

Q144 **Chris Bloore:** I presume you are confirming today that you will definitely put in an appeal.

Leonard Klenner: We are reviewing the decision.

Q145 **Chris Bloore:** But if it is so wrong, surely you would put in an appeal?

Leonard Klenner: We are reviewing the decision, and—

Q146 **Chris Bloore:** That worries me, Mr Klenner. If you are not prepared to defend this in court and say that the decision was incorrect, that implies some of the findings were true. Would you therefore admit that in 2024—when the investigation was taking place—your procedures and your safeguards were not up to much if they failed so drastically as part of that investigation that you have had to change them since?

Leonard Klenner: We have always stood by our compliance processes, and we do that today as well. With regard to the Commission's decision, as I said, we are reviewing it and considering our options. We look forward to continuing our constructive engagement with the Commission on this point and on the Digital Services Act and our obligations under it more broadly.

Q147 **John Cooper:** When Justin Madders—who is on the Committee with us—was the Product Safety Minister, he said he hoped that Government legislation would “establish a level playing field and mean online marketplaces are held to the same high standards as bricks and mortar shops.” That is clearly not the case; there is obviously a gap or disjoint here.

Dr Bell, I will come to you first. It suits you to be a third party where you introduce a buyer to a seller, and the process has nothing to do with you. As long as the transaction goes through, it is caveat emptor—buyer beware. It is up to the buyer to hope that the product is going to be all right. Is that not the case?

Dr Bell: First, we have zero tolerance for unsafe products. I strongly believe that, with my background working for Which? and the OPSS. Secondly, we believe every actor has responsibilities. The primary responsibility needs to sit, we believe, with the manufacturer. They



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design the product, they do the testing and quality checks, and they take corrective actions if required, so we think primary responsibility needs to lie there. But that does not mean that other actors in the supply chain do not have responsibilities: they certainly do. That is why we have seller verification in place and do high-risk controls—those are proactive and up front. When something unfortunately occurs, we react and work with the regulators as well.

Q148 John Cooper: But that is not much help, is it? For instance, toys would not appear to be—prima facie—a high risk, but if a child ends up choking on something that is made unsafely, it is no use saying, “Oh, we’ll react now. We’ll no longer deal with those terrible people.” Should you not be more proactive on this front?

Dr Bell: It is absolutely about proactive controls up front. That is what people expect and it is what our customers expect. That is why, specifically with toys, we have put in these proactive controls, but it is not just about toys. For instance, asbestos in sand is another case where we have proactive controls up front. We scan over 90 recall sites regularly and daily, including the OPSS and the EU. This recall first happened in Australia in November, and we picked it up and acted on it with our customers in the EU and the UK at around that time. That was before the UK regulator—or any European regulators—took action. We can do that because we are a global company. We can pick these things up, and we can act. That was an example of a global issue that I do not think anyone saw coming—it affected the whole market—where we were able to act quickly and speedily and protect our customers.

Q149 John Cooper: Mr Klenner, you say that Temu tests the products. What standards does it apply? Does it apply different standards in different countries? Does it use British standards in Britain and German standards in Germany? How does that work?

Leonard Klenner: Temu uses the applicable standards of the market where the product is sold. Standards in the UK and the European Union are generally harmonised.

Q150 John Cooper: Do you have any details on the scale of this operation? It is phenomenal. There are laboratories testing things that go through the warehouses; it sounds absolutely fantastic.

Leonard Klenner: It is important to consider the full picture. First, the digital controls apply to every trader and every product listing. Secondly, we have physical inspections; those are product inspections, but not laboratory tests. Thirdly, there are laboratory tests that are performed in-house or by accredited partners. It is a graduated approach tailored to addressing specific risks while assuring that compliance is enforced across the board.

Q151 John Cooper: You are an enormous business. How much testing are you doing? How many hundreds of products go through your warehouse? How many are you testing?



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Leonard Klenner: These are standard processes that are integrated into our day-to-day compliance operations. With regard to any specific numbers that we perform in-house at the moment or in conjunction with our external partners, I am happy to get back to you on that point and provide a specific number.

Q152 **John Cooper:** As I say, it sounds fantastic, but what is the reality on the ground? The input is great; the standard procedure is great. But if that applies to only one in 100 products, it is slightly less great, so numbers would be most helpful.

Leonard Klenner: We set this out to be a systematic effort. We put it in place because we saw that historically, one of the drivers of non-compliant products entering the market was a discrepancy between the digital information submitted by traders and the physical characteristics of the product itself. That is a root cause that we want to address, a gap we want to close. We thought the most effective way of doing that would be to institute a physical control layer in the warehouses.

Q153 **John Cooper:** That comes back to my point: if a company in China makes something that runs on a different voltage to the UK, it may declare that to you. How do you test that? Do you test it against the electricity that is going to run through it in the UK or the electricity that is going to run through it in Europe? This country has a different voltage.

Leonard Klenner: Yes, of course. I am happy to look into that incident.

Q154 **John Cooper:** I am not talking about a specific incident. I am talking in general. If a Chinese company says to you, "We've a machine that runs on 220 volts", do you test that against 220 volts and say, "Yes, you have told us exactly what that product does"? In fact, the UK consumer is going to plug it into the wall and get a much higher charge through it, with all the associated risks.

Leonard Klenner: That is understood. Our compliance processes are designed for the market where the products are sold. With regard to your question around how testing through the in-house laboratories works, as I said, we are in the process of having those laboratories audited at the moment to European standards, and that work is ongoing. We expect it to be completed within the course of this year.

Q155 **John Cooper:** Mr Weber—very quickly because time is against us—you are happy, again, to operate different standards from the bricks-and-mortar stores that we have in the UK. If I buy something from a shop here and it goes horribly wrong, I can walk back into that shop—I have protections; I can speak to trading standards. If I buy something from you and it goes horribly wrong, where am I? I do not have those protections. Isn't that right?

Wolfgang Weber: The bricks-and-mortar stores are often eBay sellers as well. Nowadays, small and medium businesses in particular face challenges, and expanding their business online is important. eBay is



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helping to lower the barrier so that those bricks-and-mortar stores can sell online. When it comes to standards, those sellers have to comply with the applicable standards in the UK or wherever they are selling their products. Our UK CA and EU CE audit programmes require sellers to provide us with the CE certificates. If we do not receive the certificates, or if they are fake or the test reports do not fit the certificates, we end the listing.

Q156 **Chair:** The combined profit of the groups in front of us today is about £44 billion a year. Both consumer groups and members of this Committee have found it much too easy to get hold of dangerous goods on your marketplaces. You are obviously under an obligation here in Parliament to tell us the full truth—not to do so would be a contempt of Parliament. Can I start by asking each of you whether you have made estimates of the value of unsafe goods sold through your marketplace? Dr Bell, I will start with you.

Dr Bell: I am not aware of that. As I said, our aim is to have no unsafe products in our store.

Q157 **Chair:** But you have not made estimates of how big a problem this may be?

Dr Bell: Not that I am aware of.

Q158 **Chair:** Okay. Mr Klenner?

Leonard Klenner: I do not have that estimate at hand.

Q159 **Chair:** Do you think an estimate has been made by your company at some point?

Leonard Klenner: I do not believe so. One important point I would mention with regard to the sale of non-compliant products is that, since Temu entered the UK market in April 2023, the OPSS has issued around 2,420 safety alerts. Only eight of those specifically applied to Temu, but this is an issue that we are committed to further addressing on the basis of the compliance requirements.

Q160 **Chair:** But you have not made estimates of the actual value of unsafe goods sold?

Leonard Klenner: We have not.

Q161 **Chair:** Okay. Mr Weber?

Wolfgang Weber: We have not made estimates—at least not that I am aware of. We have the numbers of how many listing efforts we block and prevent, and how many listings we remove. Those are available.

Chair: You will forgive me for saying that this sounds like a case of, “Don’t ask, don’t see any problems.” But let us turn to Sarah Edwards for our second issue: fake reviews.



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Q162 **Sarah Edwards:** This Committee has heard that the cost of detriment to UK consumers is estimated to be around £71 billion. Reviews are a key driver of whether they choose to purchase something—particularly online—and the CMA estimates that £23 billion of consumer spending is influenced by such reviews. That is a lot of money that UK consumers are spending through online marketplaces such as your own.

In the case of TripAdvisor—where 1.3 million reviews were found to be fake in 2022—there is a classic indication of the impact of fake reviews. The Shed at Dulwich blew this apart when it was made the number one restaurant in London purely through fake reviews, so we know how impactful reviews can be. I would like to pick up on the classification of reviews. Dr Bell, can I come to you and clarify a few figures? Did you say that there were 100,000 UK businesses selling on Amazon?

Dr Bell: Small and medium-sized businesses, yes.

Q163 **Sarah Edwards:** Are there others globally that sell on your platform, so that if you are a UK consumer, you can purchase from them?

Dr Bell: There could be others, yes.

Q164 **Sarah Edwards:** Would that be around 281,000 businesses?

Dr Bell: I am not sure.

Q165 **Sarah Edwards:** These figures were online, but you specifically mentioned 100,000. I am particularly interested in the Vine review scheme that Amazon has created and runs. It is a scheme that incentivises reviews; if you are a seller, it costs £140 to send 11 to 30 items to an Amazon customer. They will post a review and get the item for free, so it is an incentivised review. On that basis, if every single one of those 281,000 businesses that are reported to sell with you online chose to send out a small amount of one product for testing, you could make in the region of £40 million. That is a lot of money for incentivised reviews. I wanted to know how Amazon checks that those products are actually being reviewed and that those people are doing a proper job? You are making a lot of money and providing a service for these sellers to potentially create fake reviews.

Dr Bell: I am not aware of that scheme, but I can come back to you afterwards if that would be helpful. In terms of reviews, we were the first retailer back in 1995 to have reviews on our store, both good and bad because that enables the consumer to select. Every single review submitted goes into a holding pattern; it is not published straight away. We have automated controls and humans in the loop who look at those reviews and check whether the seller and customer are connected, whether the person who left the review has purchased recently on Amazon, and things like that. Once we are satisfied, the review goes live. There is also an option for consumers to report a review if they have concerns about it. As I am sure the Committee is aware, recently we have voluntarily worked with the CMA on some undertakings. We are due to report back to it on our progress annually up to, I think, 2028.



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Q166 Sarah Edwards: If you do not have the direct answer, would you be able to write to the Committee afterwards? The important information relates to the number of sellers who participate in that scheme and how much money you are therefore making from it. How many of the consumers on Amazon's platform are Vine reviewers? There is no official figure online, but there are estimated to be between 20,000 and 30,000 people who are potentially part of a scheme receiving many free items per day to review and therefore increase sales for companies and for Amazon.

Dr Bell: I will take that back with me, and we will write to the Committee.

Q167 Mr Reynolds: I was not planning to ask a question off the back of Sarah's about fake reviews and reviews being purchased, but I have quickly been on to Google and typed, "Buy Amazon reviews," and "Buy eBay reviews." The first thing on the list is called Review Genius. It explains that it has been doing this for years. It says it can bypass Amazon and eBay's tracking abilities because it can "avoid using direct links, ensuring that every purchase is organic and indistinguishable from a standard transaction." How many of your reviews do you reckon might be from companies such as this, completely paid for at \$25 per video review?

Dr Bell: I will answer first. That is organised crime. We work with the police on it, and we have taken down 100 websites last year where these brokers were offering fake reviews. If you can send that one to me, I will send it on to the team to investigate and see what action we can take.

Wolfgang Weber: When it comes to eBay, it is important to differentiate between product reviews and seller reviews. eBay is overwhelmingly about seller reviews. Product reviews are only around 0.25% of all reviews. When it comes to seller reviews, these are always tied to a transaction. A buyer cannot leave a review or feedback for a seller if there was no transaction. Several years ago, there were offers such as this on the eBay marketplace as well; sellers were offering fake reviews, and we have taken action against those listings to stop them.

Chair: There is now a vote in the House, but this has given the Committee a very good and wide range of evidence so we can end here. Thank you very much indeed for your testimony this afternoon. We are conscious that you are not the sum total of marketplaces operating in the UK, but we are grateful to you for the evidence that you have provided today and for the commitments you have made to provide the follow-up information that will help inform our recommendations. That concludes this panel and this session.