

A deposit return system for Scotland



Have
You
Got
The
Bottle?

Have You Got The Bottle? is a campaign led by the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland. The campaign is urging Scottish Ministers to introduce a deposit return system for plastic, glass and metal drinks containers to reduce litter, support a circular economy in Scotland, boost the recycling sector and create jobs, reduce public sector costs and improve the environment for residents and visitors alike.

What is a deposit return system?

A deposit return system (DRS) is a collection system for used drinks container packaging. It runs in parallel with existing kerbside collection systems and is the only modern and economically viable system yet developed that can achieve recycling rates of over 90%.



How does a deposit return system work?

A deposit is payable on every drinks container sold, whether refillable or designed for single use – the system can cover all materials, all sizes and all contents, such as water, juice, soft drinks and alcoholic beverages.

The deposit is paid by the consumer on each container they purchase. This deposit acts as an incentive for the consumer to return the container to a retailer so that they can reclaim their deposit. A DRS is self-funding and requires no financial support from the Government, as the costs of the system are met by the deposits paid on the small number of drinks containers which are not returned.

The majority of retailers collect returned containers via Reverse Vending Machines (RVMs). RVMs separate the containers into material type, preventing contamination.

Smaller retailers can collect the returned containers manually over the counter. The returned containers are then collected from the retailer for recycling.

As international evidence shows, over 90% of the drinks containers sold are returned by consumers, and then separated at source, the material gathered by a DRS is high quality as well as higher volume. This in turn delivers a wide range of benefits.

Supporters



What benefits would a deposit return system bring to Scotland?

Litter reduction – Drinks containers are one of the most visible types of litter and are made from valuable materials. When they are discarded as litter, there is a big impact on people's enjoyment of their environment and a waste of resources. By encouraging return rates of over 90%, **drinks container litter is significantly reduced, making public spaces cleaner and more attractive.**

Circular economy – collecting our empty cans and bottles more efficiently means better raw materials for Scottish industry, and treating used packaging as a resource rather than waste is an important part of the shift to a circular economy.

Local council savings – As the majority of drinks containers in a DRS are collected separately from existing kerbside collections, the cost of these services to local councils reduces, as does the cost of litter pickup. Some value from the sale of the materials is lost, but overall councils should expect a net financial gain.

More jobs – With the growth of the recycling sector, there will be more high-quality jobs created in Scotland. There are also jobs required to run the central operating system for the DRS which can be based anywhere, including areas of high unemployment. For comparison, **estimates suggest that a UK-wide system would generate up to 4,300 jobs.**

Thriving recycling sector – with a guaranteed, consistent and significant increase in high quality materials, Scotland's recycling sector can feel confident investing in expansion.

Climate change – Litter and landfill aren't just wasteful, they're bad for the planet. Making packaging from recycled materials rather than new can **cut carbon emissions by up to 60%** and pressure to explore for every last drop of oil.

Scotland will be part of an international community

Deposit return systems run in many countries and states across the world, including Norway and Canada. In Catalonia, 85% of retailers supported a DRS when surveyed after a 2013 pilot project. This pilot also showed savings for the local authority of between 6.5% and 9.5% of packaging and refuse collection. Most recently, the state of New South Wales (NSW) in Australia has decided to introduce a DRS, following extensive research. This presents reassuring parallels to Scotland, as NSW also has remote rural areas, world-famous cities, an extensive coastline, porous borders with the surrounding states, and a focus on tourism to support the economy.

www.haveyogotthebottle.org.uk



APRS

Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland.
Charity Number: SC016139.
Address: 483 Lawnmarket, Edinburgh EH1 2NT
Email: info@ruralscotland.org
Tel: 0131 225 7012.



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