

Concerns raised over delay to deposit return scheme

The Scottish Government has announced that Scotland's deposit return scheme will launch one year from today but Friends of the Earth warn that this date may not be met.

The [scheme](#) which has already been delayed twice will require a public awareness campaign to make it work and there is none evident yet even though it was promised earlier this year.

A 20p deposit will be paid on any single use plastic, metal or glass containers which will become a source of high quality recycling materials when returned and the deposit will be repaid in full. Producers must also take full financial and environmental responsibility for the proper collection of their packaging.



Lorna Slater MSP and Circular Economy Minister Photo: © 2021 Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

When launching the scheme in December 2021, Circular Economy Minister Lorna Slater said: “This will be the first scheme of its kind in the UK and one of the most environmentally ambitious and accessible in Europe.

“Implementing a scheme on this scale is a massive national undertaking involving tens of thousands of producers and retailers. Given the challenges that the pandemic and Brexit have placed upon these businesses, it is disappointing – but understandable – that the independent review concluded the original start date was no longer feasible.

“Despite calls to water down the scheme by removing materials or waiting for other nations to catch up, we have maintained our ambition and ensured that the scheme will still meet its original target of achieving 90% collection rates by 2024.

“We have also published a clear plan for delivery, with critical milestones on the path to full implementation. These

include use of return points on a voluntary basis by retailers from November 2022.

“I am also delighted that Orkney will go early in offering a return scheme, which will provide benefits to the local community and recycling.”

Kim Pratt, circular economy campaigner at Friends of the Earth Scotland said: “We must change the way we use materials to drastically reduce the impact of our consumption. Across Europe, deposit return schemes are well established, successful and popular. They have a direct impact on the climate by reducing the need for new materials, and they help reduce plastic pollution at the same time.

“We’re concerned that the Scottish Government is falling behind with implementation of this important scheme. The public awareness campaign is a crucial part of roll out and must be delivered on time. It’s vital that there are no further delays to Scotland’s deposit return scheme so that we can begin to see the benefits.”

John Mayhew, Director of APRS, which is running the Have You Got The Bottle? campaign, said: “Across Europe and beyond, more and more countries are getting on board with deposit return. Places like Latvia, Malta and Slovakia have introduced their systems at a pace which makes it all the more baffling that Scotland’s launch date is still a year away.

“Deposits will eventually bring major benefits to Scotland in terms of reduced litter, lower emissions, and cost savings for local government, but it is concerning for the rest of the circular economy agenda that such a simple step has proved so difficult for the government to implement here.”

Scotland’s material consumption accounts for 82% of our entire carbon footprint. Each tonne of plastic recycled saves 0.5 tonnes of carbon, recycling a tonne of metal saves 2.5 tonnes of carbon and recycling a tonne of glass saves 0.75 tonnes of

carbon.

The Scottish Government has published a delivery plan for the system but Friends of the Earth say the government has already acknowledged that challenges still remain. The environment group point out that the complexities of a VAT charge have yet to be agreed with HM Treasury, and the scheme administrator, [Circularity Scotland](#), is organised and run by the private sector, which has limited transparency.

Biff's the waste company has been chosen by Circularity Scotland to run the scheme. The not-for-profit scheme administrator, appointed Biffa to collect bottles and cans from around 30,000 locations across Scotland from next August and build and operate three counting centres.