

Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity submission of 23 May 2023

PE2023/A: Stop the Deposit Return Scheme

I am writing to provide the Citizen Participations and Public Petitions Committee with a response to Petition PE2023 which calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to stop the introduction of the 20p deposit for consumers and the rollout of the Deposit Return Scheme, referring specifically to the following:

- Introducing the Deposit Return Scheme will, in my view, increase the cost to the consumer, either through increasing the cost of the product or as a result of Scottish Government payments to retailers or producers, that are funded by the taxpayer.
- 50% of containers are recycled, and to get that to 90% the Scottish Government should deal with those who don't recycle instead of punishing those who do.
- This is punishment of the majority who recycle everything. I will have to store all my containers and drive additional journeys to recycling centres, complete madness. People can't even crush their cans because the barcode will have to be readable.

Response to the Petition

We must take bold and ambitious action now to tackle the climate emergency. Our Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) will be a major part of our efforts to reduce littering, cut emissions, and build a more circular economy.

Every year £46 million of public money is spent removing litter and fly tipping from the Scottish environment. We also know that packaging recycling rates have stalled, and we do not believe an enhanced kerbside scheme could deliver the level or rate of improvement that we will see through DRS. Our scheme will aim to reduce littering by a third and increase recycling rates of single-use drinks containers towards 90%. As well as helping to reduce CO₂ emissions by 4 million tonnes over 25 years – the equivalent to taking 83,000 cars off the road.

Scotland's Deposit Return Scheme is a private sector scheme and there are no payments made to producers or retailers from Government. The deposit paid is fully returnable to the consumer.

The Scottish Parliament passed the Deposit and Return Scheme for Scotland Regulations in 2020 and there continues to be strong support for the scheme with polling carried out in February showing 70% of Scots support Scotland's DRS.

We understand that implementing such an ambitious scheme is a big change for both consumers and businesses. We are listening to the concerns of industry and working with them to develop pragmatic approaches to implementation. This is why we announced we are delaying the launch until 1 March 2024, giving everyone more time to prepare for the scheme and make it a success.

I would of course be happy to respond to any other relevant queries the Committee might have and I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm my commitment to launching this scheme for Scotland.

Kind regards

LORNA SLATER MSP

Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity