

Green Party Waste Reduction Bill FactSheet

What Does Our Bill Do?

The Green Party Waste Reduction Bill 2017 does two things:

1. Introduces a deposit and return scheme for beverage containers: This Bill requires the Minister to bring in regulations under the Waste Management Act 1996 to create a deposit and return scheme. Anything that you're selling in a sealed beverage container - milk, alcohol, soft drinks, or water – must go through a deposit scheme. These containers can be plastic, glass, tin or of another material.
2. Ban on single-use non-compostable cups and tableware: The Minister is required to bring in regulations under the Waste Management Act 1996 to require that the sale or free distribution of non-compostable, disposable plastic cups, glasses, plates and other tableware is forbidden from the 1st January 2020.

Facts and Figures

Global Plastic Consumption

According to [the United Nations Environmental Programme](#), global plastic consumption has gone from 5.5 million tons in the 1950s to 110 million tons in 2009. Only [two types of plastic](#) - polyethylene terephthalate (PET, used for synthetic fibers and water bottles) and high density polyethylene (HDPE, used for jugs, bottle caps, water pipes)—are routinely recycled.

Between [22-43% percent](#) of plastic worldwide is disposed of in landfills¹, where its resources are wasted, it takes up valuable space, and it blights communities. Plastic packaging accounts for close to [39% of the total European plastics market and 62% of the plastic waste generated in the European Union each year](#).

According to UN #CleanSeas campaign to end marine litter, more than 8million tonnes of plastic leak into the oceans each year. This is equivalent to [dumping a truck of plastic into the sea every minute](#). It is now predicted that by 2050, there will be more plastic in the oceans than fish and that 99 per cent of seabirds will have ingested plastic.

[Plastic is primarily used](#) to extend the shelf life of food and reduce transportation costs due to weight. The social benefits of plastics must be weighed against the expansion of bio-alternatives, and the problems that plastics durability and their incredible volume worldwide constitute as a waste stream.

[Plastic production is estimated to use 8 percent of yearly global oil production](#) and is set to reach [20% by 2050](#). These are rare resources that contribute to climate change and should be preserved for more important purposes such as medical supplies.

¹ U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP), Valuing Plastics: The Business Case for Measuring, Managing and Disclosing Plastic Use in the Consumer Goods Industry (Nairobi: 2014).

Ireland and Plastic

In Ireland we are producing in the region [of 210,000 tonnes of plastic per year](#). The most recent [EPA Waste Packaging Statistics for Ireland 2013](#), states only 40% of plastic packaging is recycled and according to the [National Waste Report 2011](#) in 2011, at least 52.5% of all plastic packaging waste in Ireland went straight to landfill. [Zero Waste Alliance Ireland](#) say this figure could be even higher due to the lack of transparency around waste in Ireland. Much of our actual recycling is carried out in other countries and recent cases show that [up to 40% of recyclables](#) are often too contaminated to recycle.

The situation of micro-plastics pollution in Irish waters is now so severe that recent [EPA/GMIT research](#) shows eating freshwater fish may constitute a risk to people's health.

It is clear that prevention of waste is the best cure for the current plastic crisis. In 2002, Ireland proudly initiated the first plastic bag tax in the world in 2002. Since then, many European and African countries now also ban or charge for single-use carrier bags, [resulting in an over 90 per cent drop in their usage](#). Once again, Ireland has the opportunity to be a world leader in banning plastic.

The Need for an Irish Deposit and Return Scheme

According to the annual [Coastwatch Survey](#) results, drinks container litter is the most widespread and frequent shore litter in Ireland. The most common container materials are plastic, aluminium and glass. Apart from many environmental impacts, in a country with 7000km of seashore – such waste is bad for Irish tourism and green image that the country wants to convey.

In 2009, Ireland generated around 70,000 tonnes in PET (recyclable polyethylene terephthalate). Only 39% of these were collected for recycling/recovery, leaving the equivalent of over 27,000 tonnes of PET bottles lost from the recycling stream. According to VOICE Ireland this amounts to 2.3billion PET bottles going unrecycled each year.

In 2010, Ireland generated 7,555 tonnes of aluminium. Only 45% of these were collected/recycled (figures from Repak and EuroStat). VOICE Ireland estimates that the equivalent of 460.86 million aluminium cans annually go unrecycled.

Ireland has a around 81.1% collection rate for glass, however, packagers are increasingly moving away from glass towards plastic. According to [Trocaire's #gotthebottle campaign](#), over 152million litres of bottled water are sold every year in Ireland, most of which is in plastic packaging.

Benefits of a Deposit Scheme

Public support: [A recent opinion poll carried by Coastwatch Ireland](#) of 1,426 adults and children over 10 found that 89% were positive about such a proposal, with just 6% against and 5% giving it "conditional approval". The over-40s said they had "fond memories" of the good old days when there was such a scheme. Incentives were the first choice for measures to reduce drinks-container litter, with 50% support, followed by stricter law-enforcement (35%) and more clean-ups (21%).

Employment and Income: According to [a 2011 report by the CPRE](#), 3,000-4,300 full time employments could be created through the development of a deposit refund scheme.

If a charge of €0.10 deposit/container was introduced it would generate €276.1 million in deposits – in other countries such as Michigan 10% of that deposit goes unclaimed. The unclaimed deposit is used to benefit environmental projects and retailers.

Additional Benefits: According to VOICE Ireland March 2014 Report ‘Cost of Implementing a full Deposit Refund Scheme in Ireland’, society would make a net gain of €67 million per year if they introduced the deposit and return scheme. The scheme creates downstream jobs, reduces amount needed for litter control, helps us comply with the packaging and landfill directives.

Success of the Deposit Scheme and Ban on Disposable Plastics

In countries where a deposit system has been implemented, results have been positive with [return rates reaching](#) 80-90%.

- Netherlands: Government charges a 25c deposit on all PET bottles, the scheme has resulted in a 95% return. In Sweden, they have an 84% return for their PET bottles and Finland boasts a 92% return for PET bottles as a result of their deposit/refund system.
- Michigan: A 2011 Michigan Department of Treasury study found the enactment of a 10c deposit on plastic bottles in Michigan, which began in 1976, has created a 95.9% bottle return rate.
- San Francisco: In 2016, the San Francisco city board banned the expanded polystyrene used for coffee cups and food packaging.
- France: In 2016, the French government passed a law banning all plastic cups, cutlery and plates from 2020.
- South Korea: South Korea has banned the use of disposable plastic plates and bags and other single-use containers/items.
- India: [The city of Delhi has banned](#) all forms of disposable plastic in its capital.
- Taiwan: Government imposes fines against businesses that give away plastic bags, utensils, and Styrofoam and plastic food containers. Plastic tableware has dropped by 90%.
- Seattle: packaging must be compostable or recyclable. Such compostable containers must be compostable in Seattle’s system.

Solution

The [EU is already exploring options to ban once-off plastics. Industry such as Nike are also looking for alternatives as evidenced in the work of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation.](#)

Alternatives to plastic can be found in paper, wood or bio-plastics. These are plastics made from corn, potatoes, rice, wood cellulose and wheat fibre. They can be used for cups, bottles, cutlery, plates, bags, bedding, furnishings, carpets, film, textiles and packaging materials, which contribute to a large percentage of the current plastic debris. They have almost half the carbon footprint of standard plastic.