

Member briefing on ‘Simpler Recycling’ and changes to Waste Regulations

March 2026

Introduction

Since 31 March 2026, all non-black, recyclable PET or PP plastic plant pots are required to be accepted in household kerbside recycling in England. Defra confirmed this move following a successful long-term advocacy campaign from the Horticultural Trades Association (HTA), which will help reduce plastic waste and promote environmental sustainability.

The new [Separation of Waste \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) for non-household municipal premises came into force on 31 March 2025, with household collections beginning a year later, on 31 March 2026. Although pots will likely need to be rinsed before recycling, this can be easily integrated into existing recycling routines. Additionally, Defra has stated that Ministers will review recycling policies at the earliest opportunity to provide further certainty and clarity to stakeholders.

HTA press release: <https://hta.org.uk/news/hta-campaign-success-with-plant-pots-accepted-in-kerbside-recycling-from-2026>

We have also produced a template letter for you to send to your local council asking them to make it clear in any communications to households, that from 31 March 2026 non-black plastic plant pots are required to be accepted for kerbside recycling.

‘Simpler Recycling’

Simpler recycling policy has been introduced to make the recycling of waste from households and businesses in England as uniform as possible. The regulations set out the core set of materials that must be accepted for collection. This means that in any local authority in England, there should no longer be any confusion or variation of what can be recycled or not, and which bin it can go into.

There will now be four key waste streams that must be collected separately. Workplaces will be able to decide container sizes and collection frequencies based on waste volume but must ensure proper segregation. These include:

- Paper and card,
- All other dry recyclable waste streams
- Food and garden waste (garden for households only). These can be collected together or separately
- Residual waste

The implementation timelines for ‘Simpler Recycling’ are:

- As of 31 March 2025, businesses and relevant non-domestic premises in England must have arranged for the collection of the core recyclable waste streams, with the exception of garden waste (glass, metal, plastic, paper and card, and food waste).
- Micro-firms (businesses with fewer than 10 full-time equivalent employees) will be temporarily exempt from this requirement. They will have until 31 March 2027 to arrange for recycling of core recyclable waste streams.
- As of 31 March 2026, local authorities are required to collect the core recyclable waste streams from all households in England. This includes introducing weekly food waste collections for most homes, unless a transitional arrangement applies.
- By 31 March 2027, kerbside plastic film collections from businesses and relevant non-domestic premises, and households will be introduced.

Changes to business waste collections

A notable change is that food waste must be collected from all households and businesses in England as part of this. Businesses with 10 employees and more must separate dry recyclables into dedicated containers and ensure food waste is collected separately, regardless of the amount produced, starting from March 2025. Businesses with fewer than 10 employees have time until March 2027 to comply.

In addition to this, by 31st March 2027, waste collections must also include plastic film packaging and plastic bags, which is a requirement on waste collectors and processors.

Changes to consumer waste collections

For consumers, the main change is that from 31st March 2026, all local authorities in England must collect the same core set of materials from all households and provide a separate weekly food waste collection. In the regulations there is an exemption allowing food waste to be collected with garden waste.

Non-black plant pots now fit within the definition of plastic materials accepted for recycling in the plastics waste stream, as detailed below:

Items that can be included in the plastic waste stream (Part 4 of Schedule 1)

- a) PET plastic bottles, pots, tubs, trays and tubes,
- b) PP plastic bottles, pots, tubs, trays and tubes,
- c) HDPE and LDPE plastic bottles, pots, tubs, trays and tubes,

These do not include “any items which contains any pigment which prevents the item being near-infrared detectable” or any item which is not a minimum size of 40x40mm.

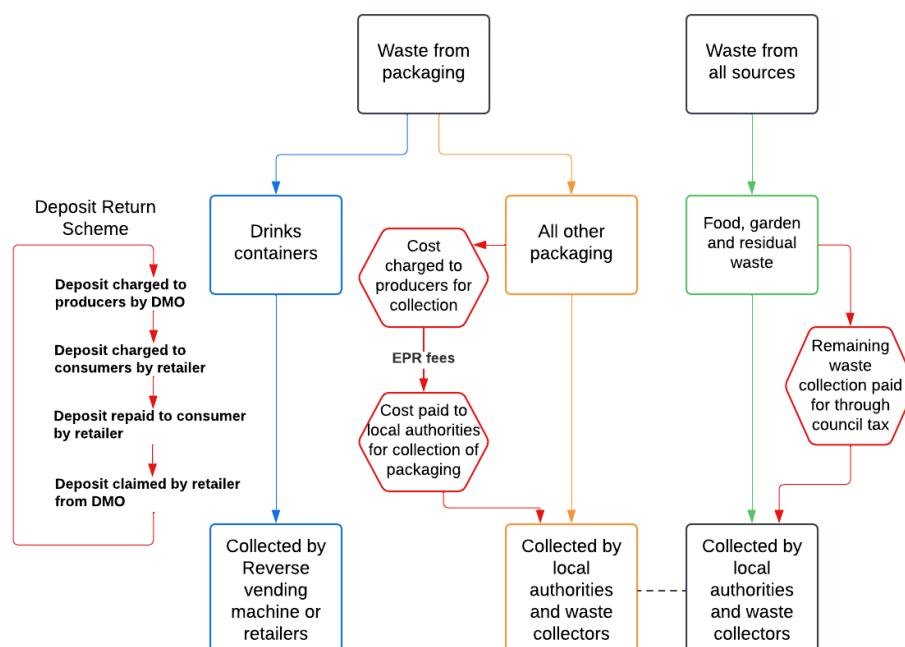
Therefore, we recommend providing this definition if asked by consumers about whether plant pots should be collected by local authorities, being clear that this requirement is now in place.

How ‘Simpler Recycling’ fits with EPR

‘Simpler Recycling’ is part of the overhaul of the waste system, including both Extended Producer Responsibility and a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers. The table below explains the differences between the regulations and how they link together.

Regulation	Purpose	Country applicable to	Who is responsible	Type of responsibility
Simpler recycling <i>(Separation of Waste (England) regulations 2024)</i>	Ensure consistent collection of materials for recycling	England	Local Authorities and Waste Collectors	Physical collection
Extended Producer Responsibility <i>(The Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) regulations 2024)</i>	Encourage greater use of recycled and recyclable materials through greater disposal fees for non-recyclable packaging	UK wide	Producers – businesses who are brand owners, importing or filling packaging	Financial and data reporting
Deposit Return Scheme <i>(The Deposit Scheme for Drinks Containers Regulations 2025 – UK and Northern Ireland)</i> <i>(The Deposit Return Scheme for Drinks Containers Regulations 2026 – Wales)</i> <i>(The Deposit and Return Scheme for Scotland Amendment Regulations 2025)</i>	Increase the volume of drinks containers collected for recycling and reuse by charging a refundable deposit	UK wide, but a devolved responsibility for set up	Drinks producers and retailers for charging and refunding the deposit and for collection of containers for recycling	Financial, physical collection and data reporting

Collections and fees are also split across the different systems, as shown below.



Template letter to send to your local council

As of 31st March 2026, all local authorities in England are required to collect the same core set of materials from all households, including non-black plastic plant pots. However, we are aware that implementation remains inconsistent across local authorities, with many councils not yet updating their recycling guidance to make homeowners aware of these new requirements.

To help raise awareness of this change and to ensure local authorities comply, we advise you to write to your local council and ask that all communications made to homeowners on the changes to recycling include explicitly that, as of 31 March 2026, non-black plastic plant pots are accepted for kerbside recycling, in line with current regulations.

The below template letter can be personalised and then sent to your local council. You can find the contact details here: <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

Dear [NAME],

I write to you on behalf of [BUSINESS NAME & SHORT INTRO TO BUSINESS]

[BUSINESS NAME] and the wider environmental horticulture sector welcome the fact that as of 31 March 2026, all local authorities in England are required to collect the same core set of materials from households, including non-black plastic plant pots.

The sector has taken the lead on recycling and re-using our own plastics in recognition of the currently limited infrastructure for plastic re-processing. Working with partners, the sector



developed the Taupe polypropylene plant pot, which has been widely adopted by the industry since 2018/19. In 2018, The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) set up a scheme with Ecogen to collect plastics from its members for re-use and recycling. Many garden centres and manufacturers have set up their own schemes to provide collection points for plastics for their customers [PERSONALISE IF YOU OPERATE A TAKEBACK SCHEME]. However, even with these schemes in place, inevitably there will be recyclable polypropylene plant pots sent to landfill due to the inability to recycle them kerbside.

Gardeners World estimate that around 500 million plant pots and seed trays are sold every year, highlighting the scale of valuable, recyclable polypropylene that is in circulation. The environmental horticulture sector is committed to reducing its impact on the environment, and a key part is to increase innovation and circularity of garden plastic packaging. A vital step is providing clarity to households and businesses on what can be collected for efficient recycling and material recovery. This includes various elements of packaging used for the production and protection of horticultural goods, such as non-black plastic plant pots, to ensure correct recycling, and avoid landfill/incineration.

The confirmation that, as of 31 March 2026, non-black plant pots fall within the definition of plastic materials accepted for recycling in the household plastics waste stream represents a major opportunity to address the common misconception that PET and PP plant pots are not recyclable. With this in mind, **we ask that your household recycling guidance is updated to explicitly include non-black, PET and PP plant pots, and that it clearly states that clean, non-black PET and PP plant pots are eligible for kerbside collection by councils from consumers' homes, as required by current regulations.**

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Yours sincerely

[YOUR NAME]

Other links for further information

Contact the HTA policy team: policy@hta.org.uk

Link to the Statutory instrument with definitions in Schedule 1:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2024/666/contents/made>

Find contact details for local council:

<https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

Further information on EPR: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/extended-producer-responsibility-for-packaging-who-is-affected-and-what-to-do>