

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**10 June 2026**

## **Exchange For Change Announces DRS Support for Retailers**

Exchange For Change, the industry-led organisation delivering the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, has today confirmed a package of targeted support for retailers, as work progresses towards the scheme's October 2027 launch.

The DRS regulations allow for retailers in urban areas with a retail footprint of less than 100m<sup>2</sup> to be automatically exempted from operating a return point for DRS items. However Exchange For Change has agreed an extension of the exemption criteria with regulators in all three nations, allowing for retailers with a sales area of between 100m<sup>2</sup> and 199m<sup>2</sup> in urban settings and rural retailers with less than 200m<sup>2</sup> of sales area to apply for a size-based exemption. Further exemption allowances have also been agreed on the basis of proximity, heritage or listed building restrictions, site access or lack of access to utilities.

In addition, Exchange For Change is making available £60m in grant funding to help up to 10,000 small, independent retailers meet the cost of installing Reverse Vending Machines (RVMs) across England, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Grants of £6,000 will be made available per site to qualifying small, independent retailers in three annual payments of £2,000, which will be funded three months after the installation of an RVM.

### **Russell Davies, Exchange For Change CEO said:**

"Retailers will play a fundamental role in transforming how we increase recycling and reduce litter in every corner of the UK through the Deposit Return Scheme.

"This package of support has been developed following extensive consultation with industry and intended to help retailers of different sizes make the best choice for their business, whether that's installing an RVM or applying for an exemption.

"Together with the Return Handling Fee, the extension to exemptions and the provision of grants for small, independent retailers is another significant milestone in our work to deliver a scheme that is fair for business and accessible and easy to use for all consumers."

Today's news follows the announcement last week of the Return Handling Fee (RHF), which has been structured into tiers to take account of the diversity in the UK's retail landscape:

- Manual return points – 3p per container
- Automatic return points
  - Tier 1 – 5p per container, up to 225,000 in-scope items returned annually
  - Tier 2 – 1.3p per container, for annual in-scope returns in excess of 225,000.

The RHF is designed to help cover costs involved in purchasing equipment for the collection and storage of beverage containers, along with items such as staff training and rental value of the floor space or any other part of the premises used to collect or store returnable containers.

The extension of exemption criteria is intended to allow more retailers to make a choice about whether they wish to be part of delivering the DRS by operating a return point. It will

be contingent on there being sufficient local provision of return points, and Exchange For Change will act as the body providing approval for exemptions.

While groceries retailers with a retail space above 200m<sup>2</sup> may apply for an exemption based on size, the new criteria will uphold a presumption against granting an exemption to those greater than or equal to 200m<sup>2</sup>.

Further details on how to apply for exemptions and detailed eligibility criteria for grants will be made available in Q3 2026.

## ENDS

### Notes for editors:

Under the DRS, only groceries retailers (such as supermarkets, convenience stores and newsagents) are required to host return points open to all consumers. Other points of sale – including hospitality venues, leisure locations, online retailers and vending machine operators – are not obligated to operate return points.

These businesses will still be required to apply deposits to in-scope drinks sold for potential off-premises consumption and provide appropriate information to customers. Where drinks are consumed on-premises, a closed-loop approach may apply, with containers retained for collection rather than returned by consumers.

Retailer Size	Location	Registration Required?	Return Point Obligation	Exemption Available?
Under 100m <sup>2</sup>	Urban	No: automatically exempt	No obligation to operate a return point	N/A – Automatic exemption applies
Under 100m <sup>2</sup>	Rural	Yes: must register	Must operate a return point	Yes, if criteria are met*
100m <sup>2</sup> and over.	Urban or Rural	Yes: must register	Must operate a return point	Yes, if criteria are met*

### \* Exemption criteria

- **Proximity-based exemption** will be granted if adequate coverage within reasonable proximity is available, and Exchange for Change is satisfied that those premises are willing to accommodate the increased volume, based on an assessment against the criteria set out in this section.

- **Premises-based exemption** if it is not possible or not reasonable to host a return point due to characteristics of your business.

Further detail on these arrangements is available on the Exchange For Change website at [www.exchangeforchange.co.uk](http://www.exchangeforchange.co.uk).

In Scotland, please also refer to the SEPA Website for further information: [Information for businesses | Beta | SEPA | Scottish Environment Protection Agency](#)

**About Exchange For Change**

Exchange For Change is the trading name of UK Deposit Management Organisation (UK DMO). UK DMO has been designated to deliver the Deposit Return Scheme in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland. While the English and Northern Irish systems operate under separate legislation from the Scottish system, they will be all operated by the same organisation. The scheme will cover drinks containers made from PET plastic, steel and aluminium between 150ml and 3 litres. The Deposit Return Scheme will launch in October 2027. More information is available at [www.exchangeforchange.co.uk](http://www.exchangeforchange.co.uk).