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# Recycling legislation made simple

## A GUIDE TO THE RULES FOR BUSINESSES IN ENGLAND




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# Welcome

**THIS IS YOUR SIMPLE GUIDE TO CURRENT AND FUTURE COMMERCIAL RECYCLING LEGISLATION RULES IN ENGLAND AND WALES.**

Recycling legislation is evolving fast and for many businesses, keeping up can feel confusing, time-consuming, and unnecessarily complex. This guide is designed to cut through that noise and help you ensure your waste and recycling systems are compliant and future-proof.

Inside, you'll find a clear, straightforward overview of the rules shaping commercial waste and recycling across the UK today, along with the changes on the horizon, including:

- Current Simpler Recycling Rules in England
- Workplace Recycling Rules in Wales
- Digital Waste Tracking
- Simpler Recycling expansion
- Deposit Return Scheme
- UK Carbon Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS)




Information correct as of writing in March 2026, we are not a regulatory body so recommend you work with local stakeholders such as your waste contractor and council to get a full picture of your requirements.

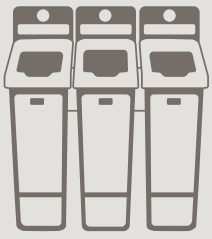
# What do you need to do?

Whether you're updating your processes, planning ahead, or simply trying to understand what applies to you, this guide will help you navigate the landscape with confidence and get your business on the right side of compliance.

**OUR GUIDE IS HERE TO HELP YOU...**



Understand your responsibilities for waste separation



Learn which types of waste you need to separate



Understand future legislation changes and how they may affect you

# Simpler recycling rules – for businesses in England

## AN OVERVIEW OF WHAT YOUR BUSINESS MUST DO TO COMPLY

Commercial facilities in England - including healthcare establishments and academic institutions - with more than 10 full-time employees must ensure they offer multi-stream recyclable waste at the point of collection for processing. This overview provides easy-to-follow guidance to support your business in complying with these legal requirements.

## SEPARATION REQUIREMENTS

The regulations mean that "recycling relevant waste" from businesses cannot be sent for disposal unless it can be shown to have gone through a treatment process. Paper and cardboard, food waste, other dry mixed recyclables (which can be grouped together), and general waste must be separated into four streams on site, prior to collection.

## DRY RECYCLABLE MATERIALS



**Glass** - such as drinks bottles and rinsed empty food jars



**Metal** - such as drinks cans and food tins



**Plastic** - such as rinsed empty food containers and bottles

## PAPER AND CARDBOARD*



**Paper** - such as old newspapers and envelopes



**Cardboard** - such as delivery boxes and packaging

## IMPORTANT PROCESS CONSIDERATIONS

- Businesses are responsible for the waste collected on and transported from their premises.
- Once collected, multi-stream waste is kept separate in order to protect it from contamination so that the largest majority of it can be recycled.
- The earlier the multi-stream splitting of waste occurs in the process, the less need there is for work splitting waste at a facility, prior to collection for processing.

These rules will apply to businesses with fewer than 10 full-time employees as well from 31st March 2027. Plastic film will also need to be separated from this date.

*TEEP (Technically, Environmentally or Economically Practicable) is UK legislation requiring businesses to separate waste streams (paper, metal, plastic, glass) for recycling when it is **practical to do so.** Take guidance from your waste contractor.

# Workplace recycling rules – for businesses in Wales

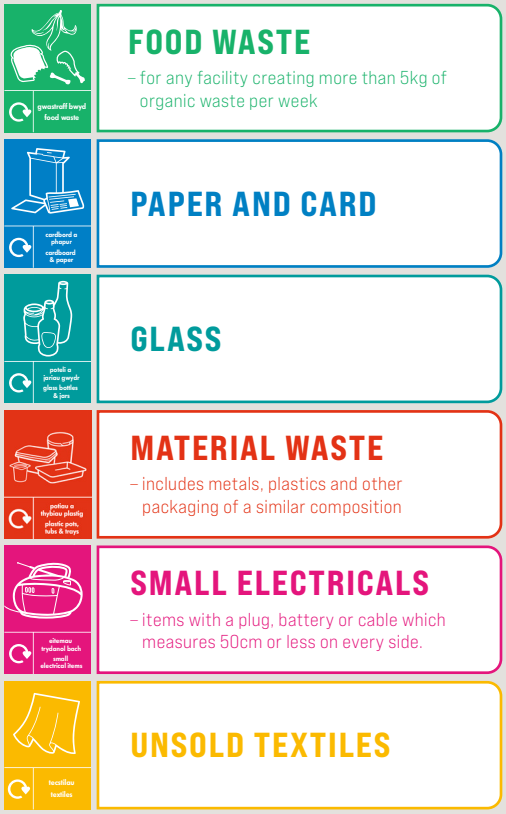
## AN OVERVIEW OF WHAT YOUR BUSINESS MUST DO TO COMPLY

Commercial and municipal facilities such as businesses, public sector, and charitable organisations in Wales, must ensure they offer multi-stream recyclable waste at the point of collection for processing. These rules will also apply to NHS hospitals and private hospitals from 6th April 2026.




## IMPORTANT PROCESS CONSIDERATIONS

- The requirement to arrange waste into separate streams falls on those collecting or arranging the waste. In most cases, this is the business generating the waste, rather than the waste handling organisation.
- Once collected, multi-stream waste is kept separate in order to protect it from contamination so that the largest majority of it can be recycled.
- The earlier the multi-stream splitting of waste occurs in the process, the less need there is for work splitting waste at a facility, prior to collection for processing.




## SEPARATION REQUIREMENTS

The law means all workplaces such as businesses, public sector organisations and charities need to separate their recyclable materials in the same way most households already do or face costly fines and, in some cases, civil sanctions.

There are six streams of recyclable waste defined within the legislation which are referred to as a facility's "separation requirements".

In addition to these requirements, workplaces are banned from disposing of food waste into the sewerage system, including through macerators, and from allowing certain specified waste streams going to incineration or to landfills.

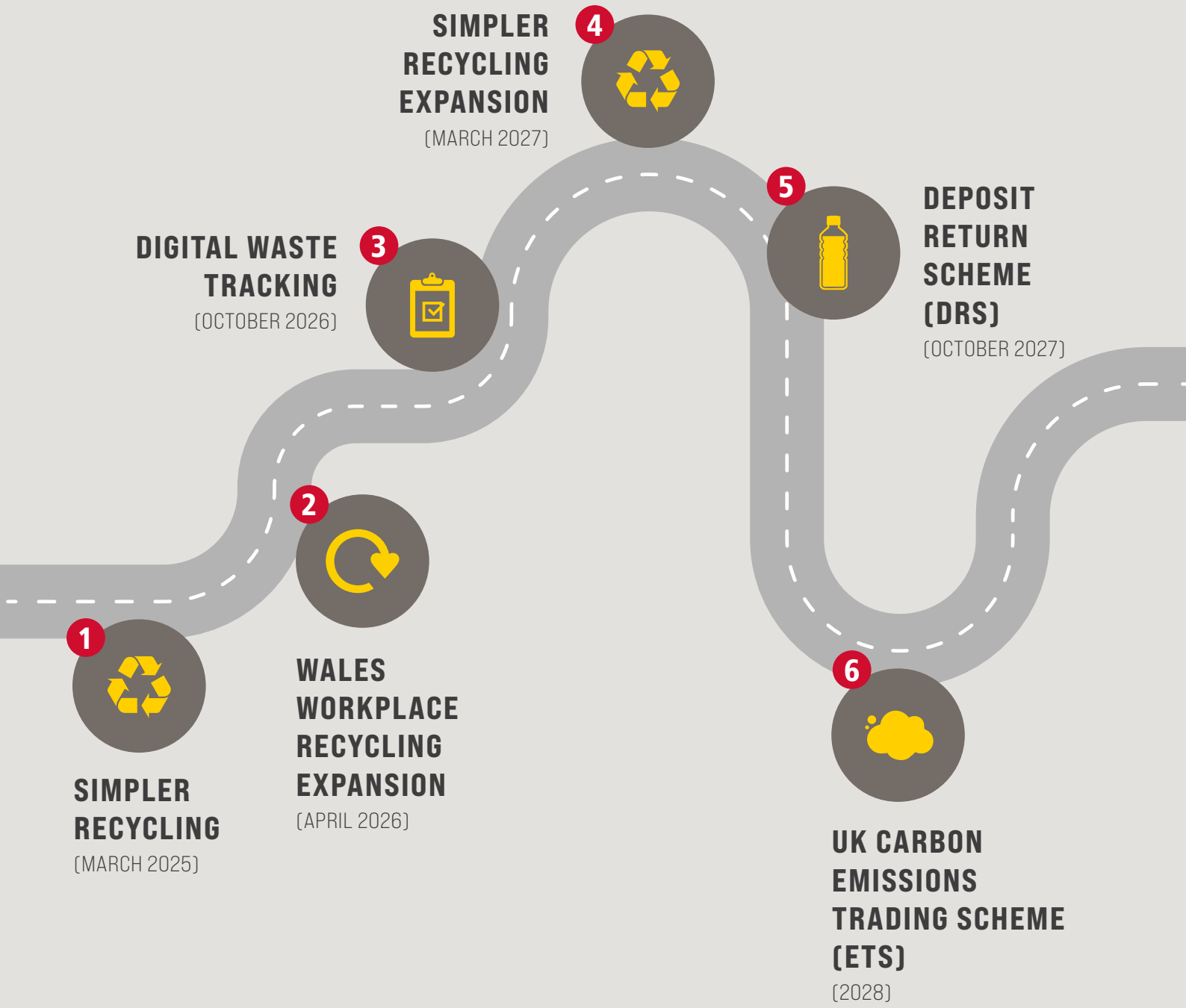
Full details of commercial requirements can be found on the Welsh Government website here.

Source: Separate Collection of Waste Materials for Recycling – A Code of Practice for Wales

# Recycling Legislation Roadmap

## GET READY FOR MORE CHANGES TO COMMERCIAL RECYCLING RULES

The current recycling rules in England and Wales are just the start of the journey. This roadmap gives you a clear view of what's next so you can stay compliant, cut confusion, and future-proof your waste management strategy.






## SIMPLER RECYCLING

All businesses in England with 10 or more full-time employees must now separate different waste streams on site, prior to collection from a waste contractor. These waste streams are food, mixed recycling (glass, plastics, metals), paper and card, and general waste.




## WALES WORKPLACE RECYCLING EXPANSION

Wales' workplace recycling rules will also apply to NHS and private hospitals from April 2026. In addition, all workplaces will need to recycle small electricals (items with a plug, battery or cable which measures 50cm or less on every side) from this date.




## DIGITAL WASTE TRACKING

All businesses with a permit or licence to receive waste will be required to log movement and disposal of waste in an online platform to help crack down on waste crimes like fly-tipping.




## SIMPLER RECYCLING EXPANSION

Simpler Recycling will also apply to 'micro-firms' with fewer than 10 full-time employees. All businesses will need to separate plastic film and plastic bags in addition to the existing waste streams introduced in 2025.




## DEPOSIT RETURN SCHEME (DRS)

Businesses who produce or sell bottled / canned drinks will need to provide a refundable deposit on recyclable single-use drinks containers, including plastic bottles and metal cans.




## UK CARBON EMISSIONS TRADING SCHEME (ETS)

Waste incineration and energy-from-waste industries will be included in the ETS, meaning they will be subject to a cap on carbon emissions. This may cause the cost of incinerating non-recyclable waste to increase.




# Food waste

One of the biggest changes for any business that disposes of food is the requirement to separate food waste for recycling. This includes leftovers or waste generated by food preparation and production. The rules mean **food cannot be put in your general waste bins and must be stored and collected separately.**

**Businesses are not able to use food waste disposal equipment, such as macerators, to discharge food waste to a drain or sewer.***

*https://businessofrecycling.wrap.ngo/faq

## TIP: POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE CHANGES

In the future, the Secretary of State may add to the materials to be collected in each recyclable waste stream, once there is confidence that the materials can be recycled. With that in mind, modular solutions are the perfect way to future-proof your waste management system. Investing in modular solutions allows you to simply add new containers for additional waste streams without having to start again, reducing waste and protecting budgets

Find out more about recycling laws in Wales here.



# Better recycling can help you reduce costs and hit your sustainability goals

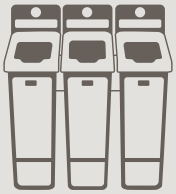
For many businesses in the hospitality and food service sector, balancing increased guest and stakeholder expectations and deeper scrutiny of environmental credentials with higher operational costs and productivity pressures continues to be a real challenge. The good news about introducing compliant waste separation in your venue is that the investment can actually see you cut waste management costs in the long-term, **especially with the 20% landfill tax rise.**

## THE BENEFITS OF HAVING MULTI-STREAM RECYCLING ON THE MENU

Aside from getting your business compliant with the recycling legislation, introducing multi-stream recycling into your venue has other business benefits.



Help you hit sustainability targets



Improve efficiency by encouraging separation at source



Help you reduce waste management costs

Implementing an efficient multi-stream recycling system into your facility could see*:

**25%** reduction of waste management costs

**20%** improvement of recycling rates

*Figures based on average indicative savings projected to businesses using the RCP Recycling Audit Tool

## START YOUR JOURNEY TO BETTER RECYCLING TODAY

To help you make the change you need to your waste and recycling systems and processes, we've put together some tips in our blog.

You can read it here.

## SPEAK TO ONE OF OUR WASTE AND RECYCLING EXPERTS

Our team of waste and recycling experts are on hand to help you update your waste management systems so you can be compliant with the legislation.

You can request a callback here.




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Disclaimer: The content provided in this document is intended for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. The information presented is based on our current understanding of recycling requirements and regulations in England and Wales. However, laws and regulations related to recycling can vary and may change over time. It is the reader's responsibility to independently verify and obtain the most up-to-date information from the respective official websites or legal authorities. Newell Brands doesn't make any representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of the information contained herein. Furthermore, Newell Brands shall not be held liable for any damages or losses, including but not limited to indirect, incidental, or consequential damages, arising from the use of or reliance on this document. Readers are strongly advised to obtain information on the official government websites and consult with relevant authorities to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations regarding recycling practices.