

# Deposit Return Scheme - Protecting your community!



The Deposit Return Scheme for plastic and metal beverage containers due to be introduced nationwide in February 2024, will bring substantial benefits for Ireland's communities and local authorities, helping us to protect our communities and environment. We will join 40 other communities around the world, including 12 in Europe, that have found the Deposit Return Scheme to be effective in reducing litter and increasing collection and recycling rates to over 90%.

## How will a Deposit Return Scheme work for local authorities?

In Ireland each year we use an estimated 1.9 billion single use drinking bottles and aluminium cans but only 60-70% of them are recycled. Almost half of them end up being incinerated, dumped to landfills, or thrown away as litter on our land and waterways. This means the loss of valuable materials will stop and instead will be saved and recycled with a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS).

As part of Ireland's efforts to promote a wider circular economy, a Deposit Return Scheme is due to be introduced to Ireland in Spring 2024 to help increase recycling rates of single-use plastic and metal beverage containers. The Minister of State with responsibility for Communications and circular Economy, Ossian Smyth, launched Ireland's national Deposit Return Scheme in November 2022.

Because the Deposit Return Scheme helps to reduce litter, it also: saves money on litter collection; boost the recycling sector; prevents waste; lowers emissions; relieves pressure on natural resources and support jobs and assist Ireland in meeting EU targets.

*Paddy Baxter and his daughter Kate, Return for Change event, St Anne's Park (Photo by: Michelle La Grue)*



## Ireland will be part of an international community

The introduction of the Deposit Return Scheme in Ireland means that we join over 130 million people in the EU who live in countries with similar schemes. These countries tend to have higher rates of recycling for PET and metal beverage cans. Deposit Return Scheme are also used in 12 Eu countries as well as states in the USA, Canada and Australia along with other countries.

Lithuania introduced a Deposit Return Scheme in 2016 when its recycling rate was 70%. After the first year they had already reached the 90% EU target for 2029. They noticed a decrease litter, in beverage packaging waste in landfill, and the quality of the recycling materials was better. The system also generated an extra 1,200 jobs.

# How will the Deposit Return Scheme work?

**A deposit of 15c will be placed on every single-use metal can and PET plastic beverage bottle (up to 500mls or less) and 25c for each container above 500mls. These containers are used for drinks such as water, juice, soft drinks and alcoholic beverages.**

**This deposit will be refunded to the consumer on each container they return. The idea is to incentivise the customer to return the empty container to any retailer selling such beverages to reclaim their deposit.**

Under the Irish Deposit Return Scheme regulations, producers of these beverage containers will be responsible for establishing, funding and running the system with a scheme operator approved by the Minister.

The Scheme will be operated by Deposit Return Scheme Ireland CLG trading as 'Re-turn'.

The scheme is designed to be cost neutral to the customer and retailers will receive a small administrative fee to offset costs of collecting such containers.

Many retailers will collect returned containers via reverse vending machines, which separate the containers into material types, preventing contamination.

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

## What are the benefits of a Deposit Return Scheme for Local Authorities?

**Waste management savings** - International evidence has shown that a Deposit Return Scheme saves local authorities money on waste cleaning activities. Drink containers are one of the most visible types of litter, accounting for over 18% of all litter by weight. Litter has a negative effect on wildlife as well as having a big impact on people's enjoyment of the environment. Evidence has shown that a Deposit Return Scheme can reduce littering of these beverage containers by 85% making public spaces cleaner and more attractive. The Scheme also reduce costs associated with street sweeping, public bin collection and litter collection. Currently, local authorities over €85 million being spent by Irish local authorities on street cleaning and litter management.

**Cost and labour saving** - Waste collection from street bins is labour-intensive and costly for local authorities. Because these drink containers are bulky, the bins fill up and overflow quickly and need to be emptied often. A Deposit Return Scheme would greatly reduce the number of containers ending up in street bins and litter on the street and so would save time and money for the local authorities.

**Circular Economy** - These beverage containers are made from valuable materials and they are lost when they are discarded as litter or in our black bins. In Ireland we generate 1.9 billion single-use beverage bottles and cans each year and only recycle between 60-70% of them. But under the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive we have to reach a collection target of 90% by the close of 2029. Collecting our empty plastic bottles and cans separately improve the quality and quantity of the materials to be recycled so Deposit Return Scheme helps with this shift to a circular economy.

**Improved amenities and waterways** - Deposit Return Scheme has been proven to reduce littering by over 80% in many countries who have introduced it. This means improvement in the quality and enjoyment of our local amenities and countryside.

**Compliance with EU Single - Use Plastics Directive**  
The introduction of Deposit Return Scheme will help Ireland reach the 90% recycling target for PET plastic as well as develop high quality recyclate which will help drinks producers meet the 30% recycled content target for all plastic drinks bottles by 2030.

**Community groups fundraising** - Community groups and charities can raise some funds for their activities by organising litter clean ups and collecting deposits on the discarded PET bottles and cans.

## RETURN FOR CHANGE CAMPAIGN

The 'Return For Change' campaign was developed by the Irish environmental organisation, VOICE, to ensure that Ireland has a world-class, robust Deposit Return Scheme and to let people know what it is. Together with local authorities, businesses and

community groups around the country 'Return For Change' have been holding community awareness events. If you would like us to set one up in your area, contact project manager Colin O'Byrne: [colin@voiceireland.org](mailto:colin@voiceireland.org)



[www.returnforchange.org](http://www.returnforchange.org)

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