

# RECYCLE WEEK

14<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> September 2026



**#RecycleWeek**

[www.thefirstmile.co.uk](http://www.thefirstmile.co.uk)

# RECYCLE WEEK 2025

**22<sup>nd</sup> to 28th September**

Recycle Week is the UK's flagship annual celebration of recycling, and this year marks over two decades of progress, innovation, and community action. First launched in 2004 by WRAP (the Waste and Resources Action Programme), Recycle Week was created to inspire people to recycle more of the right things, more often — and it's been growing in impact ever since. From the early days of encouraging households to separate their waste, to today's nationwide campaigns involving schools, businesses, and even Downing Street, Recycle Week has become a powerful reminder of what we can achieve when we all do our bit.

This year, Recycle Now is continuing last year's campaign theme, giving it a revamp and adding new items. By giving commonly binned items a personality, the campaign helps people realise that more of the things they've been wasting can be recycled after all. It's easy to rescue things like foil and trigger sprays from the rubbish and recycle them instead — small changes that make a big difference.

Thanks to efforts like Recycle Week, the UK's recycling rate has grown from just 14.5% in 2001 to over 44% today. That's a huge leap forward — but there's still more to do

This guide is packed with handy tips, myth-busting facts, and practical advice to help you recycle smarter and more confidently. Whether you're a seasoned recycler or just getting started, we hope it inspires you to take the next step. Let's make this Recycle Week count — for our communities, our environment, and our future.

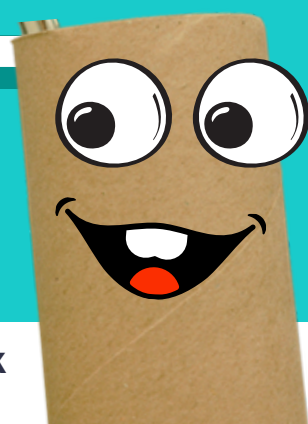
# RESCUE ME!

# RECYCLE



 Britain recycles

Brought to you by  
**wrap**



**#RecycleWeek**

## 2025 key items to recycle

**'Rescue Me! Recycle'** Encouraging everyone to rescue one more thing from the rubbish and recycle it instead.



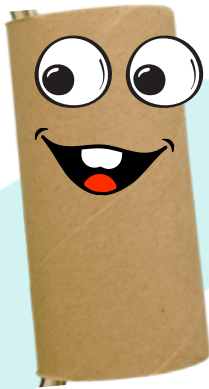
Aerosols



Trigger sprays



Clean foil



Toilet roll tubes



Toothpaste tubes



Shampoo bottles



Yoghurt pots



Perfume bottles

# The context for this year's campaign

Recycling policy in the UK is undergoing significant transformation. One of DEFRA's key priorities is the successful rollout of Simpler Recycling in England, alongside the implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging. These initiatives aim to boost recycling rates and improve public perception of recycling services.

A major shift will be the introduction of food waste recycling, representing the most substantial change to household recycling systems. However, this rollout will be gradual – many areas will not have food waste services in place during 2025. It's expected to be a transitional period, with DEFRA forecasting around 90% coverage by March 2026.

Amidst these changes, Recycle Now, led by WRAP, continues to provide consistency and clarity for the public. Last year's refreshed campaign theme – focusing on a small number of commonly missed recyclable items – showed promising results. WRAP's tracker data revealed a notable reduction in missed capture (when recyclable items are mistakenly thrown away), particularly for the campaign's focus items.

Changing long-term habits takes time, and consistency of messaging is essential. From a behavioural perspective, missed capture remains the most critical challenge – and therefore, the central focus of this year's campaign.

## Following Recycle Week 2024 missed capture of key items reduced

Toilet  
roll tubes

27% to 19%



Aerosols

24% to 19%



Aftershave  
perfume  
bottles

53% to 50%



# MYTH BUSTER

What you think you know about recycling might not be quite right...

## MYTH: The green dot means it's recyclable



The truth is the green dot symbol (while not always green) does not mean that the packaging is recyclable, will be recycled or has been recycled. It simply is a symbol used on packaging to signify that the company has financially contributed towards the recovery and recycling of the packaging in Europe.

## MYTH: The triangle icon (mobious) means that something is recyclable



Another logo on the back of many products is a different arrow symbol, this time in the shape of a triangle, it is named the Mobious Loop. It only indicates that the packaging is capable of being recycled, not that it has been recycled or will be accepted in all recycling collections. Sometimes this symbol is used with a percentage figure in the middle to show that the packaging contains that much-recycled material.

## MYTH: Your recycling needs a wash



You don't need to wash with loads of soap and water you just need to rinse so there is no food, milk or residue which will contaminate the load.

## MYTH: You need to remove the lids on plastics



Leave the lid on plastic bottles so it can be recycled, otherwise, it'll get lost in the processing and fall in with the residual waste. The film lids on plastic trays must be removed though - this is flexible plastic. The plan is to make this recyclable in dry mixed recycling by 2027 but for the moment should be removed and either put in general waste or into a First Mile dedicated flexi-plastics stream.

# COFFEE CUPS

## Why are coffee cups so tricky to recycle?

It's a common question — and a good one! While the lids and sleeves of takeaway coffee cups are usually recyclable, the cups themselves are a bit more complicated. That's because most are lined with a thin layer of plastic or wax on the inside to stop your drink from leaking. This coating makes them unsuitable for standard paper and card recycling.

To recycle coffee cups properly, they need to be collected separately and sent to specialist facilities that can separate the materials. Without that process, they end up in general waste — even though they look like paper. The good news is, more cafés and workplaces are joining cup recycling schemes, and reusable cups are another alternative.

We offer a range of specialist recycling services, including dedicated coffee cup collections, to help businesses tackle this challenge head-on. Whether you're a café, office, or event space, we can help you divert cups from landfill and make recycling easier for everyone. It's all part of making sustainability simple, practical, and impactful.



# Let's talk food waste – and why it matters.

Segregating food waste might not sound exciting, but it's one of the simplest ways businesses can cut down on costs and do their bit for the planet. And now, with the Simpler Recycling legislation in place, it's not just a good idea – it's a legal requirement. Businesses in England must have food waste collected separately, which means it's time to rethink how we manage what goes in the bin.

Mixing food waste with general waste can lead to overweight charges and risks contaminating recyclable materials – which makes recycling less effective and more expensive. By separating food waste properly, you're protecting your recycling streams, reducing disposal costs, and supporting a healthier, more sustainable ecosystem.

We're here to make that easy. Our specialist food waste services are designed to help you stay compliant, save money, and make a real impact. Whether you need advice, bins, or a full setup, we've got you covered.

## The 3 types food waste



### Food preparation waste

This includes any waste generated during food preparation, such as peels, trimmings, and leftovers.



### Plate waste

This includes any uneaten food left on the plates after customers have finished their meal.



### Spoiled or expired food

This includes any food that has gone off or reached its expiration date.



# A guide to The Waste Hierarchy

**Did you know: Under The Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011, it is a legal requirement for businesses to take all reasonable steps to manage their waste in line with The Waste Hierarchy.**



## REDUCE

Reducing: Focus on prevention as the key to sustainable waste management. By taking simple steps like using reusable cups instead of disposable ones, printing less, and reducing packaging, be proactive in finding ways to minimise waste from the start!



## REUSE

Why recycle when you can reuse waste instead? There are many ways to give new life to items. Get creative and find ways to repurpose waste within your own business or donate it to organisations in need. We also work with The Felix Project and other partners to help customers donate surplus food.



## RECYCLE

Recycling is a sustainable waste management option that conserves resources, reduces emissions, and minimises landfill waste. A whole range of materials such as paper, plastics, cans, glass, food waste, batteries, and electronics can be recycled.



## ENERGY RECOVERY

Turning waste into energy is a more sustainable option than landfill. By recovering energy from waste, we can actually create something useful like electricity or heat instead of just letting it go to waste.



## LANDFILL

Landfill is not a sustainable option due to limited space in the UK and harmful environmental impacts from landfill gases. It should only be used as a last resort for non-recyclable waste.

# What can your food waste do?

RECYCLING 1 TONNE of food waste SAVES 256 kWh of electricity  
**This is enough energy to:**



POWER A 59" LED TV FOR  
**16,000 HOURS!**



POWER A DISHWASHER FOR  
**128 LOADS!**



POWER ALEXA LONG ENOUGH TO TELL  
**64,000 JOKES!**

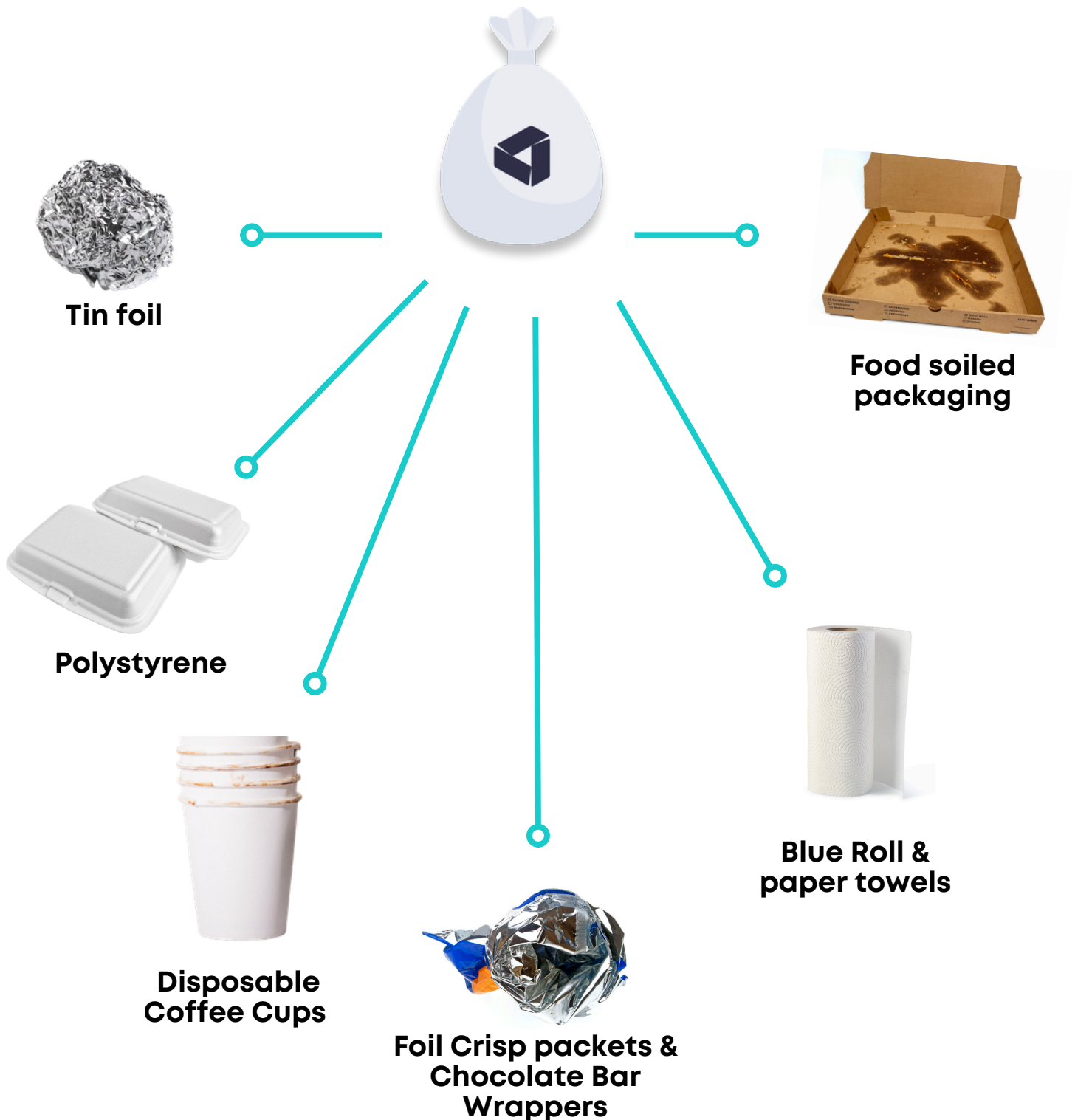


CHARGE A NISSAN LEAF BATTERY  
**6.4 TIMES!**

# RECYCLING WHAT GOES WHERE?



# GENERAL WASTE WHAT GOES WHERE?



# FUN FACTS

**Around 15 million plastic bottles are used DAILY in the UK, which is a very scary number – especially when you consider that it equates to approximately 275,000 tonnes of plastic waste a year.**



**A plastic bag will take between 500 and 1,000 years to decompose in landfill.**



**The UK used to use 500 million plastic bags every week – amounting 1000's of tonnes of plastic. However, since introducing the 5p bag, usage has dropped by a staggering 85%!**

**Paper can be recycled up to 7 times – using 70% less energy than making new (virgin) paper.**

**By recycling just 1 tonne of paper, you can save 4000kW of energy (enough to power a house for a whole year!).**



**If you recycled a million mobile phones they would yield:**

**33 pounds of palladium  
75 pounds of gold  
772 pounds of silver and  
35,274 pounds of copper**



**Aluminium can be recycled an unlimited number of times!**

**You could power a light bulb for 20 hours for the same energy needed to make one new aluminium tin. So, by recycling just one fizzy drink can or tin of beans, you could save enough energy to power your tv for around three hours. 75% of the aluminium ever made is still in use today.**

