

Press release: Government sets out plans to overhaul waste system

- Government launches consultations to overhaul the waste system, cut plastic pollution, and move towards a more circular economy.
- Packaging producers set to pay the full cost of dealing with their waste, more consistent household recycling, and a Deposit Return Scheme for cans and bottles, subject to consultation.
- Consultation also launched for a world-leading tax on plastic packaging which does not meet a minimum threshold of at least 30% recycled content.
- New analysis published today shows the net benefit to UK economy of the changes will run into millions.
- Plans for a major overhaul of the country's waste system have been set out in a suite of consultations launched today by Environment Secretary Michael Gove.

Building on commitments made in the government's landmark [Resources and Waste Strategy](#) published in December, the consultations provide detail on plans to make [packaging producers pay the full cost of dealing with their waste](#) and to introduce a [consistent set of materials collected across England from households for recycling](#), and bringing in a [Deposit Return Scheme](#) (DRS) for cans and bottles, subject to consultation.

The changes will make up a key part of the government's upcoming Environment Bill, to be introduced early in the second session of Parliament.

As well as making businesses and manufacturers pay the full cost of recycling or disposing of their packaging waste, householders will see the existing complicated recycling system simplified. A consultation has launched today on a consistent set of recyclable materials collected from all households and businesses, and consistent labelling on packaging so consumers know what they can recycle.

These will include separate weekly food waste collections for every household in England and could include free garden waste collections for households with gardens. Having comprehensive and frequent collections will ensure more reliable services for householders while retaining local flexibility.

The government is also seeking views on introducing a Deposit Return Scheme for cans and bottles, subject to consultation, alongside setting out two potential models – 'all-in' or 'on-the-go'. This could drive up the recycling of an estimated three billion plastic bottles which are currently incinerated, sent to landfill or left to pollute our streets, countryside and marine environment.

On the same day, government has also launched its consultation on [introducing a world-leading tax on plastic packaging](#) which does not meet a minimum threshold of at least 30% recycled content, subject to consultation, from

April 2022. This will address the current issue of it often being cheaper to use new, non-recycled plastic material despite its greater environmental impact.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

We are committed to going further and faster to reduce, reuse, recycle and cut waste. That's why we are leading the way to move away from being a 'throw-away' society and drive up domestic recycling.

Through our plans we will introduce a world-leading tax to boost recycled content in plastic packaging, make producers foot the bill for handling their packaging waste, and end the confusion over household recycling.

We are committed to cementing our place as a world leader in resource efficiency, so we can be the first generation to leave our environment in a better state than we inherited it.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond said:

Plastic packaging makes up two-thirds of all the plastic waste that pollutes this country and wreaks havoc on our environment. It's our responsibility to do something about it and that's why we will introduce a new tax on the producers of plastic packaging that don't use enough recycled material.

This action, coupled with the other measures we are bringing in, will help drive up recycling, cut the amount of new plastic being used and protect our environment for future generations.

To help drive up household recycling levels, the government will introduce a consistent set of recyclable materials for collection in England, no matter which part of the country people live in. Costs of managing packaging waste will be funded by industry through a packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) system. This will see industry pay higher fees if their packaging is harder to reuse or recycle and will encourage sustainable design, subject to the consultation launched today. EPR for packaging will raise between £800 million and £1 billion a year for recycling and disposal.

Consistent recycling collections

- To help drive up household recycling levels, the government will introduce a consistent set of recyclable materials for collection in England (including separate food waste collection), no matter which part of the country people live in.
- The consultation sets out options for how this will work in practice and which widely-recyclable material should be included, such as plastic

bottles and plastic pots, tubs and trays, glass packaging (bottles and jars), paper and card, and metal packaging.

Deposit Return Scheme

- In launching the consultation, the government has proposed a DRS that could operate for cans, and plastic and glass bottles.
- Government will seek views on two options for how the DRS could work if introduced. The first option, known as the 'all-in' model, would target a large amount of drinks beverages placed on the market, irrespective of size. The second option, known as the 'on-the-go' model, would restrict the drinks containers in-scope to those less than 750ml in size and sold in single format containers. This model would target drinks most often sold for consumption outside of the home (while 'on-the-go').
- This could drive up the recycling of an estimated three billion plastic bottles which are currently incinerated, sent to landfill or left to pollute streets, countryside and the marine environment.
- Similar schemes already operate successfully in other countries – for example, total return rates of drinks containers in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden are at 90%, 92%, 98%, 92% and 85% respectively.

Extended producer responsibility for packaging

- New plans set out by government will see the costs of recycling borne by those that produce packaging waste and place it on the market.
- Currently, packaging producers pay only around 10 per cent of the cost of dealing with packaging waste. By increasing that to cover the full amount, government will incentivise producers to think carefully about using less packaging, and to switch to using packaging that is easier to recycle.
- Following the overhaul of the packaging regulations, the government will explore extended producer responsibility schemes for items that can be harder or costly to recycle. As well as improving existing schemes for cars, electrical goods and batteries, this could include things such as textiles, fishing gear, vehicle tyres, certain materials from construction and demolition, and bulky waste such as mattresses, furniture and carpets.

Plastic Packaging Tax

- At Budget 2018, government announced that from April 2022 it would introduce a world-leading new tax on the production and import of plastic packaging with less than 30% recycled content, subject to consultation.
- The government's call for evidence on single-use plastic waste last year highlighted that recycled plastic is often more expensive than new plastic, despite its lower environmental impacts. The Government wants to shift the economic incentives involved in the production of more sustainable plastic packaging, encouraging greater use of recycled plastic and helping to reduce plastic waste.
- The government is now seeking views on proposals for how the tax will

work. For example, which packaging should be in scope of the tax, how to assess recycled content, and which businesses will be liable for the tax. The government is open to views on the best design options.

Government will seek views on its plans for 12 weeks.

The consultations build on existing government work to tackle unnecessary waste and plastic pollution, including a world-leading ban on microbeads in personal care products, a 5p plastic bag charge which has taken over 15 billion single-use plastic bags out of circulation and a consultation to extend it to all retailers, plans to ban the sale of plastic straws, stirrers, and plastic-stemmed cotton buds, a £15 million pilot scheme for reducing food waste, and up to £10 million to clear the worst abandoned waste sites that blight local communities.