

[News story: David Mundell celebrates LGBT History Month](#)

The event will celebrate the work of Scottish LGBT campaigners and organisations who support the LGBT community in Scotland. It will also feature a pop up photographic exhibition created by [Fife Contemporary](#) with images by young people from two Fife LGBT groups – Kirkcaldy’s Flavours of Fife and Madras College’s Madras Pride. The young people were been supported by Swedish-born artist and photographer Jannica Honey. Some of the young photographers will also attend the event to talk about the artwork and their experiences during the project.

Speaking ahead of the reception, Mr Mundell said:

Coming out was one of the most difficult things I have done, but also one of the most important. I was overwhelmed by the support I received from friends, family and colleagues.

Everyone should feel able to live their lives as they wish, in safety and confidence, without fear of judgement or discrimination. We have come a huge way in better rights for our LGBT communities, and LGBT History Month is a valuable reminder of those hard-won achievements.

But we still have more to do to build a wholly inclusive and accepting society. This month I hope that, by reflecting on our collective history, we continue to pave the way for a fairer future.

In Edinburgh this week I look forward to honouring some of Scotland’s most important LGBT organisations and diversity champions. And I am very pleased to be able to showcase the work of a very talented group of young LGBT photographers from Fife.

An image from the Fife Contemporary pop up photography exhibition

Taking place every February, [LGBT History Month](#) is an opportunity to celebrate lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender lives and culture, and to recognise the significant contribution of LGBT people to our communities.

An image from the Fife Contemporary pop up photography exhibition

Guests at the Scottish Secretary’s reception will include representatives from Pink Saltire, Edinburgh Trans Women and LGBT Youth Scotland, as well as education professionals from the University of Edinburgh and Fife Council.

An image from the Fife Contemporary pop up photography exhibition

The UK Government is committed to improving the lives of LGBT individuals. Last year we published the largest ever [survey](#) of LGBT people.

An image from the Fife Contemporary pop up photography exhibition
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[Press release: Government sets out plans to overhaul waste system](#)

- Government launches consultations to overhaul the waste system, cut plastic pollution, and move towards a more circular economy.
- Packaging producers set to pay the full cost of dealing with their waste, more consistent household recycling, and a Deposit Return Scheme for cans and bottles, subject to consultation.
- Consultation also launched for a world-leading tax on plastic packaging which does not meet a minimum threshold of at least 30% recycled content.
- New analysis published today shows the net benefit to UK economy of the changes will run into millions.
- Plans for a major overhaul of the country's waste system have been set out in a suite of consultations launched today by Environment Secretary Michael Gove.

Building on commitments made in the government's landmark [Resources and Waste Strategy](#) published in December, the consultations provide detail on plans to make [packaging producers pay the full cost of dealing with their waste](#) and to introduce a [consistent set of materials collected across England from households for recycling](#), and bringing in a [Deposit Return Scheme](#) (DRS) for cans and bottles, subject to consultation.

The changes will make up a key part of the government's upcoming Environment Bill, to be introduced early in the second session of Parliament.

As well as making businesses and manufacturers pay the full cost of recycling or disposing of their packaging waste, householders will see the existing complicated recycling system simplified. A consultation has launched today on a consistent set of recyclable materials collected from all households and businesses, and consistent labelling on packaging so consumers know what they can recycle.

These will include separate weekly food waste collections for every household in England and could include free garden waste collections for households with gardens. Having comprehensive and frequent collections will ensure more reliable services for householders while retaining local flexibility.

The government is also seeking views on introducing a Deposit Return Scheme

for cans and bottles, subject to consultation, alongside setting out two potential models – ‘all-in’ or ‘on-the-go’. This could drive up the recycling of an estimated three billion plastic bottles which are currently incinerated, sent to landfill or left to pollute our streets, countryside and marine environment.

On the same day, government has also launched its consultation on [introducing a world-leading tax on plastic packaging](#) which does not meet a minimum threshold of at least 30% recycled content, subject to consultation, from April 2022. This will address the current issue of it often being cheaper to use new, non-recycled plastic material despite its greater environmental impact.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

We are committed to going further and faster to reduce, reuse, recycle and cut waste. That’s why we are leading the way to move away from being a ‘throw-away’ society and drive up domestic recycling.

Through our plans we will introduce a world-leading tax to boost recycled content in plastic packaging, make producers foot the bill for handling their packaging waste, and end the confusion over household recycling.

We are committed to cementing our place as a world leader in resource efficiency, so we can be the first generation to leave our environment in a better state than we inherited it.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond said:

Plastic packaging makes up two-thirds of all the plastic waste that pollutes this country and wreaks havoc on our environment. It’s our responsibility to do something about it and that’s why we will introduce a new tax on the producers of plastic packaging that don’t use enough recycled material.

This action, coupled with the other measures we are bringing in, will help drive up recycling, cut the amount of new plastic being used and protect our environment for future generations.

To help drive up household recycling levels, the government will introduce a consistent set of recyclable materials for collection in England, no matter which part of the country people live in. Costs of managing packaging waste will be funded by industry through a packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) system. This will see industry pay higher fees if their packaging is harder to reuse or recycle and will encourage sustainable design, subject to the consultation launched today. EPR for packaging will raise between £800 million and £1 billion a year for recycling and disposal.

Consistent recycling collections

- To help drive up household recycling levels, the government will introduce a consistent set of recyclable materials for collection in England (including separate food waste collection), no matter which part of the country people live in.
- The consultation sets out options for how this will work in practice and which widely-recyclable material should be included, such as plastic bottles and plastic pots, tubs and trays, glass packaging (bottles and jars), paper and card, and metal packaging.

Deposit Return Scheme

- In launching the consultation, the government has proposed a DRS that could operate for cans, and plastic and glass bottles.
- Government will seek views on two options for how the DRS could work if introduced. The first option, known as the 'all-in' model, would target a large amount of drinks beverages placed on the market, irrespective of size. The second option, known as the 'on-the-go' model, would restrict the drinks containers in-scope to those less than 750ml in size and sold in single format containers. This model would target drinks most often sold for consumption outside of the home (while 'on-the-go').
- This could drive up the recycling of an estimated three billion plastic bottles which are currently incinerated, sent to landfill or left to pollute streets, countryside and the marine environment.
- Similar schemes already operate successfully in other countries – for example, total return rates of drinks containers in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden are at 90%, 92%, 98%, 92% and 85% respectively.

Extended producer responsibility for packaging

- New plans set out by government will see the costs of recycling borne by those that produce packaging waste and place it on the market.
- Currently, packaging producers pay only around 10 per cent of the cost of dealing with packaging waste. By increasing that to cover the full amount, government will incentivise producers to think carefully about using less packaging, and to switch to using packaging that is easier to recycle.
- Following the overhaul of the packaging regulations, the government will explore extended producer responsibility schemes for items that can be harder or costly to recycle. As well as improving existing schemes for cars, electrical goods and batteries, this could include things such as textiles, fishing gear, vehicle tyres, certain materials from construction and demolition, and bulky waste such as mattresses, furniture and carpets.

Plastic Packaging Tax

- At Budget 2018, government announced that from April 2022 it would introduce a world-leading new tax on the production and import of plastic packaging with less than 30% recycled content, subject to

consultation.

- The government's call for evidence on single-use plastic waste last year highlighted that recycled plastic is often more expensive than new plastic, despite its lower environmental impacts. The Government wants to shift the economic incentives involved in the production of more sustainable plastic packaging, encouraging greater use of recycled plastic and helping to reduce plastic waste.
- The government is now seeking views on proposals for how the tax will work. For example, which packaging should be in scope of the tax, how to assess recycled content, and which businesses will be liable for the tax. The government is open to views on the best design options.

Government will seek views on its plans for 12 weeks.

The consultations build on existing government work to tackle unnecessary waste and plastic pollution, including a world-leading ban on microbeads in personal care products, a 5p plastic bag charge which has taken over 15 billion single-use plastic bags out of circulation and a consultation to extend it to all retailers, plans to ban the sale of plastic straws, stirrers, and plastic-stemmed cotton buds, a £15 million pilot scheme for reducing food waste, and up to £10 million to clear the worst abandoned waste sites that blight local communities.

Press release: Brokenshire champions parks with over £13 million new funding

- Government announces £9.7 million for local authorities to improve their parks and green spaces
- A further £2.75 million confirmed for the [Pocket parks plus programme](#)
- £1.2 million invested in the National Trust and The National Lottery Heritage Fund's Future Parks Accelerator initiative

Councils across the country are to benefit from more than £13 million funding to breathe new life in to our green spaces for the benefit of all, Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP confirmed today (Sunday 17 February).

From day-to-day maintenance costs to essential playground repairs and the creation of new green spaces, £9.7 million of new funding will give local leaders and communities resources to better maintain, protect and increase their recreational spaces.

An additional £2.75 million will also be made available for the pocket parks

plus programme to support communities to take the lead in transforming their neglected and derelict spaces.

A further £1.2 million has been provided to the National Trust and The National Lottery Heritage Fund's Future Parks Accelerator initiative. The partnership supports local authorities to test new and innovative approaches to managing and funding parks, ensuring the benefits of public parks and green spaces are enjoyed by future generations.

With this latest set of actions, this government reaffirms its commitment to creating great places to live and work and ensure communities are able to enjoy the benefits parks and green spaces bring to local life.

Communities Secretary, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

Our parks and green spaces are huge assets to our towns and cities, offering precious spaces for all of us to get together, to exercise and to play.

This latest funding will support bold proposals to help renovate and restore existing parks and create new vibrant, safe green spaces for our communities.

The future of our nation's parks is an issue close to all our hearts and we will do all we can to preserve these vital green lungs that breathe life into our communities.

Today's announcement builds on action the government has already taken to encourage more people to make better use of parks including:

- creating the £1 million 'pocket parks' fund to help communities transform neglected and derelict spaces and establish over 80 new green spaces in urban areas across the country
- extending the Green Flag Award licence by a further five years in September 2017 means the people behind Britain's best parks and green spaces will continue to be recognised and awarded for their tireless dedication

The government will continue to work with the Parks Action Group, which represents leaders from across the parks sector, to help ensure that current and future generations can continue to access safe, high quality and local parks.

[Press release: Foreign Secretary](#)

statement on the Republic of North Macedonia



Following ratification of the Prespa Agreement, the Secretary General of the United Nations has been informed by the governments of Greece and Macedonia that the Prespa Agreement is now effective.

The UK Government has received a request from the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia to adopt and use the name and terminologies referred to in Article 1 (3) of the Prespa Agreement.

The UK Government will henceforth refer to Macedonia as the Republic of North Macedonia.

Following the conclusion of this historic agreement, Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

Both sides have now taken the necessary steps to make the Prespa Agreement effective. Her Majesty's Government congratulates the Governments of the Hellenic Republic and Republic of North Macedonia on their courage and determination in ending this long-standing bilateral dispute.

This is an historic moment for both countries. We look forward to working with North Macedonia and Greece both bilaterally and through the North Atlantic Alliance in the interests of European security.

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Press release: The Minister for Europe meets Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister

The Minister for Europe, Sir Alan Duncan, today (16 February) held a meeting with his Russian counterpart First Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Titov, at the Munich Security Conference on 15-16 February.

A Foreign and Commonwealth Office spokesperson said:

The Minister for Europe met First Deputy Foreign Minister Titov today in the margins of the Munich Security Conference.

Sir Alan underlined that we have deep differences, and the Russian state would need to choose a different path and act as a responsible international partner before there can be a change in our current relationship with Russia.

The Foreign Office Minister reiterated the UK's and Allies' firm stance in response to the Russian state's reckless use of chemical weapons in Salisbury.

He noted that functional channels of engagement are important to raise concerns and discuss international issues. But he made clear that Russia must address the concerns of the international community. This includes ending its destabilising activity in Ukraine; and the persecution of the LGBT community in Chechnya.

Sir Alan reiterated to First Deputy Foreign Minister Titov that the UK Government has no quarrel with the Russian people. The UK will continue to build and strengthen our cultural ties and people to people links with Russia wherever we can.

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