ACS Submission - Consistency in Household and Business Recycling Collections in England

ACS (the Association of Convenience Stores) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' consultation on consistency in household and business recycling collections in England. ACS is a trade association which represents over 33,500 convenience stores across the UK. Our members include Spar UK, Nisa Retail, Costcutter and thousands of independent retailers. More information about ACS and the convenience sector is available in Annex A.

There are 38,377 convenience stores in England, 72% of which are run by independent retailers[1]. Polling of independent convenience retailers found that convenience retailers are recycling in their business with 41% disposing their mixed recycling through local authority collections, 21% through general waste contractor, and 9% through specialist waste contractor[2]. As such, the government must consider carefully how the proposals to increase recycling from businesses will impact businesses' existing recycling practices.

It is important that there is consistency in business waste collections by local authorities given that nearly half of businesses have their mixed recycling collected through this system. The types of recycling that must be separate must also be consistent across England to ensure clarity for retailers which operate in more than one local authority. For convenience retailers who contract waste collections through private businesses, the government should ensure that requirements to separate waste does not place additional costs on businesses where the waste contractor may charge more money for the separation of recycling in different waste streams.

Convenience stores typically have low amounts of food waste to dispose of and their experience of the 5 kg food waste exemption in Scotland has been positive. Polling of independent convenience retailers in England found that over a third (37%) of retailers do not generate any food waste, while 29% will dispose as part of general food waste, 18% will recycle using a separate food waste bin, 12% will consume food waste or give to staff and 6% will donate food waste to a local cause. Where food waste is disposed of, 53% have it collected by the local authority, 28% will have food waste collected through a general waste contractor and 7% through a specialist waste contractor[3].

Please see below for ACS' response to the relevant questions in the consultation.

[1] ACS Local Shop Report 2018
[2] ACS Voice of Local Shops Survey November 2017
[3] ACS Voice of Local Shops Survey August 2016

Q51 Do you agree or disagree that businesses, public bodies and other organisations that produce municipal waste should be required to separate dry recyclable material from residual waste so that it can be collected and recycled?

Agree.

Q52 Which of the 3 options do you favour?

Our preferred option is Option 1 (mixed dry recycling and separate glass recycling; no food waste collected for recycling). However, if there is a minimum threshold for separating food waste collection, we would support Option 2 (separate dry recycling and separate food waste).

Q53 We would expect businesses to be able to segregate waste for recycling in all circumstances but would be interested in views on where this may not be practicable for technical, environmental or economic reasons

No.

The regulations should only apply to back of house waste which the business can control. Customer facing bins may experience contamination which could result in the recycling collection being rejected.

Q54 Should some businesses, public sector premises or other organisations be exempt from the requirement?

Yes.

Some businesses may have limited space such as convenience stores, which are typically smaller than 3,000 square feet to sort and separate out waste. Independent convenience retailers have the smallest stores, with 58%[4] of trading out of stores below 999 square feet. For these retailers it may be challenging to find space in store to manage the separation of waste.

Q55 Do you have any other comments to make about Proposal 17? For example, do you think that there are alternatives to legislative measures that would be effective in increasing business recycling?

There must be consistent business waste collections by local authorities across England to ensure clarity for retailers which operate in more than one local authority. This is particularly important as 54% of independent convenience retailers use their local authority collection to dispose of food waste and 43% use their local authority collection to dispose of mixed recycling[5].

Q56 Do you agree or disagree that businesses, public bodies or other organisations that produce sufficient quantities of food waste should be required to separate it from residual waste so that it can be collected and recycled?

---

[4] ACS Local Shop Report
[5] ACS Voice of Local Shops Survey November 2017

Agree.

We would welcome clarity in how food waste will be determined under the regulations. Would this be defined as food waste for disposal rather than food waste that the business produces? While 36% of independent convenience retailers do not produce any food waste, 12% consume or give food waste to staff and 7% donate food waste to a local cause[6].

Q57 Do you agree or disagree that there should be a minimum threshold, by weight, for businesses public bodies or other organisations to be required to separate food waste for collection?

Agree.

There should be a minimum threshold by weight to separate food waste for collection, which follows the same format as the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012 and the Animal By-Products Directive. There are two exemptions in the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012. The regulations exempt food businesses producing less than 5 kg and food businesses located in rural areas from being required to separate food waste.

The threshold should also be set per store rather than applying to the business as a whole and also exclude areas not controlled by the business, for example, consumer facing bins which may have contamination. 11% of the convenience sector offer recycling bins for customers[7].

Q58 Do you have any views on how we should define 'sufficient' in terms of businesses producing 'sufficient' quantities of food waste to be deemed in scope of the regulations?

The Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012 set a threshold for food businesses that produce only a very small quantity of food waste. The regulations state if businesses consistently produce less than 5 kg a week (roughly equivalent to a full domestic kitchen caddy), then the duty to present that food waste for separate collection does not apply.

Q59 Do you have any views on how we should define 'food-producing' businesses?

This should be aligned with the Food Standards Agency's definition of food business operator.

Q62 What are your views on the options proposed to reduced costs?

The government could also consider whether there should be a longer transition period for smaller businesses to comply with the regulations.

Q63 Are there other ways to reduce the cost burden that we have overlooked?

Funds raised through the packaging EPR system should fulfil business waste collections.

[6] ACS Voice of Local Shops Survey August 2016
[7] ACS Local Shop Report 2018

Q64 Do you have any other views on how we can support businesses and other organisations to make the transition to improved recycling arrangements?

There must be consistent business waste collections by local authorities across England to ensure clarity for retailers which operate in more than one local authority. This is particularly important as 53% of independent convenience retailers use their local authority collection to dispose of food waste and 41% use their local authority collection to dispose of mixed recycling[8].

Q65 Do you have any views on whether businesses and other organisations should be required to report data on their waste recycling performance?

Agree, but it should be the responsibility of the waste management company to report data on the waste recycling performance of an area rather than the responsibility of the business to report their data. The majority of the convenience sector are independent retailers (72%) who would not have the resources at a head office to fulfil the reporting obligations. It will be the retailers themselves that would be required to report if they are obligated. 24% of shop owners work more than 70 hours per week, 19% take no holiday per year, and 45% of their employees work less than 16 hours a week. Therefore, it would also be challenging for an independent convenience retailer to have the time (as well as resources) to record their recycling data. We believe it would be far more efficient if the waste management company reported the data on their behalf for the geographical area.

For more information, please contact Julie Byers, ACS Public Affairs Manager by emailing Julie.Byers@acs.org.uk or calling 01252 515001.

[8] ACS Voice of Local Shops Survey November 2017

ANNEX A

ABOUT ACS

The Association of Convenience Stores lobbies on behalf of over 46,000 convenience stores across mainland UK on public policy issues that affect their businesses. ACS' membership is comprised of a diverse group of retailers, from small independent family businesses running a single store to large multiple convenience retailers running thousands of stores.

Convenience stores trade in a wide variety of locations, meeting the needs of customers from all backgrounds. These locations range from city centres and high streets, suburban areas such as estates and secondary parades, rural villages and isolated areas, as well as on petrol forecourts and at travel points such as airports and train stations.

ACS | the voice of local shops

WHO WE REPRESENT

INDEPENDENT RETAILERS

ACS represents over 19,000 independent retailers, polling them quarterly to hear their views and experiences which are used to feed in to Government policy discussions.

These stores are not affiliated to any group, and are often family businesses with low staff and property costs. Independent forecourt operators are included in this category.

SYMBOL GROUPS AND FRANCHISES

ACS represents over 14,000 retailers affiliated with symbol groups. Symbol groups like SPAR, Nisa, Costcutter, Londis, Premier and others provide independent retailers with stock agreements, wholesale deliveries, logistical support and marketing benefits.

Symbol group forecourt operators and franchise providers like One Stop are also included in this category.

MULTIPLE AND CO-OPERATIVE BUSINESSES

ACS represents over 12,000 stores that are owned by multiple and co-operative retailers. These businesses include the Co-Operative, regional co-operative societies, McColls and others.

Unlike symbol group stores, these stores are owned and run centrally by the business. Forecourt multiples and commission operated stores are included in this category.

THE CONVENIENCE SECTOR

In 2018, the total value of sales in the convenience sector was £39.1bn.

The average spend in a typical convenience store transaction is £6.50.

There are 46,262 convenience stores in mainland UK. 72% of stores are operated by independent retailers, either unaffiliated or as part of a symbol group.

The convenience sector provides flexible employment for around 365,000 people.

24% of independent/symbol stores employ family members only.

24% of shop owners work more than 70 hours per week, while 19% take no holiday throughout the year.

70% of business owners are first time investors in the sector.

Convenience stores and Post Offices poll as the two services that have the most positive impact on their local area according to consumers and local councillors.

81% of independent/symbol retailers have engaged in some form of community activity over the last year.

Between August 2017 and May 2018, the convenience sector invested over £814m in stores.

The most popular form of investment in stores is refrigeration.

OUR RESEARCH

ACS polls the views and experiences of the convenience sector regularly to provide up-to-date, robust information on the pressures being faced by retailers of all sizes and ownership types. Our research includes the following regular surveys:

ACS VOICE OF LOCAL SHOPS SURVEY

Regular quarterly survey of over 1,200 retailers, split evenly between independent retailers, symbol group retailers and forecourt retailers. The survey consists of tracker questions and a number of questions that differ each time to help inform ACS' policy work.

ACS INVESTMENT TRACKER

Regular quarterly survey of over 1,200 independent and symbol retailers which is combined with responses from multiple businesses representing over 3,000 stores.

ACS LOCAL SHOP REPORT

Annual survey of over 2,400 independent, symbol and forecourt retailers combined with responses from multiple businesses representing 7,669 stores. The Local Shop Report also draws on data from HIM, IGD, Nielsen and William Reed.

BESPOKE POLLING ON POLICY ISSUES

ACS conducts bespoke polling of its members on a range of policy issues, from crime and responsible retailing to low pay and taxation. This polling is conducted with retailers from all areas of the convenience sector.

For more information and data sources, visit www.acs.org.uk