

## **IRISH WASTE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION CALLS FOR DEPOSIT RETURN SYSTEM TO BE DIGITAL**

Digital Deposit Return System (DDRS) is best option for the consumer, for the environment and for the future

The Irish Waste Management Association (IWMA) representing Irish waste management companies is calling on Eamon Ryan, Minister for Environment, Climate, and Communications, to make the proposed Deposit Return System (DRS) easier and more convenient for the public.

To reduce litter and to increase recycling rates Minister Ryan's department is proposing a €0.20 deposit on the sale of aluminium cans and plastic bottles as part of a new DRS system. The IWMA welcomes a Deposit Return System but says using the currently proposed 'return to retail' model for consumers to reclaim their deposits at grocery stores is not the best way forward.

According to Conor Walsh, Secretary of the IWMA, *"The 'Return to Retail' model is an analogue solution for a digital age. That system generates unnecessary carbon emissions, is inconvenient for consumers, and lacks future-proofing. There is however a digital solution that performs much better in these three areas and we are calling on Minister Ryan to adopt this smart technology proposal."*

The IWMA recommends a digital return system that has a much lower carbon footprint and greater public convenience compared to traditional DRS using the 'return to retail' model.

The Digital DRS enables consumers to reclaim deposits by simply using a smartphone app to scan a Quick Response (QR) Code on a product and another QR code on the recycling bin at their home or place of work, negating the need to return the material to the retail store. Recycling bins on streets, at beaches and at public parks can also be used in a digital DRS system, as the deposit can only be claimed once due to the fact that every can or plastic bottle will be uniquely identified in this electronic system. Littering of these items in public parks will be highly unlikely when it is so convenient to reclaim the deposit at the park gate rather than the grocery store.

*"The future is not in the outdated, inconvenient, return to retail model, that clearly has a high carbon footprint. A Digital DRS performs best and can be introduced much faster as it has a lot fewer moving parts,"* Conor Walsh added.

The IWMA recently commissioned SLR Consulting carry out an independent carbon assessment of a traditional versus digital Deposit Return System. Traditional 'return to retail' DRS has a much higher carbon impact, using circa 20,000 more tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum when compared with Digital DRS, which is equivalent to unnecessarily burning 10,000

tonnes of coal each year or burning 46,000 barrels of oil when opting for the traditional model.

The huge carbon impact discrepancy between the two systems is because a digital DRS will rely on existing infrastructure, whereas a 'return to retail' DRS requires new parallel infrastructure to enable the collection of materials. Aluminium cans and plastic bottles are already collected in the 1.3 million kerbside recycling bins, as well as many workplaces, and the Digital DRS model would allow continued use of that infrastructure, making it very convenient for the public.

To demonstrate public support for its proposal, the IWMA commissioned iReach to survey 1,000 people to establish public attitudes to the two options. The survey showed that 61% of people would prefer to get their deposit back using their existing recycling bin instead of having to travel to deposit cans and bottles at retail stores.

The IWMA proposal is not a new one, a digital DRS system has been trialled in Northern Ireland by local authorities. The same system is also being trialled in Wales by the Welsh Government, and here in Ireland the IWMA has commissioned a trial, which will commence shortly and will be completed within 3 months.

Conor Walsh further added *"The beverage producers in Ireland have indicated a preference for the traditional DRS model, but we would expect a Green Minister to choose the option that is best for the environment and most convenient for the public. The Digital DRS wins on both counts, so we would be disappointed to see the Government follow the lead of the beverage producers, at the expense of the environment and public convenience. Recycling must be as easy as possible if we are to maximise public participation."*

**ENDS**