



THE FUTURE IS RETURNABLE

[The future is returnable. Taking a circular approach to hot drinks](#) - outlining a blueprint for establishing a successful returnable cup scheme.

Drawing on the expertise of over 20 industry experts, leading reuse brands, and businesses, the guide is designed to provide invaluable insights and practical advice for organisations looking to implement returnable cup schemes at scale.

Designed for universities, cafés, community groups, councils & business, the completely free guide includes everything from cups, washing and logistics, to payment mechanisms and tech solutions.

A BLUEPRINT FOR SETTING UP
AND RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL
RETURNABLE CUP SCHEME
FOR HOT DRINKS.

[DOWNLOAD THE GUIDE >](#)





INTRODUCING A RETURNABLE CUP SCHEME

Like all reuse systems, returnable cup schemes provide an alternative, circular solution to the current linear, disposable models of consumption.

Unlike customers being responsible for carrying their own reusable cups, in returnable systems, the product is served in a returnable cup owned by the business.

The cup is collected, washed and reused after the drink is finished. And this can be done over and over again.

- **A reusable is owned by the customer.**
- **A returnable is owned by the business and borrowed by the customer.**





THE BENEFITS (TO BUSINESSES)

There are multiple reasons why switching from single-use to reuse makes economic as well as environmental sense including:

- Reducing their carbon footprint.
- Reducing waste and pollution generated by single-use cups.
- Saving money spent on single-use cups and managing waste.
- Preparing for proposed legislation changes.
- Supporting wider sustainability targets.
- Aligning with business ethos.
- Keeping customers happy.
- Staying ahead of competitors.

LEGISLATION

Governments around the world have already imposed, or have plans to impose, legislation banning or taxing single-use items like disposable cups.

- In the future, it will be unlawful or simply uneconomical to offer drinks in a single-use cup.
- Legally-binding reuse targets will be set.
- Deposit Return Schemes will be defined.
- These will incentivise the scaling up of refillable and reusable packaging.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- The environment the scheme is operating in: open-loop or closed loop?
- Ensuring packaging is returned through financial incentives.
- Choosing a tech-based or manual system.
- Which packaging to use?
- How are the scheme logistics managed?
- Who manages the scheme?
- Who funds the scheme?
- How do you break the habit of single-use?





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New returnable coffee cup scheme launching in Cardiff aims to help reduce waste

INNOVATIVE CARDIFF 'REFILL RETURN CUP SCHEME' GOES LIVE THIS WEEK

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Cardiff's Refill Return Cup Scheme Hits Major Milestone: 97% Return Rate After One Month

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Mackie's renewable energy record and Cardiff's 'Refill Return Cup' scheme: The sustainability success stories of the week

CASE STUDY: CARDIFF REFILL RETURN CUP

In October 2024, we launched the Cardiff Refill Return Cup with FOR Cardiff as part of a 6 month pilot. The scheme went live in **23 outlets** across the city. Outlet staff attended group training sessions and we ran a joint comms campaign with FOR Cardiff to promote the launch of the scheme.

In the first month of the project:

- 431 people signed up and tried out the scheme
- 2426 cups were borrowed
- A 97% return rate was achieved
- 43KG of CO2 was saved

Next steps: Working with FOR Cardiff, we will be looking to increase participation in the scheme, undertake research with the participating businesses and plan for post-pilot rollout.



OUR 10 TOP TIPS...



Find a system that works for you.

When it comes down to it, it's about your organisation and finding a solution that works for you will ultimately depend on your size, context, budget and team.



Think carefully about logistics.

Make sure you're geared up for buying, storing, cleaning and drying cups.



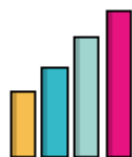
Focus on ensuring cups are returned.

Ultimately, it doesn't matter which way you decide to run your scheme, if cups aren't being returned it's not working. So always design your scheme with this goal in mind.



Make reuse the default.

If possible, eliminate single-use altogether.



Measure your impact.

Calculating your return rate is key to knowing you're having a positive environmental impact.



Set the right price.

If a deposit or penalty is too low, people may not return the cup. If it's too high, they may be put off altogether.



Consider cup branding.

Focus on simple, functional messaging that reminds people what to do with the cup.



Embrace marketing and communications.

Promote your scheme, message across different stages of the customer journey, and make sure cup collection points are well signposted.



Make sure staff are engaged.

They're the front line for your scheme. Keep them motivated and invest in training.



Collaborate.

Collectively, we should be setting out to achieve mass participation, which in turn will create a strong demand for returnable solutions.