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Dear Cllr Hayes,

Thank you for your letter of 15 March about the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for drink containers.

The UK Government, Welsh Government and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland consulted in 2019 and 2021 on the detail of introducing a DRS in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. In January 2023 we published the Government response to the 2021 consultation, setting out policy decisions and next steps for introducing the scheme from October 2025.

The DRS has several additional benefits over and above the wider Collection and Packaging reforms. It is designed to increase the collection and recycling of a commonly littered packaging type – drinks containers – and reduce littering. By creating separate waste streams for these materials, they will be captured to a high quality for reprocessing. Rather than risk being downgraded to lower value material, drinks containers will be turned back into new drinks containers.

You have highlighted several key matters in your letter. On the cost to the consumer, we acknowledge that the addition of the monetary deposit will increase the price of drinks for consumers in the first instance. However, we need to be clear that this is a redeemable deposit, and we want to make it as easy as possible for consumers to return containers. As well as return to retailer return points, we have also explored takeback obligations for online/distance sales. We are particularly looking at how large supermarkets delivering grocery shopping provide consumers a takeback service, as well as considering how other businesses could deliver a takeback service where feasible to help support vulnerable customers. With regards to multipacks, our scheme administrator will have powers to set either a fixed or a variable deposit, which they could use to reduce the impact on costs of multipacks. An equalities impact assessment is being undertaken and will continue to be updated in the next phase of work as we develop the detailed legislation to allow us to accurately reflect what is included in legislation.

Unredeemed deposits will remain in the scheme and be reinvested back into it, helping to fund the overall running of the DRS. This is a common form of funding in international DRSs.

We anticipate the scheme will be collecting upwards of 90% of in-scope DRS containers from year three of the scheme's operation. It is likely that many of those containers not returned will continue to travel through local authority waste streams such as kerbside recycling.

We want to encourage local authorities and their waste operators to separate out in-scope drinks containers and return them into the scheme to receive the deposit amount (provided they meet the criteria for return set by the scheme administrator). We anticipate the Deposit Management Organisation working closely with local authorities, to ensure as much material is returned as possible via return points and, to help meet collection targets and keep material within the closed-loop model of the DRS. We envisage local authorities making savings as a result of reduced litter clean up.

The DRS will cover drinks containers (polyethylene terephthalate plastic, steel, and aluminium cans; plus glass in Wales). In scope containers will be labelled and there will be supporting communications so we do not think the messaging will be confusing to consumers.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contact me about this important issue.



**REBECCA POW MP**