



## Guidance for leaders

# The pros and cons of deposit return schemes

### What is a deposit return scheme (DRS)?

A deposit return scheme involves paying a deposit for an item, which is then redeemed when that item is returned. Schemes in existence around the world commonly focus on drinks containers. Plans have already been announced for a deposit return scheme for drinks containers in Scotland, and England, Wales and Northern Ireland have consulted on introducing a scheme.

The cost of the deposit would be added to the price of the drinks included in the scheme when they are purchased. In Scotland this will be 20p per container. This deposit would be redeemed when consumers return their empty drinks containers to a designated return point.

### Why introduce a deposit return scheme?

The main reasons for introducing a deposit return scheme are:

- Increase the quality of recycling. By focussing on a few materials collected through a specific route, the quality of material separated for recycling could be increased. Would you separate your items at home for recycling to redeem a deposit?
- It could reduce litter. If people who would otherwise litter drinks containers are motivated to return the container to redeem a deposit, then there would be less litter. Do you think a deposit would make people litter less?
- Increase the quantity of recycling. If a deposit encourages more people to recycle more things, more often, then the amount of recycling overall could increase? Would you recycle things you don't recycle now if there was a deposit?

### What are the challenges for a deposit return scheme?

- The level of the deposit has to be high enough to encourage a change in behaviour, but not so high that it stops people from buying drinks. How would you decide this?
- Drinks containers are just one type of product littered? What other sources of litter are there and how could they be tackled?
- Should a deposit return scheme place a deposit on all drinks containers?
- Governments across the UK are also looking at a new system which incentivise higher recycling of all packaging, not just drinks packaging (extended producer responsibility). Any deposit return scheme would need to avoid businesses paying twice to recycle the same item. Would you pay a deposit on other packaging (e.g. crisp packets)?
- Local Authorities across the UK already collect drinks containers for recycling. There are very few, if any, case studies from around the world where a deposit return scheme is implemented after an extensive regime of household recycling collections have been implemented at kerbside. What effect would a Deposit Return Scheme have on kerbside collections?
- If everyone brings their containers back and redeems their deposit, who would pay to make the scheme work?