

# Charging for single-use disposable beverage cups consultation (Scottish Government)

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in Scotland. For information only for England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

## 1 Executive summary

The Scottish Government are consulting on the introduction of a national mandatory charge for single-use disposable beverage cups.

The consultation closes on 14 November 2024. [Click here](#) to complete the consultation. [Click here](#) to read the consultation paper.

## 2 Background

The use of single-use disposable beverage cups in Scotland is one of the highest in the EU, with an estimated 388.7 million used in 2021-22 (up from 200 million in 2018), creating 5,400 tonnes of waste each year. This is part of the four-fifths of Scotland's carbon footprint which comes from products and services that are manufactured, used and then thrown away. Keep Scotland Beautiful's 2023 Litter Survey supports this with the majority of people reporting they frequently see littered single-use disposable beverage cups. These not only have an impact from a litter perspective, but they can also potentially release harmful materials and chemicals to marine environments and cause damage to ecosystems.

To continue tackling the climate emergency, the Scottish Government believes that there is a need to introduce a policy with a minimum charge on single-use beverage cups in order to

reduce their use and thus reduce the environmental harm that they cause. They would like to build on the success of the introduction of the single-use carrier bag charge that was introduced in 2014 which demonstrated that a charge can positively influence consumption. This is the desired approach due to the way most single-use disposable cups are made from paper and lined with plastic which means they are not easily recyclable. In 2021-22, it was estimated that Scotland uses 71 single-use disposable beverage cups per capita per year, which is one of the highest in the European Union. A recent Zero Waste Scotland research paper entitled 'Consumption of Single-Use Disposable Beverage Cups in Scotland' forecasts that a minimum charge alone could reduce the number of single-use beverage cups by an estimated 15% to 39% per year by 2035. Responses to the 2019 Developing Scotland's circular economy consultation showed that 73% of organisations and 97% of individuals supported Scottish Ministers having the powers to require charges for single-use items that are harmful to the environment.

### **3 Proposals**

The proposals are as follows:

1. a charge of at least 25p should apply to all single-use beverage cups when an individual buys a drink of any kind, including through a loyalty scheme, to maximise coverage and ensure the charge is easily understood;
2. the charge will apply regardless of cup material, and therefore would include cups made of biodegradable material or bio-based plastics. While it can be argued that these are more sustainable than traditional plastics, they are still single-use and present their own sustainability challenges including a lack of recycling infrastructure and frequency of littering;
3. the charge will not apply when a drink is free, for instance in non-retail settings such as hospitals and care homes;
4. that there will be a limited number of exemptions based on purpose or setting, for instance in schools and when a drink is bought from a vending machine;
5. retailers should be able to retain reasonable implementation costs from the charge, in line with the approach taken for the single use carrier bags charge; and

6. to the extent it is legally deliverable within the competence of the Scottish Parliament, that net proceeds of the charge should be used for environmental or similar purposes.

The charge would be part of a wider array of measures to build a circular economy and reduce waste including the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme and the Deposit Return Scheme as well as work underway looking at banning single-use vapes and wet wipes containing plastic.

#### **4 Consultation Questions**

1. What would you consider a reasonable minimum price for a single-use disposable beverage cup, which is visible and separate to the price of the drink, to meet the aims of the scheme: to reduce the use of these items towards reusable alternatives?
2. Please provide reasons for your answer to question 1 - We would be interested in knowing your views on what price per cup would encourage behaviour change.
3. Alternatively, Scottish Ministers could require suppliers to charge in regulations but leave it up to suppliers to choose the price they charge for a single-use beverage cup. This approach would be supported by guidance provided by the Scottish Government. This is similar to the approach taken in the Netherlands. Do you prefer this approach?
4. Please provide reasons for your answer to question 3
5. Do you agree the proposed exemption for single-use cups sold in schools is appropriate?
6. Do you agree the proposed exemption for drinks sold from vending machines is appropriate?
7. Do you agree the proposed exemption for settings where a reusable cup is not practical is appropriate?
8. Do you think there should be other exemptions?
9. Where do you believe the funds generated from the charge should be directed?
  - a. to the advancement of environmental protection or improvement or for a similar purpose
  - b. in line with the single use carrier bag charge - retained by business and

- encouraged to be donated to good causes on a voluntary basis
  - c. collected by local or national government
  - d. I don't know
  - e. other
10. (Please only answer this question if you are a supplier of single-use disposable cups)  
To what extent do you agree with the recording requirements as set out below?
11. To what extent do you agree with the enforcement regime as set out below?
12. (Please only answer this question if you are a supplier of single-use disposable cups)  
What are the challenges you face to introducing the charge?
13. (Please only answer this question if you are a supplier of single-use disposable cups)  
How much time do you think it would take for your business to prepare to implement the charge?
14. (Please only answer this question if you are a supplier of single-use disposable cups)  
What could the Scottish Government do to assist in helping your business implement the charge?
15. Please provide any further information or evidence that should be considered in the accompanying interim Equalities Impact Assessment
16. Please provide any further information or evidence that should be considered in the accompanying interim Fairer Scotland Assessment
17. Please provide any further information or evidence that should be considered in the accompanying interim Island Communities Impact Assessment
18. Please provide any further information or evidence that should be considered in the accompanying interim Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment
19. Please provide any further information or evidence that should be considered in the accompanying interim Strategic Environmental Assessment

## **5 APSE Comment**

APSE encourages our members in Scotland to respond to this consultation and to make their views known on the proposals to charge for single-use disposable beverage cups. Collecting and disposing of these single-use cups is currently costing Scottish local authorities approximately £1 million per year.

Discussions on the way forward with all of the changes to waste and the sharing of best practice takes place in APSE Scotland's [Waste and Recycling advisory group](#) which is free to attend for APSE members. APSE also provides the secretariat for the Scotland Litter Managers Network. Should you wish to sign up for the next meeting of these groups please [click here](#)

**Garry Lee,**  
**Research and Coordination Officer**  
[glee@apse.org.uk](mailto:glee@apse.org.uk)

**Louise Melville,**  
**Principal Advisor (Scotland)**  
[lmelville@apse.org.uk](mailto:lmelville@apse.org.uk)

## Sign up for APSE membership to enjoy a whole range of benefits

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular advisory groups, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The advisory groups are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Advisory groups are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE advisory group meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email [enquiries@apse.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@apse.org.uk).

Our national advisory groups include:-

- FM and Building cleaning
- Catering (School Meals)
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Cost of Providing/Cost of Living Network
- Highways and Street Lighting
- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Local Authority Commercialisation, Income and Trading Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
- Recovery and Renewal
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Roads, highways and street lighting
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Waste Management, Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing

Visit [www.apse.org.uk](http://www.apse.org.uk) for more detail



Association for Public Service Excellence  
3rd floor,  
Trafford House,  
Chester Road, Manchester M32 0RS.  
telephone: 0161 772 1810  
fax: 0161 772 1811  
web: [www.apse.org.uk](http://www.apse.org.uk)

**NEW MUNICIPALISM**  
Delivering for local people and local economies