

Consumer rights fortified by new bill

The Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee has approved the general principles of a bill which will strengthen the rights of consumers in Scotland through the creation of a new public body.

The Consumer Scotland Bill seeks to establish a new statutory body with responsibility for strengthening consumer advocacy and advice. It hopes to do this by identifying how and why consumers experience harm in Scotland and proposing solutions to mitigate this harm.

The Committee heard evidence which highlighted concern that much of the work proposed for the new body may already be being done by other organisations. It was shown that more detail about the form and functions of the new proposed body was needed to ensure there is no duplication of work.

Committee Convener, Gordon Lindhurst MSP said: “The majority of evidence that the Committee received showed support for the creation of a new consumer body which would in turn raise the profile of issues that directly relate to consumers.



Gordon Lindhurst MSP Pic – Andrew Cowan/Scottish Parliament

“However, the Scottish Government must ensure that this new body operates in a way that strengthens and doesn’t impede the current work of existing bodies. We saw concern from bodies such as Citizens Advice Scotland that their role could be weakened.

“It was noted in our evidence sessions that a risk of overlap between the work of Consumer Scotland and other Scottish bodies, such as trading standards, could develop and therefore the Committee would welcome a statement from the Minister setting out how this would be avoided.”