

You can bank on bottles

Cash-for-empties scheme to bring back memories of childhood pastime

By **Andrew Picken**

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COLLECTING bottles and returning them to the shop in exchange for a few pennies was, for many years, a common part of childhood.

As well as helping the youngsters to buy toys and sweets, glass from the bottles could be re-used.

Although this largely died out with the rise of canned drinks and plastic containers, a new Scottish scheme will allow shoppers to bring back their empties and collect a deposit.

SNP ministers have drawn up the plan as part of a bid to slash the amount of waste going to landfill.

Consumers would be offered cash, discount vouchers or even loyalty points as part of the 'deposit return' initiative.

Most commonly associated with products such as Barr's Irn-Bru, where customers get 30p back for every glass bottle, the idea is set to be extended to other materials, including aluminium trays from takeaways and tin cans.

A second idea that allows customers a small payment or voucher for recyclable items will also be piloted.

Hi-tech 'reverse vending', where customers feed empties into machines in exchange for loyalty card points is already in use at some Tesco stores.

Retailers, schools, venues and community centres will be encouraged to apply for cash from a £900,000 fund aimed at helping

with set-up costs.

It is hoped the schemes will eventually pay for themselves

through the sale of recyclable materials.

Environment Secretary Richard Lochhead said: 'A lot of us remember taking our empty glass bottles back to the shop for money.'

'Now, with the help of modern technology, this approach can also be used to recycle the valuable

'Make the most of our resources'

plastic bottles and metal cans we currently send to landfill.

'Last year, we made an election manifesto commitment to pilot deposit return and reverse vending systems for single-use plastic, glass and aluminium containers.'

'New recycling methods must be considered to help us continue to boost the recycling rate and make the most of our resources.'

Recycling quango Zero Waste Scotland estimates that about 22,000 tons of plastic drinks bottles go to landfill annually. This material, if recycled would be worth about £6 million a year.

Across the UK, it is estimated that 24 billion drinks containers could be recovered each year.

The deposit return and payment for recycling schemes are popular across Europe. In Germany,

for example, 98.5 per cent of the bottles which have a deposit are collected and recycled again.

The pilot schemes will run for a year and then an assessment will be made as to how successful the initiatives have been in increasing recycling as well as other issues such as stopping litter.

Iain Gulland, of Zero Waste Scotland, said: 'Deposit and return systems have proven successful in many other parts of the world. Trialling these in Scotland will allow us to see whether they could be adopted more widely.'





POP FANS: Children often boosted their pocket money by claiming deposits on bottles

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