

From Waste to Worth: Northern Ireland Waste Prevention Programme Consultation April 2026



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Depairtment o'

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

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Consultation: From Waste to Worth – Northern Ireland Waste Prevention Programme

Purpose

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is seeking views on the proposed Waste Prevention Programme for Northern Ireland. This Programme sets out the actions we intend to take to reduce the generation of waste across our economy, encourage more sustainable patterns of production and consumption, and support a transition to a circular economy in which resources are kept in use for as long as possible.

Waste prevention is the most effective way to reduce environmental harm, conserve resources, and limit carbon emissions associated with the extraction, manufacture, and disposal of products. By focusing on designing out waste, extending product lifetimes, and supporting reuse, repair, and remanufacture, the Programme aims to support long-term environmental, social, and economic benefits for individuals, businesses, and communities across Northern Ireland.

This consultation outlines the strategic priorities, proposed interventions, and supporting measures that will guide our approach over the coming years. It reflects our statutory obligations under the Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011, aligns with commitments in the Circular Economy Package, and supports Northern Ireland's wider climate and environmental ambitions.

We invite responses from Northern Ireland local councils and Northern Ireland environmental groups. Your feedback will help shape a Programme that is effective, evidence-based, and reflective of the needs and opportunities across Northern Ireland.

Making a Submission

This consultation is organised around each action area. Respondents are requested to consider the questions presented, acknowledging that not all questions will be relevant to all respondents.

The section on respondents' details is mandatory.

All submissions are welcome and will be considered in developing the new Waste Prevention Programme for Northern Ireland.

Responses to this consultation are to be submitted online at the following link on Citizen Space: <https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/daera/waste-prevention-programme-from-waste-to-worth>

Data Protection

DAERA is committed to engaging with stakeholders in a clear, open, and transparent manner. Any person or organisation can make a submission in relation to this consultation via Citizen Space. Guidance is provided on the 'Confidentiality' of

responses under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, in Annex 1 for your reference. Also, if you require any further information, please contact a member of the consultation team on WastePolicyTeam@daera-ni.gov.uk.

Consultation Questions

Respondent Details

A wide range of stakeholders generate and manage resources across Northern Ireland. Each sector produces different types and volumes of waste, shaped by their scale and operating models. These stakeholders also face varying levels of challenge in transitioning to more sustainable practices. To be effective, the Programme aims to deliver targeted actions that reduce burdens and provide tailored support, enabling each sector to make measurable improvements and identify further opportunities for waste prevention.

We expect this consultation to be of greatest interest to:

- Councils
- NI Environmental groups

Please complete all questions to allow us to capture the background and geographical location of respondents.

What is your name?

What is your email address?

What local Council area do you represent/live in?

Drop-down box

- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
- Ards and North Down Borough Council
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
- Belfast City Council
- Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
- Derry City and Strabane District Council
- Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
- Mid Ulster District Council
- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
- Other – Republic of Ireland
- Other – UK
- Other – EU
- Other – Rest of World

Which category best represents you from the list below?

Drop-down box

- Local Government
- NI Environmental group
- Other, please specify.

Actions

1. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

A key form of producer responsibility is Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), which is increasingly being adopted across the UK and internationally. Under EPR schemes, producers are required to fund or directly manage the collection and treatment of waste arising from their products. This encourages them to design products that are easier to reuse, recycle, or dispose of safely.

Action 1 - Extended Producer Responsibility and Reducing Packaging

DAERA will continue to work in conjunction with the UK Government and the Devolved Governments in the implementation of the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024 which aims to reduce the amount of unnecessary and difficult to recycle packaging.

Question 1 - Do you agree with action 1 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

2. Collaboration with Defra and Other DG's in relation to Eco-Design and Eco-labelling

Eco-design and eco-labelling are two complementary approaches aimed at reducing the environmental impact of products throughout their life cycle.

Eco-design refers to the process of integrating environmental considerations into the design and development of products while Eco-labelling is a communication tool that helps consumers identify products with lower environmental impacts.

Action 2 – Eco-Design and Eco-Labelling

DAERA will continue to work collaboratively with the Devolved Governments to support eco-design and develop eco-label frameworks.

Question 2 - Do you agree with action 2 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

3. Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)

A Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) is a circular economy initiative designed to reduce litter and increase recycling rates by incentivising the return of single-use drinks containers. Under the scheme, consumers pay a small deposit when purchasing drinks in containers such as plastic bottles or aluminium/steel cans.

This deposit is refunded when the empty container is returned to a designated collection point, such as a shop or a reverse vending machine.

Action 3 – Deposit Return Scheme

DAERA will implement the Deposit Return Scheme for single use drinks containers. This is due to go live from October 2027 to include PET plastic, steel, and aluminium drinks containers from 150ml to 3l to further drive-up recycling rates and reduce littering.

Question 3 - Do you agree with action 3 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

4. Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE)

WEEE refers to discarded electrical and electronic devices, such as computers, phones, household appliances, and lighting equipment. These products often contain critical raw materials like copper, lithium and cobalt, as well as hazardous substances such as lead, mercury, and flame retardants. Proper management of WEEE is essential to prevent environmental harm and recover resources.

Action 4 – WEEE Reform

DAERA will collaborate with Defra and the other Devolved Governments to implement WEEE Reform.

Question 4 - Do you agree with action 4 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion

- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

5. Carrier Bag Levy

The Carrier Bag Levy was introduced in Northern Ireland on 8 April 2013 through the introduction of The Single Use Carrier Bags Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 to address the environmental damage caused by the excessive use of carrier bags. Prior to its introduction, around 300 million bags were used annually across the region, contributing significantly to litter, landfill waste, and resource depletion. In April 2022 the levy increased to 25p per bag and still contains some exemptions, including an exemption for bags used to contain hot foods or hot drinks intended for consumption away from the premises on which they are sold.

Action 5 – Carrier Bag Levy

DAERA will continue to administer the levy and ensure the revenue is allocated to additional environmental projects within Northern Ireland

Question 5 - Do you agree with action 5 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

6. Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHP's)

Absorbent hygiene products (AHPs) include disposable nappies, incontinence pads, sanitary products, and other single-use items designed to absorb bodily fluids. Due to their mixed material composition, often combining plastics, cellulose, and superabsorbent polymers, AHPs are challenging to recycle and are typically disposed of in landfill or through energy recovery processes.

Action 6 – Absorbent Hygiene Products

DAERA will support WRAP in conducting an AHP collection study into the separation of AHP waste.

Question 6 - Do you agree with action 6 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

7. Waste Levies

Levies applied to waste products offer a range of benefits for waste prevention, particularly when designed to influence consumer behaviour, support sustainable alternatives, and fund waste prevention initiatives.

Levies create a direct financial incentive for individuals and businesses to reduce waste. For example, charges on single-use items like plastic bags have led to dramatic reductions in consumption. By making wasteful choices more expensive, levies encourage consumers to opt for reusable or more sustainable alternatives.

Action 7 – Waste Levies

DAERA will continue to tackle the problem of littering and work with stakeholders to advance the circular economy including the potential for introducing bans or levies on certain problematic product materials.

Question 7 - Do you agree with action 7 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion

- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

8. Plastic Pollution Reduction Plan

DAERA's Plastic Pollution Plan is Northern Ireland's strategic approach to tackling plastic waste and its environmental impacts. The plan aims to reduce plastic pollution, particularly in marine environments, and to support the transition to a circular economy where resources are used efficiently and waste is minimised. It builds on previous initiatives, such as the successful removal of unnecessary single-use plastics (SUP) from the government estate and aligns with broader UK and EU commitments on waste prevention and resource efficiency.

Action 8 – Plastic Pollution Plan

DAERA will publish a Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland to achieve a reduction in plastic pollution.

Question 8 - Do you agree with action 8 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

9. European Week for Waste Reduction

The European Week for Waste Reduction (EWWR) is a major annual campaign across Europe that promotes awareness and action on sustainable resource and waste management. In Northern Ireland, it is coordinated by WRAP and supported by DAERA.

Local councils, businesses, schools, and community groups are encouraged to register and carry out awareness-raising actions. Participants can access toolkits,

communication resources, and even enter the EWWR Awards for outstanding initiatives.

Action 9 – European Week for Waste Reduction

DAERA will continue to support the European Week for Waste Reduction and will seek to build upon the outcomes and successes generated through participation in its associated competitions.

Question 9 - Do you agree with action 9 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

10. Circular Councils

DAERA delivery partner, Northern Ireland Resources Network (NIRN), through its Local Authority Forums is developing a co-created education programme with councils to raise awareness of the circular economy and waste hierarchy among council staff and elected members. They will showcase and celebrate reuse and repair initiatives currently being delivered by councils and to identify further opportunities for collaboration, innovation and public engagement.

Action 10 – Circular Councils

DAERA will assist NIRN to establish a Circular Councils network and develop a co-created waste prevention education programme with councils.

Question 10 - Do you agree with action 10 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion

- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

11. Waste Prevention Metrics

Waste prevention metrics are essential tools for evaluating the effectiveness of policies, programmes, and interventions aimed at reducing the generation of waste at source. Current waste prevention metrics in Northern Ireland and across the UK face several challenges that limit their effectiveness in guiding policy and evaluating progress. One of the most significant issues is the incomplete coverage of data. In Northern Ireland, detailed monitoring is largely confined to municipal waste collected by councils, which represents only about 10% of total waste.

Action 11 – Waste Prevention Metrics

DAERA will support NIRN to explore the establishment of a framework of metrics to monitor, evaluate, and report on waste prevention efforts across Northern Ireland.

Question 11 - Do you agree with action 11 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

12. Circular Communities

Circular Communities are grassroots initiatives that place community at the heart of the circular economy. These communities focus on waste reduction, reuse, repair, and sharing, creating local hubs where people can come together to extend the life of products, reduce consumption, and build social connections.

Examples include repair cafés, community fridges, tool libraries, and upcycling workshops, all designed to make sustainability accessible and practical for everyone

Action 12 – Circular Communities

DAERA will support NIRN to develop & deliver a Circular Communities Programme to embed reuse & repair into everyday community life.

Question 12 - Do you agree with action 12 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

13. Recognised Awareness Days

Recognised waste awareness days play a crucial role in promoting sustainable practices and reducing environmental impact. These days serve as focal points for education and advocacy, helping citizens and businesses understand the consequences of waste and the benefits of resource efficiency. By highlighting issues such as plastic pollution, food waste, and electronic waste, they encourage people to rethink consumption habits and adopt more sustainable lifestyles.

Action 13 – Recognised Awareness Days

DAERA will support NIRN to co-ordinate a schedule of recognised awareness day campaigns.

Question 13 - Do you agree with action 13 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

14. Love Food Hate Waste Communications Campaign

The Love Food Hate Waste campaign is a UK-wide initiative launched in 2007 by WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) to tackle the growing issue of food waste, particularly in households. Its core mission is to help people reduce the amount of food they throw away by raising awareness, changing behaviours, and providing practical tools and advice.

Action 14 – Consumer Food Waste Prevention

DAERA will maintain its partnership with WRAP to support the delivery of the Love Food Hate Waste campaign, aimed at preventing consumer food waste. DAERA and WRAP will co-develop follow-up initiatives designed to strengthen behavioural change and enhance messaging around food waste prevention.

Question 14 - Do you agree with action 14 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

15. UK Food and Drink Pact

The UK Food and Drink Pact, formerly known as the Courtauld Commitment 2030, is a voluntary agreement led by WRAP that brings together nearly 200 organisations across the food and drink supply chain including businesses, trade bodies, local authorities, and charities to tackle key sustainability challenges.

The Pact aims to build a circular food system that supports the planet, people, and business.

Action 15 – UK Food and Drink Pact

DAERA will continue to support WRAP with the UK Food and Drink Pact to deliver against UN Sustainable Development Goal 12.3: a 50% per capita reduction in food and drink waste by 2030 vs the UK 2007 baseline

Question 15 - Do you agree with action 15 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

16. Food Redistribution

Large quantities of edible food are wasted every year by producers, retailers, and consumers. This not only represents a loss of valuable resources such as water, energy, and labour but also contributes to environmental degradation through increased greenhouse gas emissions from landfill waste. Many individuals and families across Northern Ireland also face food poverty, struggling to access sufficient, nutritious food on a regular basis.

Food redistribution involves collecting surplus food, often from farms, manufacturers, supermarkets, and hospitality businesses and redirecting it to people in need through charities, food banks, and community organisations.

Action 16 – Food Redistribution

DAERA will work in partnership with NIRN to collaborate with food redistribution networks to reduce avoidable food waste by enhancing their visibility and facilitating connections with businesses and public sector organisations. DAERA will provide support for targeted projects focused on food waste prevention.

Question 16 - Do you agree with action 16 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

17. Industrial Symbiosis

Industrial symbiosis is a collaborative approach where traditionally separate industries work together to exchange materials, energy, water, and by products in ways that create mutual economic and environmental benefits. It is a key strategy in the circular economy, aiming to keep resources in productive use for longer and reduce waste generation.

Action 17 – Industrial Symbiosis

DAERA will continue to collaborate with Invest NI to promote its waste prevention initiatives, particularly those relating to resource efficiency and industrial symbiosis

Question 17 - Do you agree with action 17 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

18. Eco- Schools

Eco-Schools is the world’s largest environmental education programme, empowering young people to lead sustainability efforts in their schools and communities. The programme began in 1994 and now spans 101 countries, with

over 52,000 registered schools and more than 13.7 million students participating globally.

The programme follows a seven-step Framework that guides schools through forming eco-committees, conducting environmental reviews, creating action plans, linking sustainability to the curriculum, and engaging the wider community. Schools work on up to 14 themes, including biodiversity, climate change, energy, litter, marine, transport, and waste.

Action 18 – Eco-Schools

DAERA will further support the Eco-Schools Programme to embed waste prevention and circular economy principles into the curriculum.

Question 18 - Do you agree with action 18 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

19. Circular Schools

The Circular Schools Programme in Northern Ireland is an educational initiative designed to embed circular economy and waste prevention principles into school communities. Its core aim is to help pupils understand how resources can be kept in use for as long as possible, reducing waste and promoting sustainability. Rather than focusing solely on recycling, the programme encourages schools to rethink consumption patterns, repair and reuse materials, and design out waste from everyday activities.

Action 19 – Circular Schools

DAERA will support NIRN to promote reuse and repair in school communities.

Question 19 - Do you agree with action 19 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree

- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

20. Support to the Third Sector & Zero Waste Projects

DAERA provides targeted support to the third sector in Northern Ireland to help tackle waste and promote circular economy practices. This includes funding, strategic partnerships, and programme delivery aimed at empowering charities, social enterprises, and community groups to reduce consumption, increase reuse, and divert waste from landfill.

Action 20 – Support to the Third Sector for Zero Waste/Circular Economy Projects

DAERA will continue to provide support to the Third Sector for zero waste/circular economy projects as part of ongoing funding operations and investigate new ways to do so.

Question 20 - Do you agree with action 20 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

21. Reuse & Repair Week

Reuse and Repair Week 2025 marked a significant milestone for sustainability in Northern Ireland, running from 3rd to 9th March 2025. Led by the Northern Ireland Resources Network (NIRN) and funded by DAERA through the Carrier Bag Levy, this was the first time an entire UK region hosted a dedicated Repair Week. The

initiative aimed to foster a culture of repair and reuse, helping individuals and communities extend the life of everyday items, from textiles and furniture to bikes and electronics, while reducing waste and supporting the circular economy.

Action 21 – Reuse & Repair Week

DAERA will support NIRN to establish an annual Reuse & Repair Week to promote waste prevention across Northern Ireland.

Question 21 - Do you agree with action 21 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

22. Waste Prevention Programme

The Waste Prevention Programme has previously been published as a standalone document, aimed at recognising its importance in its own right, however, consideration is being given to integrating it into the Resources and Waste Management Strategy. As waste prevention is a fundamental component of effective resource and waste policy and the core purpose of the Strategy is to set the strategic direction for waste policy over the next six years, embedding waste prevention priorities within the Strategy could ensure clearer alignment, strengthen policy coherence, and signal a more ambitious, long-term commitment to reducing waste at source.

Question 22 - Do you agree that the Waste Prevention Programme should be incorporated into the Waste Management Strategy?

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

23. Equality Screening Assessment

An Equality Screening is one of the key tools to enable public authorities to fulfil their statutory obligations and mainstream the Section 75 equality and good relations duties into policy development. It provides an opportunity to improve decision-making, support 'evidence based' policy making and can help improve a public authority's service provision through a systematic review of all services, policies, procedures, practices and/or decisions.

Question 23 - Do you agree with the conclusions of the Equality Screening Assessment of the draft Waste Prevention Programme?

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

24. Rural Needs Impact Assessment

Public authorities must undertake a Rural Needs Impact Assessment when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and when designing and delivering public services. A Rural Needs Impact Assessment is a step-by-step process aimed at helping public authorities to ensure that the due regard duty imposed under section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 ('the Act') duty is fulfilled.

Question 24 - Do you agree with the conclusions of the Rural Needs Impact Assessment of the draft Waste Prevention Programme?

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

HOW TO RESPOND

This consultation will run for 12 weeks, opening on 20 April 2026 and closing at 23:59 on 10 July 2026.

Responses to this consultation are to be completed online at the following link:
<https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/daera/waste-prevention-programme-from-waste-to-worth>

What we will do with your responses

When the consultation has closed, we will analyse your responses. Once analysed we will use these to publish a final Waste Prevention Programme.

ANNEX 1 Publication of Responses

Confidentiality

The Department will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation may be disclosed on request. The Department can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations as these provide guidance on the legal position of any information given by you in response to this consultation. Any confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system in e-mail responses will not be treated as such a request.

Data Protection

Section 8 (e) of the Data Protection Act 2018 permits processing of personal data when necessary for an activity that supports or promotes democratic engagement. Information provided by respondents to this consultation exercise will be held and used for the purposes of the administration of this current exercise and subsequently disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation.

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority (the Department in this case). This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider information supplied to it as confidential in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances.

The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- The Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- The Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties 'in confidence' which is not confidential in nature;
- Acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses, please contact the Information Commissioner's Office: Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Email: ni@ico.org.uk Website: <https://ico.org.uk>