



Please reply to: Crispin Truman OBE, Chief Executive, CPRE The countryside charity, 5-11 Lavington Street, London SE1 0NZ / CrispinT@cpre.org.uk

Prime Minister Boris Johnson
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

28 June 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: England's Deposit Return Scheme

Our organisations have worked for many years to reduce the litter and pollution caused by drinks cans and bottles, both plastic and glass, advocating for the introduction of a UK-wide all-in Deposit Return Scheme.

As you will have seen in our recent open letter to you in the Telegraph (copy attached), we are not alone in our support for this important policy, and there are many organisations across a range of sectors that understand the economic and environmental benefits a UK-wide all-in deposit system will bring.

There has been consistent support from the public, with recent polling by YouGov on behalf of the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) showing over 74% support for the introduction of an all-in deposit scheme, across all socio-economic groupings, with only 6% opposed.

Three years ago, the UK government publicly committed to the introduction of a deposit scheme and it was also included within the 2019 Conservative manifesto, at the same time confirming that glass would be included. We are now pleased to see that your government has included the primary powers for deposit return within the Environment Bill.

However, following Defra's latest consultation on a Deposit Return Scheme, which concluded at the start of June 2021, we are now very concerned that you and your Cabinet are being given poor advice on the scope of the system. There is still a suggestion from within the government that the deposit scheme should be restricted to only small beverage containers, with the potential for glass bottles to also be excluded, despite the economic and environmental evidence from existing system operators, the government's own impact assessments and the recent Environmental Audit Committee inquiry showing the only logical option is an all-in system.

We understand that this idea of a limited system, described erroneously as 'on the go', is partly based on an underestimation of the public's desire and ability to get behind this type of critical intervention. But there is overwhelming support, with a YouGov survey commissioned by MCS showing 72% supporting all sizes, with only 3% wanting only sizes below 750ml. For materials, 77% support the inclusion of plastic, 75% glass, 67% aluminium and 57% multi-material (e.g. TetraPak).



We saw the same miscalculation on the level of public commitment during our collective campaign for a carrier bag charge in England. Yet, when the charge was introduced, it was immediately popular with the public, with Defra confirming in May 2021 that the charge has led to a 95% cut in plastic bag sales in major supermarkets since 2015 – a truly staggering figure - and a 55% reduction in plastic bags on UK beaches reported in the annual Beachwatch statistics.

Even during the pandemic, deposit schemes in other countries have worked without danger or inconvenience to the public. These systems haven't been an economic burden on consumers, precisely because the system is based on a deposit, which is fully refunded when the bottles and cans are returned.

Significantly, a restricted scheme in England, which would be different to elsewhere in Great Britain, will add costs, complexity, confusion, loopholes and border issues to the new Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programme, meaning a poor decision at this stage has the ability to affect the critical progression of the government's Resources and Waste Strategy.

There are also considerable carbon benefits associated with an all-in scheme. Defra's own impact assessment concludes that an all-in system will result in six times the carbon savings compared with a more limited 'on-the go' scheme. As the UK hosts major international climate conferences this year with the ambition to lead the way in climate commitments, adopting an all-in scheme provides an opportunity for you to demonstrate your commitment to tackling climate change.

You said recently, in response to the shocking news of Amazon's policy to destroy unused goods, "We want to see more reuse, we want to see more recycling but above all we want to stop people using things that are going to be, ultimately, polluting our seas, our world and that means cutting down our use of plastics - you name it".

This ambition matches that of the people of the UK. When the decision on the scope of England's deposit system comes to Cabinet in July we hope you will reiterate your government's support for an all-in scheme - aluminium, glass and plastic drinks containers of every size - rather than the untested 'on the go' system which would risk leaving a significant volume of bottles and cans in the environment as litter. Indeed, Keep Britain Tidy's Litter Composition Analysis, commissioned by Defra, found that drinks containers – including both large and small glass bottles - make up 75% of litter by volume on our streets.

The government has the opportunity to show its ambition on waste and plastic pollution and to realise the carbon reduction benefits that an all-in Deposit Return Scheme will deliver. By choosing an all-in scheme you will rid our streets, countryside and oceans of drinks container litter. You will have an active policy that demonstrates your commitment to reduce carbon emissions in advance of COP26 in November. And you will show the people of the UK and the rest of the world that the UK government means business when it comes to reducing litter and plastic pollution.

We are optimistic that you will make the right decision.

Yours sincerely,



Crispin Truman OBE
Chief Executive
CPRE The countryside charity

John Sauven
Executive Director
Greenpeace

Hugo Tagholm
Chief Executive
Surfers Against Sewage

Sandy Luk
Chief Executive
Marine Conservation Society

Allison Ogden-Newton OBE
Chief Executive
Keep Britain Tidy

Please note a copy of this letter has been sent to George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Rebecca Pow MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs as a Deposit Return Scheme falls under their remit. It may also be shared with the Chairs of relevant committees and All Party Parliamentary Groups for their information.