



Advisory Group on a ‘Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy’

Third Meeting, 11:00 am, Wednesday 8 April 2020 – Deposit and Return Schemes (DRS)

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

1. Welcome and Introduction

Philip Nugent opened the meeting and welcomed all those who were available to join in. The topic for discussion at the meeting, which took place on-line using the Zoom application, was on Deposit Return Schemes (DRS) for single-use beverage containers as a means of reducing waste, reducing littering and supporting the circular economy. The format of the meeting consisted of two presentations on the topic- one proposing the introduction of a national scheme and the other opposing- followed by a wider group discussion. Ms. Mindy O’Brien from Voice Ireland proposed the introduction of a scheme while Mr. Conor Walsh from the Irish Waste Management Association opposed. Mr Nugent noted that both presentations were circulated to Group prior to the meeting.

2. Presentations proposing and opposing the introduction of DRS

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3. Discussion highlights and comments

- Niamh NiFhlaithbheartaigh (DCCAE) clarified one point from the presentations by stating that the 90% targeted collection rate outlined in the Single Use Plastics Directive refers to all plastic beverage bottles of up to 3ltrs not just PET bottles.
- The presentations focused mainly on plastics and aluminium when discussing the costs associated with the introduction of a DRS. However it was noted that a DRS typically would also include glass and the cost implications for including glass in any proposed DRS should also be factored in.
- There are a small number of examples of a DRS being introduced alongside an existing kerbside collection service with New South Wales being cited as one such example to examine. In NSW they found that approximately 20% of deposit eligible material was still collected through the kerbside collection system despite the availability of a deposit. This also needs to be factored into any calculations.
- The impact of the Covid-19 crisis and its implications for businesses and resulting de-prioritisation of a DRS was noted with over 1,200 Repak members currently closed down, 1,400 in distress and only 800 trading relatively well. In this regard it was noted that Scotland have now postponed their planned introduction of a DRS by a year.
- Hitting the SUP targets will be difficult and clear thought based on sound data and statistics will be required. It was noted that existing systems, with better public education and awareness, should be sufficient to meet 2025 target but some form of DRS will likely be required to meet 2029 target. It was stressed that care needs to be taken to ensure whatever solution is proposed does not damage the existing successful kerbside collection system.
- DRS is often cited as a potential solution to the litter problem however the example of Sweden, which has a DRS for over 40 years, was given where in 2013/2014 they increased their anti-litter spending trebled.
- The ongoing Irish Beverage Council funded research project, an overview of which was circulated prior to meeting into how a DRS could operate in Ireland and its potential implications was mentioned.
- The DCCAE funded study into the introduction of a DRS is unfortunately not finalised as yet however it was stressed that as soon as it is available it will be shared with the Group.
- As usual any further comments in writing would be welcomed which should be submitted to Paula.OToole@dccae.gov.ie or Denis.Dunne@dccae.gov.ie . We

would hope that all comments submitted are free to be shared with the entire Group however please inform us if you do not wish for your comments to be circulated further.

4. Update on Covid-19 and its waste-related impacts

Kevin O'Donoghue (DCCAE) gave the Group a quick update on the Department's ongoing efforts on the impact of Covid-19 on waste related matters.

- The Department convened a High Level Group to consider the matter prior to the issue actually hitting us.
- Some issues examined by Department in conjunction with High Level Group thus far include:
 - Establishing if we needed a new collection system to deal with MSW
 - Clinical waste and finding routes for that clinical waste?
 - We received clarification from HSE on handling waste which has gone up on HSE and Mywaste.ie websites
 - Dealing with ongoing issue with hazardous waste from bio-pharma sector
 - Contingency planning for facilities and companies
 - Capacity constraints including challenges regarding exports
 - Civic amenity sites
 - Access to PPE for waste sector

5. Next Meeting

Next meeting which will discuss the structure of the waste market in Ireland will take place at 12:30 pm on Wednesday 15 April again via the Zoom application with a discussion note to issue in advance.