



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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TITLE Consultations on Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging and a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers

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Plastic waste and packaging waste are important issues that are high on the political and public agenda. In the UK, we generate 2.3 million tonnes of plastic packaging waste every year and when it comes to packaging waste as a whole, we generate around 11.5 million tonnes annually in the UK¹. Wales is leading the way on recycling and waste management. As well as improving the collection of household and business wastes, we are investing in reprocessing infrastructure and are committed to developing the market for recycle in Wales.

Wales is a world leader in recycling but we want to go further and build on what we have already achieved. We need to work collectively and in collaboration with others to address global issues such as, minimising the amount of packaging we use and incentivising better design of products and packaging, so that it can be reused or more easily recycled. Over recent months, we have been working with the UK Government and the other devolved administrations to develop joint consultations on Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging and a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers. In doing this, I have carefully considered and taken account of Members' insightful contributions on these issues, alongside a range of other evidence.

These joint consultations will be issued today. The consultation documents and response forms are available on the links provided below.

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/environmental-quality/consultation-on-reforming-the-uk-packaging-produce>

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/environment/introducing-a-deposit-return-scheme>

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/778594/UK_Statistics_on_Waste_statistical_notice_Feb_2019.pdf

The first consultation, which applies to the UK as a whole, relates to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging. EPR schemes are meant to ensure that producers bear the waste management cost of the products they place onto the market. This is in line with the 'polluter pays' principle. Currently, in the UK, it is estimated that producers pay approximately only 10% of the overall cost of recycling their packaging waste.

It is clear that this contribution will need to rise significantly, and the consultation document contains proposals for how this can be achieved, managed and monitored. The main purpose would be to ensure full net cost recovery for managing packaging waste, providing a potential source of revenue to Local Authorities. Another important aim of EPR would be to incentivise producers to improve packaging design, for example by making it easier to reuse or recycle their packaging. This would help to further improve waste management, stimulate economic opportunities in Wales, and support our ambition to become a truly circular economy.

The second consultation, which applies to England, Wales and Northern Ireland, relates to a deposit return scheme (DRS) for drinks containers. The Scottish Government consulted on proposals for a DRS last year.

I am keen to explore whether a DRS for drinks containers could work for Wales, given our already high recycling rate and as the only UK nation that sets statutory targets for Local Authorities. I would like to hear views from all sectors, stakeholders and the public on these proposals as I want to understand the likely impact on local authority income and recycling rates and also on businesses, including large and small retailers. If a DRS is to be introduced in Wales, citizens will be expected to pay a deposit on drinks containers and have to manually return empty containers to collection points in order to claim back their deposit, rather than just sorting and separating their household waste collections for kerbside collection by their council.

The proposals in the consultation documents are the first steps towards the design of an integrated, strategic approach to managing packaging waste and I hope you will encourage your constituents to read and respond to the consultations.

Another related UK-wide consultation is also being published by HM Treasury today in relation to a proposed tax on the production and import of plastic packaging. It is proposed that this tax will apply to plastic packaging which does not contain at least 30% recycled plastic. The consultation is available at this link.

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/environmental-quality/plastic-packaging-tax>

There is widespread public interest and engagement around waste and packaging. I hope to see a high level of interest in these consultations from people in Wales and I welcome your support in encouraging responses to this important engagement.