exchange for change

What Groceries Retailers need to do now

Materials in scope*

- PET
- Aluminium
- Steel

150ml - 3L



*There are separate arrangements underway for managing glass in Wales.

Who is Exchange For Change?

Exchange For Change is the official operator of the UK's Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), launching on 1 October, 2027.

We're an independent, not-for-profit organisation, responsible for designing and delivering DRS across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Our purpose is to increase the rate and quality of recycling in the UK.

As a groceries retailer, it is important that you understand your obligations, monitor key dates and begin preparing now.

What is a deposit return scheme (DRS)?

A Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) is designed to boost recycling and cut down on litter. It works by adding a deposit to the price of in-scope drinks containers, which consumers get back when they return the empty container for recycling.

Who this is for

Groceries retailers will need to operate a return point unless they are exempt.

All groceries retailers will need to charge a deposit on in-scope drinks containers.

How a DRS works

STEP 1



DEPOSIT
Customers pay a 20p deposit on each product at purchase.

STEP 2



RETURN
The 20p deposit is refunded when the empty container is returned.

STEP 3



RECYCLED
The returned material is collected and recycled.

Your obligation as a groceries retailer*

1

All groceries retailers that are mandated to operate a return point must register with Exchange For Change as a return point operator. You can register via our website here.

2

Groceries retailers must operate a return point unless exempt

Consider which return point option is right for your business.

Automatic (Reverse Vending Machines):
Investment upfront, but offers faster processing and container checks for busy locations.

Smart Bins:
Are considered a manual solution and will not be on our certified RVM list.

Manual Take Back:
An option for smaller volume retailers, requiring staff involvement and storage space.

3

All groceries retailers that act as producers must also register with Exchange For Change as a producer.

Visit our website for further information on producer obligations: exchangeforchange.co.uk/producers.

*other obligations apply as per regulations.

Deposit Return Scheme Timeline

The key dates retailers should be aware of are:

Now!
Start preparing for DRS launch, and sign up to our newsletter for all the latest retailer updates producer updates

Q3 2026
Phase 1
Registration opens

Q1 2027
Phase 2
Registration opens

Prepare for go-live
If you are required to host a return point, ensure you understand your obligations, have the necessary arrangements in place, and are ready for the scheme launch

October 2027
Scheme launches

Retail handling fee

Automated Return Points (RVMs):

Tier 1: 5p per container for up to 225k in-scope items per year

Tier 2: 1.3p per container for annual returns above 225k

Manual Return Points (Smart Bins or Staff-Operated):
3p per container

RVM specifications

We have published details on RVM specifications, guidelines and certified suppliers on our website here.

Groceries retailers required to host a return point must register now

Registration timings

Registration will be taking place over two phases.

Phase one: September 2026

Phase two: From January 2027

You can register at exchangeforchange.co.uk

Further detail on eligibility for each phase, the registration process and submission requirements will be shared through official Exchange For Change channels.

Why this matters

The engagement of groceries retailers forms a critical part of getting the scheme ready.

Groceries retailers should not wait to register. Early registration and engagement will help you understand what you need to do, access the right information at the right time and avoid issues closer to launch.

Grants

Some small businesses will be eligible for grant funding to support with the cost of installing an RVM. To check your store's eligibility, click here.

Exemptions

Small groceries retailers:
You do not need to register if your business has a retail selling space of less than 100m² in an urban area.

Other exemptions:
Exemptions may apply based on proximity to another return point or premises restrictions. View the exemptions criteria and use our postcode tool here to understand if your store maybe eligible to apply for an exemption.

What Groceries Retailers need to do now

- [ ] Prepare for charging the deposit*
- [ ] Check if you need to become a Return Point Operator
- [ ] Register your Return Point with Exchange For Change
- [ ] Set up your Return Point
- [ ] Prepare your teams and stores
- [ ] Sign up to receive Exchange For Change updates

*Further guidance on requirements for displaying the deposit price will follow.

Stay informed

with newsletters, practical updates, timelines and guidance on the UK's Deposit Return Scheme, plus details of upcoming free webinars and events. Visit **exchangeforchange.co.uk**

Have questions?

Contact us at
enquiries@exchangeforchange.co.uk

Where to find official information

Retailers should use official Exchange For Change channels for the latest scheme information, guidance and updates.

exchangeforchange.co.uk/retailers

exchangeforchange.co.uk/knowledge-hub