

Written evidence from Bryson Recycling

About Bryson Recycling

1. Bryson Recycling is the UK's largest social enterprise recycling provider. We are predominantly based in Northern Ireland and have activities in N Wales and Donegal, Ireland. We either collect or sort recyclables from 50% of homes in Northern Ireland.
2. We are innovators and played an important role in establishing the Welsh collections blueprint which is at the heart of the impressive recycling results achieved in Wales. Our approach is to be primarily interested in the environmental and social outcomes from recycling and have built a highly innovative and collaborative approach as a business. Core to this is the view that recyclables should be collected and processed as a resource that meets a specification required by end users. This will allow the full benefits of recycling to be realised through local remanufacturing that produces jobs in the UK and Ireland and limits the need to export materials to countries that may not have an adequate waste management infrastructure to handle residues and non-target materials that are common in poorly sorted recyclables.
3. We have played an important role in exploring the feasibility of a digital DRS (DDRS) which we define as the use of unique serialised codes on drinks containers that can be recognised through the use of a mobile phone app. This allows the user to redeem their deposit when they are at an authorised deposit point which has its own unique QR code to activate the app. This enables people to authorise and use their own recycling containers at home to redeem their deposit and recycle the item.

Key points we would like to raise

4. Bryson Recycling has carried out a trial of DDRS in Whitehead to 2000 houses. This was carried out to understand how householders would respond to the use of an App, designed by Cryptocycle, that enables householders to redeem their deposits at home using their standard kerbside recycling service which in this case is provided by Bryson. The process is described in the Cryptocycle response to this enquiry. A report of the findings will be published in April by Queens University and will show a very favourable response by the participants of surveys and focus groups questioned about their experience of using the App.
5. Following on from the trial, Bryson facilitated the formation of the Digital DRS Industry Working Group which is comprised of leading industry bodies and companies that would be impacted by DRS. A full submission from the working group has been provided to this enquiry.
6. Bryson is of the view that a DDRS could provide a solution to the significant downsides that have been raised to the enquiry about the function of a DRS. We believe that forthcoming legislation should allow a DDRS to be accommodated without unduly delaying the implementation of a form of DRS.
7. Bryson believes that the fundamental reasons for introducing a DRS are welcome – namely reducing litter, increasing recycling and improving the quality of recyclables to enable local

reprocessing. Should a DRS be possible we believe that it would achieve the following core results at a fraction of the cost of a standard approach to DRS:

- Perform better at reducing litter, by enabling a much wider and affordable distribution of 'on the go' collection points.
- Increase the quantity of materials recycled due to the improved convenience of the system.

8. However it is right also to acknowledge that a digital DRS will not, on its own, achieve the quality of recyclables required by reprocessors. It is our view that this should not be overlooked, even if a very compelling case of Digital DRS were to be demonstrated. We have heard first hand from drinks producers who plan to introduce much greater recycled content to plastic drinks containers that the quality of plastic generated from the current recycling collection methods does not achieve the standards required to meet make food grade recycled bottles.
9. The issue of quality needs to apply across the board in recycling, for drinks containers which are in scope for DRS and for other packaging items that fall under EPR (extended producer responsibility). It is also important for items that fall under the responsibility of Councils and are not in scope for either the DRS or EPR scheme (e.g. paper). These items that fall outside of DRS still need to be collected within the household kerbside collection service.
10. Our view is that the introduction of EPR legislation which has been released for consultation at the same time as the DRS consultation exercise, should, along with a consistent approach to recycling, conclusively deal with the issue of quality for all recyclables collected from home.
11. The impact of a standard DRS on the current kerbside recycling service provided to householders would be very significant. Bryson predicts a reduction of 38% in the weight of materials collected. It will become the responsibility of the householder to take these items to a central point to recycle and redeem their deposit.
12. Our view is that a well designed and consistent kerbside collection system should follow the Welsh collections blueprint. EPR should use quality specification requirements to ensure that the correct quality of all items collected are adequate. This would ensure that all materials meet quality standards and that the well established approach of having recyclables collected from the household is maintained and enhanced.
13. The Welsh blueprint collections model allows for all materials that are in scope for DRS, EPR and the responsibility of councils to be collected weekly, along with food waste, at the same time. This should provide an efficient, easy to use and low cost solution that achieves all the requirements of DRS and the wider objectives of the related EPR and consistency agendas.