



Charging for single-use disposable beverage cups

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Introduction to Scottish Environment LINK

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 40 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

Its member bodies represent a wide community of environmental interest, sharing the common goal of contributing to a more sustainable society. LINK provides a forum for these organisations, enabling informed debate, assisting co-operation within the voluntary sector, and acting as a strong voice for the environment. Acting at local, national and international levels, LINK aims to ensure that the environmental community participates in the development of policy and legislation affecting Scotland.

LINK works mainly through groups of members working together on topics of mutual interest, exploring the issues and developing advocacy to promote sustainable development, respecting environmental limits. This consultation response was written by LINK's Sustainable Economy Group.

1. Response

1. What would you consider a reasonable minimum price for a single-use disposable beverage cup, which is visible and separate to the price of the drink, to meet the aims of the scheme: to reduce the use of these items towards reusable alternatives?

g. I don't know

2. Please provide reasons for your answer to question 1.

Scottish Environment LINK members welcome the proposed introduction of a charge in the absence of an outright ban. Single use cups are often unrecyclable and regularly result in increased litter, while the use of plastics has a wider environmental impact through contribution to climate change. To reflect this high environmental impact a charge should be set at a level which clearly incentivises behaviour change. Polling commissioned by Keep Scotland Beautiful found that 65% of people in the Highlands believe that takeaway venues need to do more to make it easier for people to buy and use reusable cups.

Evidence recorded by Marine Conservation Society Beachwatch volunteers found that single use cups were the 11th most common public litter item found on surveyed beaches, found on 48% of all beach cleans. Beachwatch evidence has previously found that the introduction of a charge on carrier bags led to a significant decline in litter, with 90% fewer bags found in 2023 compared to 2014 when the carrier bag charge was introduced. Trials conducted by Keep Scotland Beautiful with 121 participating stores found that initiatives encouraging consumers to return used cups led to a fall in the number of single-use cups in bins.

A charge is only one necessary measure and more must be done to develop reuse and borrow systems to move away from the use of unnecessary and harmful disposable products. LINK members disagree with the decision not to make it compulsory for outlets to accept reusable cups.

3. Alternatively, Scottish Ministers could require suppliers to charge in regulations but leave it up to suppliers to choose the price they charge for a single-use beverage cup. This approach would be supported by guidance provided by the Scottish Government. This is similar to the approach taken in the Netherlands. Do you prefer this approach?



b. no

4. Please provide reasons for your answer to question 3

Allowing businesses to set their own charge would undermine public understanding of the scheme and would likely result in businesses introducing a minimal charge which wouldn't lead to the intended behaviour change. A consistent charge, set at an effective level, is necessary.

8. Do you think there should be other exemptions?

LINK members believe that there should be as few exemptions as possible. However, it is understood that there will be initial challenges in some settings and that it may be appropriate to exempt or phase-in charges in a small number of scenarios. In these cases it is important that there is a clear timeline to bring exempted settings into scope or to take steps to encourage reuse. The Scottish Government should also consider whether, where exemptions are in place, alternative obligations should be placed on the relevant organisations to deal appropriately with the problems associated with disposal and litter.

9. Where do you believe the funds generated from the charge should be directed?

a. to the advancement of environmental protection or improvement or for a similar purpose

Please provide any information in support to your answer to question 9.

The primary aim of the introduction of this charge is for environmental benefit. It is therefore appropriate that funds raised are used for environmental measures, such as investment in recycling infrastructure.

This response was compiled on behalf of LINK Sustainable Economy Group and is supported by:

APRS Action to Protect Rural Scotland
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