HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING CODE OF PRACTICE

UPDATE - NOVEMBER 2026

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A new Code of Practice for household recycling

- The Code of Practice for household waste recycling sets out standards for how local authorities should provide and manage recycling services, ensuring they are consistent, efficient, and accessible for residents.
- Our Circular Economy and Waste Route Map committed to a co-design process with local government and other stakeholders for high-quality, high-performing household recycling and reuse services.



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Consultation timeline

- Published 29 October 2026 for 12-week consultation.
- Closing date of 21 January 2027.
- Consultation analysis publication expected in June 2027 (tbc).
- Strategic Environmental Assessment in summer 2027.

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Legal status and funding

- Compliance with the Code of Practice will not be mandatory, but local authorities will have a duty to outline how they intend to carry out their services in line with the Code and where they will deviate.

- Incentives are provided in several other ways (future targets, packaging EPR, ETS) and this approach helps to manage issues encountered with unique or challenging properties.

- Scottish Government position remains that it will **fund the change required to deliver services consistent with the Code**. If substantial additions were made to the Code following consultation, these may or may not be included in that commitment to fund.

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The package now out for consultation

Core materials

- Paper and card; metals; glass; plastics, including film
- Food waste in UR1-4
- Cartons expected

Dry Recycling

- At least twin-stream; paper/card separate from containers
- No change to glass policy
- Alternative service design must achieve equivalent outcomes

Residual Waste

- Maximum effective weekly capacity for eligible kerbside collections
- Options: 60L, 70L, 80L, no limit
- Bin size and collection frequency flexible

Organics

- Food waste preferably weekly; no less than fortnightly
- Co-mingled food and garden
- Views on UR4 extension
- Garden waste charging remains discretionary

Communication

- Maintain and periodically review a comms strategy
- Provide clear, accurate and timely information to residents
- Use multiple media approaches and support service changes with comms

Operational Guidance

- Use recommended colours when replacing bins or changing services
- No wholesale replacement based on standardised colours
- Apply accessibility, staff safety and TEEP assessments

Where Co-design changed the final content

	Early direction	Consultation position
Dry Recycling	Uniform collection model	Twin-stream expected; glass method and frequency remain locally flexible
Residual Waste	Prescribe frequency and bin size	Consult on 60–80L weekly capacity; councils choose bin size and frequency
Food and Garden	Separate weekly food; wider rural coverage; free garden service	Weekly preferred, fortnightly accepted; UR4 only considered; charging discretion retained
Bin Colours	Replace containers for national consistency	Recommended colours only when assets are replaced or services change
Local Flexibility	Detailed rules for every property type	Principle-based TEEP test and equivalent-outcome alternatives

Links and contact details

Consultation portal: https://consult.gov.scot/environment-forestry/a-new-household-recycling-code-of-practice/

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