

Press release: Views sought on reward and return schemes for drinks containers

The government today [invited views](#) on how reward and return schemes for drinks containers could work in England by issuing a call for evidence.

More than eight million tonnes of plastic are discarded into the world's oceans each year, putting marine wildlife under serious threat.

Up to 80% of this is estimated to have been originally lost or discarded on land before washing out to sea, and plastic bottles are a particular concern – with figures showing just 57% of those sold in the UK in 2016 collected for recycling.

This compares to a record 90% of deposit-marked cans and bottles that were returned to dedicated recycling facilities in Denmark, and a return rate of almost 80% of beverage containers in South Australia, both of which have a form of deposit return scheme.

To improve these numbers and increase recycling, Environment Secretary Michael Gove has asked organisations and individuals to share their views with the government on the advantages and disadvantages of different types of reward and return schemes for plastic, metal and glass drinks containers that could help reduce the number of bottles entering our waterways.

The call for evidence opens today for four weeks and ministers have asked the Voluntary and Economic Incentives Working Group, set up as part of the [Litter Strategy](#), to accelerate its work and report back early in the New Year.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

We must protect our oceans and marine life from plastic waste if we are to be the first generation to leave our environment in a better state than we found it.

That means tackling the rise in plastic bottles entering our waters by making it simpler and easier to recycle and dispose of them appropriately.

Today we are launching a call for evidence to help us understand how reward and return schemes for plastic bottles and other drinks containers could work in England.

This approach has already seen great success in other countries such as Denmark in curbing plastic pollution and we want to hear people's ideas on how we could make it work in England.

This adds to the progress we have already made in cleaning up our oceans by significantly reducing plastic bag use and drawing up one of the world's toughest bans on plastic microbeads.

The evidence submitted will be examined by the government's working group which includes brand and retail giants such as Coca Cola and Tesco.

This builds on successful waste initiatives already launched by the government, including the [5p plastic bag charge](#) which has seen enormous success in changing consumer behaviour by reducing use by 83 per cent.

Some nine billion fewer carrier bags have been distributed since the charge was introduced, with more than £95million raised donated to environmental, educational and other good causes.

In addition, legislation for the government's [ban on microbeads](#) – welcomed by campaigners as one of the toughest in the world – will be introduced later this year and we are now assessing how best to tackle other sources of microplastics from polluting the seas.

[Press release: Next phase in rollout of Universal Credit confirmed](#)

The next stage of the rollout of Universal Credit to all claimants starts on Wednesday 4 October 2017.

Universal Credit is available in all jobcentres across the country to new single jobseekers and the government has been rolling out the [Universal Credit full service](#) to all new claimants, including families and people who cannot work.

In July, Universal Credit full service was successfully introduced to 29 jobcentres across the country, making a total of 101 jobcentres with Universal Credit full service. In October we will introduce it to a further 45 jobcentres across the country.

The [commencement order confirming those plans](#) was published today (2 October 2017).

Universal Credit replaces the complex old system of 6 main out-of-work benefits with one simple monthly payment and is paid the same way many working people are.

The expansion is in line with the planned, gradual, safe rollout of Universal Credit.

As a percentage of the total expected caseload on Universal Credit, the number of households claiming Universal Credit is expected to increase from 8% in September to 13% in March 2018.

Follow DWP on:

[Press release: Minister Field reaffirms UK commitment to Afghanistan during visit to Kabul.](#)

Minister Field expressed the UK's continued support for the Afghan government, highlighting the excellent progress made on reforming the security sector, addressing anti-corruption and making progress on elections. The Minister stressed the need to focus on political solutions as the key to bringing a more peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

He also met with Attorney General Farid Hamidi to discuss the progress made by the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre (ACJC). The ACJC was set up in 2016 with UK funding and technical support, and since its formation, has successfully prosecuted a number of senior Afghan officials, highlighting the move towards ending impunity for corruption in Afghanistan.

The Minister also met with Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Karzai to discuss regional affairs and prospects for peace.

Minister for Asia and the Pacific Mark Field said:

The UK is committed to continuing its support for Afghanistan, and we continue to work closely with the Afghan Government as it seeks to overcome the legacy of over 40 years of conflict.

We work in close partnership with the government, and will continue to provide military, political and developmental assistance as this amazing country moves ever closer to becoming a more prosperous and stable state that provides real opportunities for the Afghan people.

The UK's combat mission to Afghanistan ended in 2014 but we continue to work closely with NATO on Afghanistan in a number of areas. As the framework nation for the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA), the UK has helped to train over 2,500 cadets, intended to be the next generation of military leaders.

By working closely together on corruption, a policy priority shared by both

the UK and Afghanistan, our technical assistance is helping to increase accountability and support the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre (ACJC). The first trial took place at the ACJC in November.

All the latest news is available on the Foreign Office page of the gov.uk website at: www.gov.uk/fco

Follow Minister Mark Field on Twitter @MarkFieldUK

[News story: A quicker process for removing Form A restrictions](#)

Today we have updated the [electronic Document Registration Service \(e-DRS\)](#) which business customers use to send and receive applications to update the register via [the portal](#), our online channel for transactions.

The update to the service will help to speed up the process for removing default Form A restrictions which protect multiple owners' interests in a property. Find full details of what these restrictions are, what they do, and the circumstances under which we enter them in [section 2 of Practice guide 24: private trusts of land](#).

When customers lodge documents via the portal, they need to tell us the type of registration they are performing, such as registering a new lease or submitting a document to support an application. Customers will now see a new option 'Removal of default Form A restriction (JP1)' in the 'types of registration' list. When customers use this option to remove a default Form A restriction we can remove the restriction much quicker. This is one of the ways customers can help us improve our overall speed of service.

Form A restrictions are entered in the register when a customer lodges an application where more than one person or company, or a person and a company, is being registered as the owner of a registered estate; and the customer has not given us evidence to support how the joint owners will hold the land or property.

When the Form A restriction is entered in the register, we send the customer an automated stock letter to inform them we have done this. If the customer returns this stock letter to us we can remove the restriction immediately if they send it within 30 days and we have not received an intervening application for the same title.

To return our stock letter via the portal and remove the restriction quicker, customers can simply 'check' the new radio button in e-DRS, enter the 'LR reference' we provide in our stock letter and upload the document.

In May 2017, we added 'JP Cancellation of Default Form A restriction' to the drop-down 'document type' list within e-DRS. We have now removed this option from the list and changed it to a radio button because customers told us they often overlooked the option on the drop-down list.

[News story: £10 billion new funding for Help to Buy Equity Loan](#)

The government will invest a further £10 billion in the Help to Buy Equity Loan, due to the popularity of the scheme across the country.

More than 130,000 completions have already taken place by people using the equity loan, which helps people buy a new build home with only a 5% deposit.

The new funding means that the [Help to Buy Equity Loan](#) could help around 135,000 more people to buy homes by 2021. This would bring the total number of households across England that would be supported through the scheme since it began in 2013 to around 360,000.

Some 81% of home purchases using the [equity loan scheme](#) have been made by first-time buyers, helping the total number of first-time buyers to increase by 70% between 2010 and 2016.

The new funding expands the government's commitment to help people make their dream of owning a home a reality. The Chancellor has been clear that support for buyers must be matched with support for building so that, over the longer term, housing becomes more affordable. This means land must be made available in the right places to build the homes we need. The government will therefore consult [at Budget](#) on an ambitious package of planning reforms, building on the [Housing White Paper](#).

These commitments build on the package of further measures announced by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Further Information

The Equity Loan scheme launched in April 2013 and funding has been committed until 2021. It works by the government providing an equity loan of up to 20% which is repaid when the home is sold, or after 25 years, whichever comes first.

Potential homeowners using the programme are subject to the normal affordability assessments undertaken by mortgage lenders. No interest or repayments are due during the first 5 years of the loan.

The Help to Buy: Equity Loan can be used to purchase a new build property up

to the value of £600,000, with a maximum equity loan of £120,000 (20%). In London, applicants are able to claim an equity loan up to 40% of the purchase price.

The housing announcements follows the most recent Help to Buy statistics which showed that [over 320,000 completions have taken place using one or more of the Help to Buy schemes](#), including over 275,000 first-time buyer households. Over 1 million Help to Buy: ISAs have now been opened by first-time buyers, offering government bonuses of up to £3,000 towards the cost of a first home.

Since 2010, the government has delivered over 300,000 affordable homes, and more than double the amount of council housing has been built in the seven years since 2010 than in the 13 years before it.