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INCPEN broadly welcomes the four governments' clarity on the UK-wide Deposit Return Scheme

INCPEN broadly welcomes today's Ministerial Written Statement by Robbie Moore MP, Parliamentary Undersecretary of State at DEFRA. INCPEN also welcomes the additional detail provided in the Joint Policy Statement from the four UK nations.

Paul Vanston, CEO of the Industry Council for Packaging and the Environment said, 'INCPEN welcomes the clarity Ministers across the four nations are together bringing to the design and implementation of the UK-wide DRS. It's very positive the four governments have agreed interoperability on such things as common labelling, common registration systems, consolidated reporting processes across the UK, and reciprocal returns of in-scope containers.'

Vanston continued, 'The revised go live date of October 2027 remains challenging given how much the governments have to achieve from now onwards. This includes appointing a Deposit Management Organisation (DMO) by Spring 2025, set-up phase to Spring 2026 and the physical roll-out of DRS across one of the world's major economies by Autumn 2027, and which properly serves the needs of our 68 million citizens wherever we live. But, given the previously announced timescales became unrealistic for the governments themselves to achieve, the new timings provide welcome clarity to all stakeholders.'

UK internal market

The Ministerial Statement outlines that England, Northern Ireland and Scotland have agreed a glass-out DRS for these nations. Wales wishes to have a glass-in DRS.

Paul Vanston said, 'INCPEN recognises the sovereignty of each of the UK's four nations on policy matters. Equally, INCPEN recognises the importance of the UK's internal market, particularly as it relates to the needs of citizens and businesses who are, together, a fundamental engine of the economic prosperity all four nations say is needed at these challenging times. INCPEN's position continues to be to encourage the four governments to not undermine internal market needs for the UK as a whole, and we remain committed to supporting the four governments in reaching that position. In so doing, we deeply recognise that the sovereignties of the nations, and the internal market needs, can tend to pull at each other. DRS won't be the only time the four governments experience this tension, but how the four nations maturely handle the current predicament could be a benchmark for how to handle all such tensions arising in the future.'

Wales

INCPEN is kindly invited to attend a Ministerial Roundtable on 9th May 2024 with Huw Irranca-Davies MS, recently-appointed as Welsh Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs.

Paul Vanston said, 'INCPEN very much welcomes that the Welsh Minister has reached out to us so speedily upon his appointment. He takes on his new role at a critical time for settling on a UK-wide DRS that works for citizens and businesses. For my part, I will do all I can to understand his constraints, and work with him and officials in Wales and across the four nations to focus on UK-wide outcomes that deliver the economic and environmental ambitions we all want to see happen for real.'

END

Editor's Notes

1. The Ministerial Written Statement published on 25 April 2024 is available [here](#).
2. The Joint Policy Statement from all four UK nations is available [here](#).
3. England's policy statement relating to glass is [here](#).
4. Questions about this press release can be directed to Paul Vanston, CEO, INCPEN.
Email: paul.vanston@incpen.org
5. For editorial clarity, INCPEN has not asked any of the four UK governments to delay implementation of the UK packaging reforms including Deposit Return Scheme, Extended Producer Responsibility or the four nations' variations of packaging recycling collections systems (e.g. Simpler Recycling in England).

Quite the opposite, INCPEN has supported the governments' timescales over the last five years and we were expecting by 2024 to be up-and-running with the reforms and achieving the environmental, economic and social benefits that form the backbone of the reforms.

What INCPEN did frequently outline was the extensive sets of challenges for the governments themselves to complete all of the tasks on their own task lists in order that the timelines could be adhered to, including agreeing the design of systems (e.g. DRS).

For reasons that are publicly available, the governments as a collective have found those challenges to be more than they could chew. INCPEN does not wish to dwell on the past, but we do wish to be clear that INCPEN has not been a reason for lack of inter-governmental agreements and/or delays in the packaging reforms implementation timescales since the first major set of consultations in 2019.