



ACS | advice

OPERATING RETURN POINTS AND APPLYING FOR AN EXEMPTION

An ACS advice guide for retailers
www.acs.org.uk

ACS | the voice of
local shops



The Scottish Government is introducing a deposit return scheme (DRS) on 16th August 2023.

Customers will pay a deposit of 20p when purchasing a single-use container and receive the deposit back when they return the empty container.

Single use containers in scope include:
PET plastic bottles, metal cans, glass bottles
(volume between 50ml and 3 litres).

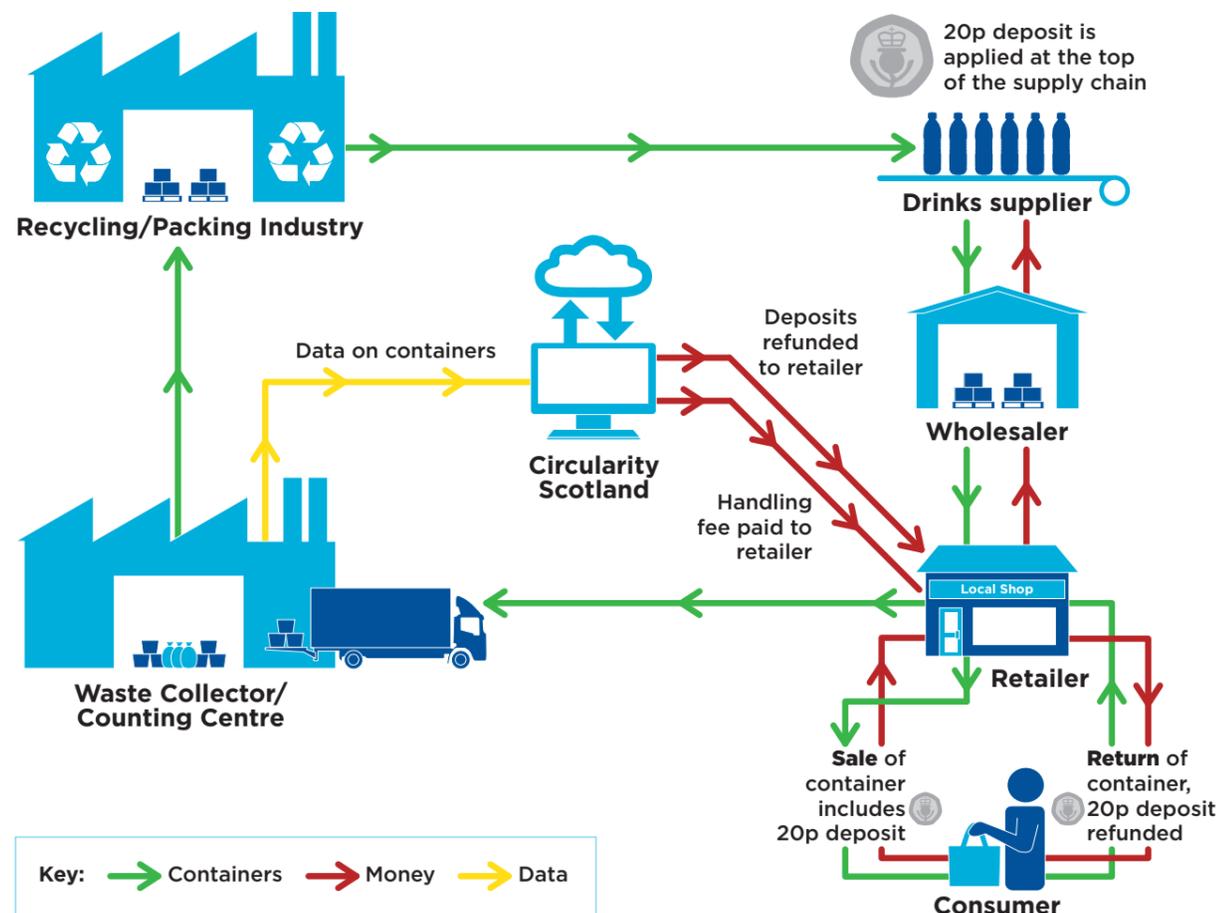


Retailers that sell single use drinks containers in their stores are obligated to:

- Accept a container in scope of DRS returned to your store.
- Pay to the consumer a sum equal to the deposit (20p) for each container accepted.
- Retain the container for collection by, or on behalf of, the scheme administrator.

Retailers can apply for an exemption from being a return point operator. However, all retailers must charge a deposit on containers even if they are exempt.

How a deposit return scheme works



KEY DECISIONS FOR RETAILERS

1: Do I operate a Manual Return Point in my store?

(See pages 4-5 & 7 for more details)

- Members of staff collect returned containers at checkout and refund deposits to customers.
- Containers are scanned, stored in bags or tote boxes at the checkout and removed by staff for collection.
- Retailers are paid 2.69p per item collected to cover their costs.

2: Do I operate a Reverse Vending Machine in my store?

(See page 6-7 for more details)

- Retailers buy or lease a Reverse Vending Machine that is used by customers to return containers.
- Containers are scanned, crushed / naturally broken, stored in the machine and removed by staff for collection.
- Customers are reimbursed their deposit by the machine in the form of a voucher for cash or non-cash redemption, loyalty card points, electronic payment or charitable donation.
- Retailers are paid 3.7p per item for the first 8,000 containers collected per week, and 1.6p per item for additional containers.

3: Do I apply for an exemption?

Proximity Exemption (See page 8-9): Apply for this exemption if...

- There is an alternative return point within reasonable proximity that still ensures reasonable access to a return point to your customers, AND
- The alternative return point operator has agreed to take returns on your behalf, AND
- The alternative return point operates at similar opening times and provides the same level of accessibility as your premises (e.g. wheelchair accessibility).

Environmental Health Exemption (See pages 10-13): Apply for this exemption if...

- Operating a return point would result in you risking a breach of any of your environmental health obligations, AND
- Your premises could not be reasonably altered to avoid risking a breach of any of your environmental health obligations in operating a return point.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

1. How many containers will be returned to your store?

- You can estimate this by calculating the monthly eligible container volumes through your business, thinking about other return point operators in your area and considering the level of accessibility your customers have to return containers to your store.

2. What would be the implication for footfall to your store?

- Being a return point operator could help you attract more customers and convert people returning containers into regular customers.
- Not hosting a return point could result in some footfall being diverted away from your store to other return point operators nearby.

3. What would be the impact of operating a return point on your store operations?

- Whatever type of return point you operate it will have a significant impact on your store operations and ability to serve customers.
- Will the impact on store operations undermine your broader retailer or food to go offer to consumers?



KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR CONVENIENCE STORES

OPERATING A DRS RETURN POINT

MANUAL RETURN POINT STORE

DEPOSIT RETURNS

From the checkout you may be able to offer refund deposits via cash, voucher or as a direct refund to a credit or debit card.

MANUAL RETURNS APP

An app is being developed to allow staff doing manual collections to track returns. The app will be published early in 2023.

PROCESSING RETURNED CONTAINERS AT THE CHECKOUT

Returned containers will have to be collected, processed and initially stored at the checkout in bins. Glass will have to be stored separately in tote boxes but metals cans and plastic bottles can be collected in the same bag.

EPOS INTEGRATION

Manual return point operators will be offered electronic point of sale integration. The EPOS integration details are available [here](#), you should share these with your EPOS provider.

REFUSING CONTAINER RETURNS

Retailers can refuse containers for the following reasons:

- The container is soiled
- The container is not intact or identifiable
- The container is not empty
- You have reached your capacity for storing containers

Refusing to take containers could be a flash point for abuse towards staff. You should train staff on how best to refuse take back of containers, more information on refusals is available in ACS' Preventing Underage Sales guide [here](#).



INCREASE CLEANING

You will need to increase cleaning protocols around the checkout area where containers are returned. Soiled containers or residual liquids in containers may increase the likelihood of wet floors and therefore slips and trips.

SHELF EDGE LABELLING

Retailers are required to show on the shelf edge label that a 20p deposit is applied to products in scope of the deposit return scheme. Discussions are ongoing about whether the deposit should be included within the price.



MOVING CONTAINERS

Returned containers, at checkouts or in RVMs, will need to be moved safely across the shopfloor to the secure storage space. Retailers will need to review their risk assessments and the equipment available to staff for moving containers, especially glass.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Clear communication to customers, especially when DRS is first introduced, will be needed so customers know what containers can be returned and how they redeem deposits. Signage must include your complaints procedure and the contact details of the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA).

ACS local shop

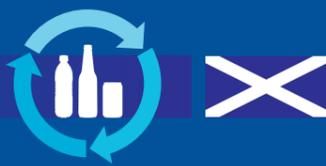
Recycle & Reward 20p per item

Return glass, plastic & metal soft drinks containers bought in this store and receive a voucher or donate to local charities.



KEEPING STAFF CLEAN

Staff members will be handling return containers that may be dirty or have residual liquids in. You will need to consider providing hand washing facilities and providing staff with personal protective equipment.



REVERSE VENDING MACHINE (RVM) RETURN POINT STORE

IS AN RVM VIABLE FOR YOUR STORE?

You need to estimate whether you will receive enough returned containers to justify the investment and maintenance of an RVM. Retailers will be paid 3.7p per item collected for the first 8,000 items collect per week and 1.6p for each additional container in the same week.

RVM SPECIFICATIONS

If you have an RVM it must meet the RVM specification set out by CSL [here](#). RVMs require a power supply and internet connection to capture data about the volume of returns.

REDEEMING DEPOSITS FROM RVMs

The payment methods that will be available to reimburse customers' deposits using an RVM are: Voucher for cash or non-cash redemption, loyalty card points, electronic payment, and charitable donation.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Clear communication to customers, especially when DRS is first introduced, will be needed so customers know what containers can be returned and how they redeem deposits. Signage must include your complaints procedure and the contact details of the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)



MANAGING SPILLS AROUND RVMs

You will need to consider how you will manage spills around RVMs where residual liquid is left in containers. This could include rubber mats and bins for residual liquids. You should also consider that there may be odour from returned containers and enhanced pest controls may be needed.

SHOP STORE ROOM: BOTH RVM AND MANUAL RETURN POINT STORES

STORAGE OF CONTAINERS

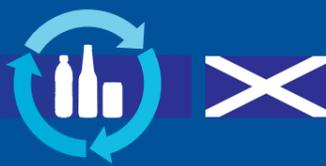
You will need safe and sufficient space to store containers separately from where open food is served or stored.

TOTE BOXES AND BAGS

You will be provided with tote boxes for glass containers and have to buy bags from recognised suppliers to store plastic and metal containers. When bags and totes are full staff will need to add special labels so that the returned containers can be collected and refunds can be given to retailers.

COLLECTING THE CONTAINERS

The frequency of collections of containers from your store will depend on your store size and container volumes. When you register your business with Circularity Scotland you will have to give information about your estimated monthly container volumes and the level of access vehicles will have to collect containers.



HOW TO APPLY FOR AN EXEMPTION FROM BEING A RETURN POINT OPERATOR

If you believe you will not be able to feasibly host a return point in your store, you can apply for an exemption. There are two types of exemptions offered: a **proximity exemption** and an **environmental health exemption**.

APPLYING FOR A PROXIMITY EXEMPTION



The Scottish Government via Zero Waste Scotland have set up a Return Point Mapping & Exemption Support service. You can insert information about your business to help you find an alternative business in your area that is willing to take back containers at their premises on your behalf.

Proximity Exemption Eligibility

- There is an alternative return point within reasonable proximity that still ensures reasonable access to a return point to your customers, AND
- The alternative return point operator has agreed to take returns on your behalf, AND
- The alternative return point operates at similar opening times and provides a similar level of accessibility as your premises (e.g. wheelchair accessibility).

Application process for a Proximity Exemption



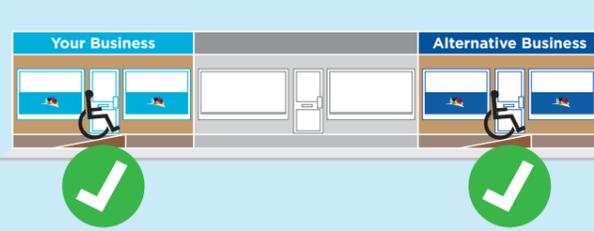
Zero Waste Scotland manage the exemption application process on behalf of the Scottish Government. It is estimated that an exemption application will take 35 days to process.

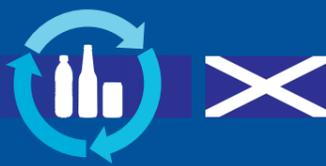
It is recommended that you collect all the information you need before starting the application process. If you begin the application process but do not submit the application then all information you have input will be lost.

Zero Waste Scotland Proximity Exemption Application Form	Zero Waste Scotland Proximity Exemption Application Guidance
<p>The application form that you must complete to secure a proximity exemption.</p> <p>tinyurl.com/2mas5vtb</p>  <p>SCAN ME</p>	<p>This guidance document tells you what information to insert into each part of the application form.</p> <p>tinyurl.com/3k23nujj</p>  <p>SCAN ME</p>

TO SECURE A PROXIMITY EXEMPTION YOU WILL NEED TO DEMONSTRATE:



<p>Your Business</p> <p>Store Opening Times</p> <p>Monday 07.00 - 22.30 Tuesday 07.00 - 22.30 Wednesday 07.00 - 22.30 Thursday 07.00 - 22.30 Friday 07.00 - 22.30 Saturday 07.00 - 22.30 Sunday 07.00 - 19.30</p> <p>Alternative Business</p> <p>Store Opening Times</p> <p>Monday 07.00 - 22.00 Tuesday 07.00 - 22.00 Wednesday 07.00 - 22.00 Thursday 07.00 - 22.00 Friday 07.00 - 22.00 Saturday 07.00 - 22.00 Sunday 07.00 - 19.00</p>	<h3>1 OPENING TIMES</h3> <p>The opening times for your business and alternative business (Section B Q1). The alternative business must open for at least 80% of the time you are open. You should use a 24 hour clock format.</p>
<p>Your Business Alternative Business</p>  <p>Within 400m</p>	<h3>2 DISTANCE</h3> <p>The distance between your store and an alternative business that will take your customers' containers. Ideally the alternative would be within 400 metres of your business, but there is flexibility. You can use Google maps "walking" function to show how far a pedestrian would travel.</p>
<p>Your Business Alternative Business</p> 	<h3>3 ACCESSIBILITY</h3> <p>The accessibility criteria for your business and alternative business taking your returns. You could include information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheelchair access • Wide aisles • Parking • Hearing loops
	<h3>4 AGREEMENT</h3> <p>You MUST have agreement from the alternative business including contact details of an approved person, address and company registration number. You also need to know if they will be operating a manual return point or reverse vending machine.</p>
	<h3>5 CONTAINER VOLUMES</h3> <p>You need to know approximate monthly container volumes of your PET Plastic bottles, steel and aluminium cans, and glass bottles.</p>



APPLYING FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH EXEMPTION

Environmental Health Exemption eligibility

- Operating a return point would result in you risking a breach of any of your environmental health obligations, AND
- Your premises cannot be reasonably altered to avoid risking breach of any of your environmental health obligations in operating a return point.

Application process for an Environmental Health Exemption



Zero Waste Scotland manage the exemption application process on behalf of the Scottish Government. It is estimated that an exemption application will take 35 days to process.

It is recommended that you collect all the information you need before starting the application process. If you begin the application process but do not submit the application then all information you have input will be lost.

Zero Waste Scotland Environmental Health Exemption Application Form

The application form that you must complete to secure a proximity exemption.

tinyurl.com/232twz6v



Zero Waste Scotland Environmental Health Exemption Application Guidance

This guidance document tells you what information to insert into each part of the application form.

tinyurl.com/mvd7swe9



Collecting information for an Environmental Health Exemption

To secure a environmental health exemption you will need to collect the following information:

A store plan that demonstrates:

- All internal store space, including sales and storage space.
- The internal area of your store in m².

What type of store you operate, options include:

- General retailer.
- Food-to-go retailer.
- Restaurant or café with both food to go and sit in.
- Closed loop hospitality/retailers with off sale drinks.

Approximate monthly container volumes of your PET Plastic bottles, metal cans and glass bottles, bands range from:

- Less than 3,000 containers.
- 3,000 to 9,000 containers.
- 10,000 to 20,000 containers.
- More than 20,000 containers.



OBLIGATIONS THAT ARE CONSIDERED RELEVANT FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH EXEMPTION

To secure an environmental health exemption you will need to show what legal obligations you could breach by hosting a return point.

Obligations that are considered relevant for an environmental health exemption are listed below (not an exhaustive list). You should provide detailed descriptions and submit photos to show:

Food safety

- How open food sold in your business would be near to returned containers either at checkouts or in store rooms.
- The need for hand washing facilities or personal protective equipment for staff to operate a return point safely.
- The potential increase in pest control measures.



Use photos to support your application

Health and safety

- Problems with stacking and storing returned containers.
- Increased risks of slips and trips for staff and customers due to spills from returned containers.
- Challenges associated with handling broken glass.
- Increased risk of injury to staff when handling heavy containers.



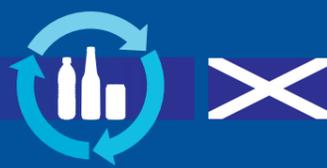
Use photos to support your application

Fire safety

- Potential risk of blocking an escape route from storing containers or installing a reserve vending machine.
- Increasing distance of travel to an escape route from storing returned containers or installing a reserve vending machine.
- Increased fire risk from changes to location and storage of returned containers and other materials.



Use photos to support your application



OBLIGATIONS THAT ARE CONSIDERED RELEVANT FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH EXEMPTION

Alterations required to your store

After you have described the legal obligations you could breach, you need to show what alteration need to be made to your store.



For convenience stores below 100m² you will need to provide:

- Detailed descriptions of what alterations are needed to ensure compliance.
- A plan of your premises showing the alterations required.
- Clear photographs of any areas of the store needing alterations.



In addition, for convenience stores over 100m² you will need to provide:

- The cost for any alterations that require to be made, should be valued and itemised by a VAT registered tradesperson. The threshold for exemption consideration is £2,000 (excluding VAT).
- All costs should be quoted excluding VAT.
- The quote should be attached on the tradesperson's headed paper.
- Your planning Use Class. A convenience store is considered Class 1 Use Class. You can see the full list of Use Classes for Scotland [here](#).
- If your convenience store has a food to go concession and seating area, you should stipulate how many seats you have and include photographic evidence of the seating areas.



YOU SHOULD CONSIDER ADDRESSING THE FOLLOWING ALTERATIONS IN YOUR APPLICATION:

The installation of reverse vending machines is a method that could be used to reduce the risk of breaching environmental health risks, therefore you should detail why you cannot host a Reverse Vending Machine in your store. For example:



You do not have enough space for an RVM.



You are unlikely to get high enough volumes of containers to justify the cost of buying/leasing and operating an RVM.

Describe changes required to ensure the separation of returned containers and where open food is sold.



Show a requirement for Perspex screens or dividers at checkouts or in store rooms and the impact on existing store layouts.

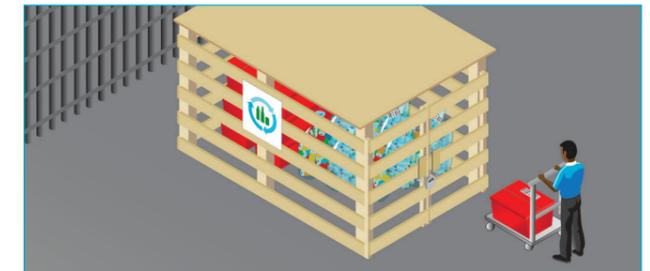


Outline the requirement for new or additional handwashing facilities at checkouts or in store rooms and the impact on existing store layouts.

Describe changes needed to deliver sufficient and suitable storage for containers.



Show that you do not have sufficient storage space to store the expected number of container returns and reduce your ability to clean storage areas (use the average number of containers your business sells in a week for expected number of containers).



Detail how you will deliver additional storage space, for example new, secure storage space external to the store.

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CONTACT

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