

Scotland's Deposit Return Scheme

What is a deposit return scheme?

A deposit return scheme places a deposit on items which are sold to incentivise people to return them. This usually relates to products which, if mismanaged, would have harmful impacts on the environment.

Scotland has committed to introduce a deposit return scheme for single-use drinks containers. This means that the cost of drinks will include a 'deposit' on the item at the point of sale. When the container is returned to an authorised return point for recycling, the deposit is refunded in full to the consumer.

Why is a deposit return scheme being introduced?

The Scottish Government is committed to developing a more circular economy in Scotland, benefitting the economy and environment.

These ambitions led the Scottish Government to look at new ways of ensuring we keep as many valuable materials in circulation for as long as possible in our economy. A deposit return scheme is one such method, which has been proven to work well in other countries.

Following research and a call for evidence facilitated by Zero Waste Scotland, the Scottish Government announced in its 2017 Programme for Government that it intends to introduce a deposit return scheme for single use drinks containers.

What are the benefits of a deposit return scheme?

Zero Waste Scotland's research work to date has indicated that a deposit return scheme in Scotland could deliver a number of benefits:

- Increased recycling
- Improved quality of recycling
- Reduced litter pollution

The role of Zero Waste Scotland

Zero Waste Scotland has been at the heart of facilitating advice, research, and expert stakeholder opinion to inform policy decisions in this area.

In May 2015, we published a feasibility study looking at the benefits and challenges of a deposit return scheme in Scotland, and in the same year carried out a call for evidence on the issue from stakeholders. In 2017, Zero Waste Scotland published a further summary report in response to issues raised from the evidence submitted.

Tasked by the Scottish Government, we are now leading on the design options for a scheme that will be effective for Scotland. Specifically, we are looking at a range of options to identify what the best approach will be for Scotland to deliver its ambitions for a circular economy.





What could the scheme look like?

A number of factors need to be considered in designing the most effective scheme for Scotland and we'll work with stakeholders to understand those options.

Among the things we need to consider are:

- The level of the deposit
- The types of products and container the deposit could apply to
- The options for where containers are returned to
- How the scheme is managed and promoted
- Labelling and logistical requirements
- Impact on other recycling and waste schemes
- Financial issues relating to the scheme

Who is affected by a deposit return scheme?

Zero Waste Scotland will seek to engage with stakeholders who can assist to make a deposit return scheme work for Scotland. These groups include trade bodies, associations, federations, businesses, manufacturers, producers, retailers, the hospitality sector, local authorities, the resource management industry, logistics organisations, the third sector, equality and campaign groups.

We will also engage with the Scottish public and consumer groups, as we seek to raise awareness of the Scotland's deposit return scheme and how it could work.

Engagement with our stakeholders throughout the process is crucial to ensuring that the design of a deposit return scheme works for Scotland.

We've consulted and engaged with a range of stakeholders throughout our work on deposit return and we will continue to do so. We will seek advice and input from stakeholders and experts throughout in an open and transparent process through a variety of methods.

What are the timescales for introducing a scheme?

We are currently working to develop a set of options for the design of the proposed scheme, with the Scottish Government. There will then be a public consultation on the proposed scheme, later this year.

To introduce a scheme, the Scottish Government will need to lay regulations before the Scottish Parliament. If regulations are passed, there will need to be an implementation period before any scheme is fully operational.

How can you engage with us?

We welcome feedback and invite questions on the scheme design and consultation process. There will also be a major stakeholder event ahead of the public consultation. We will share details of that event once they are confirmed.

For more information on the engagement process, please contact Zero Waste Scotland on the details below.

drs@zerowastescotland.org.uk