

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House,
17 Smith Square,
Westminster,
London SW1P 3JR

5th March 2018

Dear Secretary of State,

We are a broad coalition of water and outdoor sporting organisations and marine conservation charities operating across England and the rest of the UK. We are writing to you to raise some issues around the possible introduction of a deposit return system on empty drinks containers, an initiative which the Scottish Government have already committed to. We represent surfers, swimmers, kayakers, sailors, divers and other recreational water users, and we know from sometimes painful experience the problems empty cans and bottles cause in the marine and terrestrial environment.

We would therefore urge you to support the introduction of a comprehensive deposit return system for England. These systems work well in other countries, with return rates of well over 90% in some cases, and we recognise the other benefits beyond the litter agenda, notably around resource efficiency, jobs in the circular economy, improving recycling rates, and reducing climate emissions.

However, our primary interest is still in litter reduction, particularly in the areas we rely on for recreation including our beaches, rivers and lakes, countryside paths, cycle ways and trails, and other assorted open spaces where beverage containers are often discarded. The recent emphasis on plastic waste has been welcome, as have your comments on this issue (and indeed on the principle of deposit return). However, we must not overlook the litter that perhaps presents the greatest danger to our members and their equipment. Broken glass from drinks containers and the sharp metal edges resulting from littered cans, can cause both injury to beachgoers and damage to equipment. As you will know, the most successful deposit return systems include all three materials, and would help protect our natural playground and members from plastic, metal and glass. We also believe this is crucial to ensure the long-term operational success and financial stability of a deposit system.

Our final hope is that you and your civil servants will continue to work with your counterparts in Scotland, and with Wales and Northern Ireland if appropriate, and perhaps even with the Irish Government. We understand that the various nations may wish to adopt systems which differ in some respects, but litter (and indeed marine life and recreational water sports enthusiasts) do not restrict themselves to national boundaries - for example, the bulk of littered cans and bottles found on Norwegian beaches are no longer sold in Norway, but travel there from Britain and elsewhere. Should you decide to give the go-ahead for deposit return in England, we believe taking a generally consistent approach with other administrations will bring benefits for us, for the public more

generally, and for business. We believe a decision of this sort could genuinely inspire action elsewhere on what is after all a global issue, and would be very broadly welcomed, across sporting bodies, NGOs, businesses and indeed the media.

If it would be useful to meet and discuss some of these issues, please do let us know.

Yours sincerely,

Hugo Tagholm
Director
Surfers Against Sewage



Jeanette Hopkins
Director of External Affairs
Royal Yachting Association



Mary Tetley
Chief Executive
British Sub-Aqua Club



Land Rover BAR



Nick Rees
Operations Manager
Surfing England



Kate Rew
Founder & Director
Outdoor Swimming Society




Clare Brook
Chief Executive
Blue Marine Foundation



**BLUE MARINE
FOUNDATION**

Continued overleaf.

Chris Tuckett
Director of Programmes
Marine Conservation Society (GB)



Robert Thompson
Founder
Fathoms Free

