

# UK Deposit Management Organisation

*Chief Executive Officer*

May 2025





# Deposit Return Schemes (DRS)

**Deposit Return Schemes (DRS)** are a proven global solution to one of the most visible and persistent environmental issues: beverage container waste. By placing a small, refundable deposit on drinks containers, DRS incentivises consumers to return them for recycling, dramatically improving collection rates, reducing litter, and enabling the production of high-quality, food-grade recycled materials.

57 DRS schemes are currently in operation across 32 countries – including Germany, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Australia, and several US states – with return rates often exceeding 90%. These systems are widely recognised as critical to accelerating the transition to a circular economy. They are a proven response to beverage container waste – which makes up around 40% of visible litter.

## Advantages of DRS

Compared to kerbside collection:

- Recycling rates jump from ~70% to over 90%
- Carbon savings of over 46 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e expected in the UK by 2035
- Litter reduction, energy savings, and creation of food-grade recycled materials

## Incentives & impact

DRS delivers results that benefit industry, environment, and society:

- Aligns with ESG and circular economy goals
- Unlocks access to high-quality recycled materials
- Enhances consumer trust and participation
- Establishes a scalable infrastructure for sustainable waste recovery



# Deposit Management Organisation (DMO): A system only as effective as its operator

**The Deposit Management Organisation (DMO) is the entity responsible for overseeing the operation of a DRS. The DMO manages the logistics of collecting and sorting the returned containers and financial operations, such as collecting and reimbursing deposits.**

**The UK has long intended to implement a DRS**, first announcing the ambition in 2018. However, progress has been uneven. An initial scheme launched in Scotland faced significant political challenges, leading to a pause and rethink. In response, **a renewed approach was introduced in 2024** – excluding Wales. To ensure success, the UK Government (via Defra and the two devolved administrations of Scotland and Northern Ireland) invited industry to step forward with a unified proposal for a new delivery model.

At the heart of this reimagined system is the creation of a new **Deposit Management Organisation (DMO)** – a single, not-for-profit industry-led body made up of drinks producers, retailers, and the wider supply chain with the mandate to design, deliver and operate the DRS across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. **The DMO will be responsible for the entire lifecycle of the scheme: managing logistics, financial flows, fraud prevention, and regulatory compliance to ensure high return rates and system efficiency.** It will also serve as the central interface between government, industry and the public – building trust and transparency while ensuring the environmental and economic goals of the scheme are met.

This is a **once-in-a-generation opportunity** to:

- build a national system from the ground up
- deliver lasting environmental value
- shape a model of collaboration between government, industry and consumers
- lead a scheme that could process billions of items and generate £5B+ annually.

**The UK DRS is scheduled to launch in October 2027 across England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland**, covering PET plastic bottles and steel/aluminium cans (excluding glass), with containers sized between 150ml and 3 litres included in scope. The UK DRS will significantly **impact beverage producers and retailers** – requiring producer registration, new product labelling, and payment of fees, while retailers must operate return points unless exempt and register with the DMO.



# Industry-Led Collaboration: How the DMO Took Shape

In response to the UK Government's 2024 DRS policy, a Steering Committee ("SteerCo") formed, bringing together leading producers and retailers across soft drinks, alcoholic drinks, water, and grocery.

The group agreed to act as a consortium to design and submit a single DMO application – grounded in shared industry goals and aligned with government timelines for an October 2027 go-live.

## Seven core principles guided their collaboration:

1. Full UK interoperability across operations and materials
2. Broad, inclusive industry representation
3. Commitment to the 2027 launch timeline
4. Fair and transparent governance
5. Industry-led funding model for early-stage setup
6. Open communication and accountability
7. Collective decision-making with a one-member-one-vote ethos

A structured working model was established with a SteerCo, working groups, and advisory council, co-ordinated by PwC and including non-voting participation from Defra and the two devolved governments of Scotland and Northern Ireland.

## Agreed Board Composition (Total: 13 members)

- 4 producer representatives (currently employed, across beverage segments)
- 4 retailer representatives (currently employed, across retailer types)
- 1 *Independent Chair – vacant*
- 2 *Independent Non-Executive Directors – vacant*
- *Chief Executive Officer – vacant*
- *Chief Financial Officer – vacant*

## Governance Principles

- **Diversity of Membership:** The board should reflect broad, balanced expertise across industries and aim for diversity across gender, ethnicity, geography, and socioeconomic background.
- **Sub-group Representation:** No single business or sub-sector should have disproportionate influence over board decisions.
- **Independence:** Independent board members must have no current ties to beverage production or retail, safeguarding impartiality.
- **DMO-first Ethos:** All board members must act in the best interest of the DMO, above organisational or commercial affiliation.
- **Integrity:** Members are expected to uphold high standards of ethics and integrity.
- **Open Communication:** Transparent communication must exist between the board, executive leadership, the Advisory Council, and DMO members.
- **Performance Evaluation:** Board effectiveness will be regularly reviewed to ensure continuous improvement.
- **Subcommittees:** Functional subcommittees will be established to provide recommendations to the full board, enhancing focus and decision quality.



# Roles and Responsibilities

**Critical to the DMO's success is the appointment of its Chief Executive Officer. The CEO will be the driving force behind the organisation's strategy, culture, and operational execution, and will play a pivotal role in establishing and leading the DMO through its start-up and scale-up phases. As the most senior executive, the CEO will be accountable to the Board for delivering on the organisation's mission – to implement and operate a world-class Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) – and will work closely with the UK Government, industry stakeholders, and the public. This is a rare opportunity for a visionary and pragmatic leader to shape one of the most significant environmental infrastructure initiatives in the UK. The successful candidate will be an inspiring, values-led leader, capable of navigating complexity, forging partnerships across sectors, and building a purpose-driven organisation with impact and longevity.**

- First and foremost, the Chief Executive Officer will be **pivotal in leading the set-up, mobilisation, and long-term success of the DMO**. They will define and deliver the strategic direction of the organisation, embedding the vision, culture, and operating framework needed to build a trusted, transparent, and effective body that serves the UK public, government, and industry with integrity and excellence. A builder by instinct, the CEO will lead from the front in establishing the DMO's organisational infrastructure, operational footprint, and corporate identity. This includes **designing the operating model, appointing the functional leadership team, and creating a scalable, mission-led organisation capable of managing complex, multi-stakeholder demands**. The CEO will also ensure that the DMO is operationally ready for go-live – with the right people, systems, processes, and delivery partnerships in place to support logistics, data flow, scheme performance, and customer interface from day one.
- Working closely with the Board, CFO, and broader Executive Leadership Team, the CEO will shape a commercially viable and accountable business model, with the agility to evolve alongside policy and regulatory requirements. A key responsibility will be embedding a robust performance framework, underpinned by clear KPIs, real-time reporting capability, and a data-led approach to continuous improvement.
- Central to the CEO's role will be inspiring trust and alignment across a wide and complex stakeholder ecosystem – including the Board, DEFRA, devolved governments, producers, retailers, local authorities, environmental organisations, the media, and the public. The CEO will act as the DMO's lead advocate, communicating clearly and consistently, building awareness and support, and ensuring that the public understands and engages with the scheme.
- The CEO will be responsible for delivering the DMO on time by October 2027 – and in a sustainable, enduring way that balances environmental impact, commercial discipline, public confidence, and political scrutiny. They must also be prepared to manage reputational risk and respond swiftly to scrutiny, ensuring transparency, resilience, and the protection of public trust throughout the implementation journey and beyond.
- The ideal candidate will be a strategic, commercially minded leader with strong operational credentials and a **proven ability to scale organisations and deliver complex programmes in regulated environments**. They will be fluent navigating between the Boardroom, Westminster, operational environments, and public-facing platforms, with clarity and credibility.
- As a **people leader**, the CEO will attract and retain exceptional talent, foster a high-performance, collaborative culture, and ensure the DMO is recognised as a benchmark for effective public-private partnership. They will galvanise a team that delivers on its purpose and achieves measurable environmental and societal outcomes – including meaningful contributions to the UK's circular economy and long-term sustainability agenda. This is a role for a leader of stature and substance – someone capable of delivering a nationally significant environmental initiative while building a resilient, future-ready organisation from the ground up.

# Essential Criteria



## Qualifications and experience

- Candidates should bring enterprise-wide leadership experience, ideally as a Chief Executive Officer, Managing Director, or divisional CEO in a complex, delivery-focused environment.
- Experience within the UK Retail, Drinks, Logistics or Environmental Services sectors is essential, with a deep understanding of operational and stakeholder complexity in these industries.
- A track record of successfully scaling a business or national programme – ideally from set-up through to full implementation – is highly desirable. Experience of start-up environments or greenfield builds is a strong advantage.
- Demonstrated ability to build and lead a high-performance executive team, embedding a results-driven culture and clear accountability frameworks across functions.
- Proven experience managing senior stakeholder relationships, particularly across both industry and government. Candidates must be credible with boards, regulators, industry trade bodies, ministers, media and the public. Prior responsibility for public-facing communications and external representation – acting as a visible and trusted figurehead for an organisation, programme or policy initiative.
- Experience designing and implementing organisational governance, operational delivery models, and enterprise risk frameworks.
- Strong strategic and commercial acumen, with the ability to translate complex challenges into actionable business plans.
- A compelling communicator with the gravitas, clarity and integrity required to engage diverse audiences and unify competing interests.
- Experience leading or overseeing fundraising, investment programmes, or capital infrastructure delivery would be additive.
- An understanding of digital infrastructure, data systems, and technology-enabled service delivery would be beneficial.



## Competencies

- A strong affinity with a customer- and consumer-focused, low ego, purpose-driven organisation, with a commitment to sustainability and public value.
- Champions a culture of continuous improvement and organisational learning.
- Brings intellectual curiosity, operational know-how, and a pragmatic “sleeves rolled up” leadership style – comfortable leading from the front while empowering others to deliver.
- Demonstrates an entrepreneurial mindset with the influencing and relationship-building skills needed to drive impact across a diverse, cross-sectoral stakeholder landscape.
- A natural collaborator who gets things done through relationships and alignment, not just hierarchy or process. Able to navigate ambiguity with clarity and confidence.
- A proven leader and team builder, with the ability to attract, inspire and retain high-calibre talent.
- Acts with integrity and fosters a culture of accountability, collaboration, and shared best practice.
- Brings strong strategic thinking skills, with the ability to set and articulate a clear and compelling long-term vision for the DMO, while staying grounded in the day-to-day tactical and operational realities.
- Operates with pace, agility, and commercial discipline, balancing ambition with delivery focus in a high-stakes, mission-critical environment.
- Highly resilient, composed under pressure, and able to adapt to evolving priorities, stakeholder needs, and market dynamics while keeping the organisation aligned and on track.

# How to apply

The recruitment process is being undertaken by Russell Reynolds Associates on behalf of the DMO. Please submit your full application by email to [responses@russellreynolds.com](mailto:responses@russellreynolds.com). Please quote the role title and assignment code **2504-055L** in the subject heading of the email. All applications will be acknowledged. The closing date for applications is **23:59 on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2025**.

Your submission should include:

- A **CV** setting out your career history, with key responsibilities and achievements. Please ensure you have provided reasons for any gaps within the last two years.
- A **Statement of Suitability** (no longer than two pages) explaining how you consider your personal skills, qualities and experience provide evidence of your suitability for the role, with particular reference to the criteria in the person specification.
- A completed **Diversity Monitoring Form** [available here](#). All aspects of diversity are important to us. This includes in the context of the nine protected characteristics, as well as diversity of experience, background and working style. We believe diversity of perspectives and thought delivers better judgements and better decision-making in the public interest. We believe our people should reflect and understand the diverse society we serve. Therefore, we strongly encourage applications from everyone irrespective of age, gender identity or expression, disability, religion, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

Please submit all documents so that the panel will have all the required information on which to assess your application against the criteria in the person specification.

The process and indicative timeline following the closing date will involve a longlist meeting with the selection panel, followed by in-depth, competency-based interviews with Russell Reynolds in June, followed by a shortlist meeting to narrow the field of candidates to a final group for informal conversations with relevant stakeholders and final panel interviews in July. Specific dates will be determined and communicated to candidates as they become available.

If you wish to speak with someone before submitting an application, please contact: [responses@russellreynolds.com](mailto:responses@russellreynolds.com).

*Please note that due diligence will be carried out on shortlisted candidates. Candidates should expect this to include searches of previous public statements and social media, blogs or any other publicly available information.*

