

WHAT DO LOCAL SHOPS NEED FROM THE NEXT WELSH GOVERNMENT?



Convenience stores in Wales are essential community businesses that constantly adapt to serve the changing needs of their communities. People use their local shops to access everyday groceries, but increasingly we deliver essential services like Post Offices, access to cash, parcel services, and bill payments.

There are **50,387** convenience stores in mainland UK
 **3,064** of these stores are in Wales
 Wales has more shops per head than any other part of mainland UK

£3bn total sales
26,000+ jobs

Over the last year, convenience stores in Wales have invested over **£43m** in their businesses

As we move closer to the Welsh election, we have set out the top priorities for local shops for the next government to deliver. The top priorities for local shops are tackling retail crime, reforming business rates to incentives investment, and a consistent approach to the introduction of a deposit return scheme.

■ Tackle violence, abuse, and theft against local shops to deliver safer communities

There were **3,587 incidents of violence** in local shops last year in Wales and **87% of shopworkers have experienced verbal abuse**. If we want safer communities across Wales, we must target the repeat offenders responsible for the majority of incidents and address rogue businesses that operate outside the law on our high streets and neighbourhood shopping parades.

Support we need:

Strengthen operational policing capacity and improve reporting systems

- Increase resources for neighbourhood and operational policing, and develop more effective online reporting mechanisms that allow retailers to share report incidents quickly and directly with the police.

Remove barriers to investing in crime-prevention Measures

- Remove essential equipment like CCTV from increasing business rates bills and support investment in crime prevention measures.

Prioritise funding for Trading Standards

- Provide additional resources for Trading Standards teams to identify and close down businesses that sell illicit products.

■ Reform business rates and support investment in local shops

Convenience stores in Wales paid **£18 million in business rates** last year, making it one of the largest fixed costs for local shops and a major factor in decisions on investment. While 38% of Welsh retailers made some form of investment between June and November 2025, **just 9% plan to invest in refurbishing or improving their store**, highlighting the limited headroom many businesses now have.

Support we need:

Maintain a meaningfully lower retail multiplier

- Ensure the retail multiplier is kept low enough to genuinely offset the loss of reliefs and rising rateable values, protecting the viability of local shops.

Reform Small Business Rate Relief

- Review and index Small Business Rate Relief thresholds to inflation to prevent growing numbers of small retailers from being drawn into higher business rate liabilities.

Unlock investment through Improvement Relief

- Extend Improvement Relief from 12 months to three years to reflect real-world investment cycles.

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■ A simple, consistent and cost-effective Deposit Return Scheme

We strongly advocate for the Welsh Government to **align with the rest of the UK on DRS** to minimise complexity for retailers and consumers. Divergence in scope, timelines, and material inclusion will create operational challenges for convenience stores and will ultimately increase costs and reduce consumer choice.

Support we need:

DRS must be cost neutral for retailers

- Handling fees that are paid to retailers must cover the costs of taking back containers. No retail business should lose out financially for being a return point under the deposit return scheme.

Clarity and guidance

- Retailers need certainty on key requirements such as Reverse Vending Machine (RVM) specifications, return frequency and logistics, and the exemption criteria.

Clear and detailed timeline

- The timeline to implement DRS has become significantly shorter. Prolonged uncertainty around the scheme will leave retailers with less time to adapt and increase the cost of implementation.

More about the Association of Convenience Stores

For more details on these recommendations to support local shops and high streets, visit www.acs.org.uk

- [@ACS_localshops](#) on X/Twitter, TikTok and Instagram
- [Association of Convenience Stores](#) on LinkedIn, Facebook and YouTube

Who we are

ACS (the Association of Convenience Stores) is the voice of the UK's 50,000+ local shops, supporting our members through effective lobbying, comprehensive advice and innovative networking opportunities.

Our membership includes a diverse range of convenience store retailers, from stand-alone family run independent stores to symbol groups to multiple convenience stores. These retailers operate in neighbourhoods, villages, on petrol forecourts and in city centres.

ACS' core purpose is to lobby Government on the issues that make a difference to local shops. We represent the interests of retailers on a range of issues, including business rates, energy, regulation, planning, alcohol and many more.