



**ZERO
WASTE
SCOTLAND**

Deposit return in Sweden

A case study

Deposit return in Sweden

In Sweden, deposit return has been part of life since the mid-80s. Initiated in 1984 to capture aluminium cans, and extended to include PET plastic bottles 10 years later, the scheme is operated by the brewery trade (50%) in partnership with the two associations for the grocery trades – the Swedish Grocery Trade Association and the Grocery Store Association (25% each).

Sweden's deposit return scheme has one of the highest return rates of any such system across the globe, with 85% of target materials captured. The aim is to reach 90%.

Public support for deposit return in Sweden is high – something that Returpack, the company which operates Sweden's system, says it is proud of. "We regularly study the attitudes among the Swedish population towards the deposit system. The overall acceptance and liking of the system is very high and there is a continuous positive trend to be seen," comments Project Manager Leif Stenberg.

Industry benefit

Crucially for the Swedish operator, which is an independently-owned limited company, the benefits of deposit return go further than societal and environmental and extend to industry too.

For example, for breweries and importers, having a closed loop of materials means those industries have access to a consistent stream of recycled material to utilise for drinks containers. Meanwhile, for the Swedish packaging sector, deposit return enables better use of resources; recycled aluminium saves about 95% energy compared with virgin material.

For retailers, it's argued that deposit return is a customer traffic-builder and contributes to a reduced volume of waste. For Returpack itself, operating as a not for profit company means that any additional money is reinvested back into the system.



Challenges

The company maintains that the biggest challenge to introducing a deposit return scheme in Sweden was not industry-related – the sectors involved being quick to see the benefits of deposit return and get involved. The biggest challenge was instead changing consumer behaviour.

Mr Stenberg continued: “There is always work to be done to stay ‘top of mind’ in consumers’ heads and get people to the reverse vending machines instead of throwing their cans and bottles in trash bins. In Sweden there was no big challenge on the industry side, since the different parties all had benefits to get from the system.”

Communicating the scheme

With industry on board with the benefits of a deposit return scheme for Sweden, this is the focus of Returpack’s marketing strategy. Communications focus on the positive effects of the system. With strong consumer support for deposit return, some businesses have also been persuaded to join the scheme to foster positive customer relationships.

Branded ‘Pantamera’ (Recycle More), Sweden’s deposit return scheme is now as well recognised by Swedes as a brand as Coca-Cola. ●

Want to know more about a deposit return scheme for Scotland? Visit zerowastescotland.org.uk/deposit-return-scheme or email drs@zerowastescotland.org.uk

