

## Scottish Government Review of Permitted Development Rights - Phase 3 Consultation

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(Link to consultation page: <https://consult.gov.scot/planning-performance/scottish-government-review-of-pdr3/>)

16<sup>th</sup> August 2023

To whom it may concern,

## Scottish Government Review of Permitted Development Rights - Phase 3 Consultation

The Scottish Grocers' Federation (SGF) is a trade association for the Scottish Convenience store sector. There are 5,098 convenience stores in Scotland, which includes all the major symbol groups, co-ops and convenience multiples in Scotland. SGF promotes responsible community retailing and works with key stakeholders to encourage a greater understanding of the contribution convenience retailers make to Scotland's communities. In addition, Convenience stores are known to be economic multipliers and an important source of local employment, providing over 49,000 jobs in Scotland ([Scottish Local Shop Report 2022](#) (SLSR22)).

Convenience stores trade across all locations in Scotland, providing a core grocery offer and expanding range of services in response to changing consumer demands close to where people live. According to our Scottish Local Shop Report 2022, the valued services provided by local shops include post office services (27%), bill payment services (78%) and free-to-use cash machines (49%) (SLSR22).

With the UK convenience sector expected to grow to £48.6bn by 2025, the sector is more relevant than ever to every type of customer and has key social benefits and is of key economic value to the economy. Over the last year, the UK convenience sector contributed over £9.7bn in GVA and over £9bn in taxes (SLSR22).

**The Deposit Return Scheme is a key issue for convenience retailers and SGF welcomes the opportunity to respond to Question 29 of the Scottish Government Review of Permitted Development Rights - Phase 3 Consultation.**

SGF promotes responsible retailing and is fully committed to a functional and fit for purpose Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for the UK and Scotland. The aim of SGF throughout the process has been to ensure that our members are fully aware of all the information they will need to know in order to comply to the scheme's objectives.

As representative of the largest group of Return Point Operators (RPOs) in Scotland, SGF has held regular meetings with the Scottish Government's Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity and we have now begun the process of engagement with DEFRA and UK Ministers, ahead of an October 2025 launch. During the previous iteration of the Scottish scheme, SGF was a founding member of Circularity Scotland and had regular engagement with SEPA and Zero Waste Scotland.

Convenience stores in Scotland are already facing an extremely challenging trading environment and our sector has limited capacity to absorb further additional costs. This, in turn, impacts on customer footfall and household budgets for many communities. In order to comply to the scheme, retailers are required to navigate through a complex set of challenges and new regulations. It is essential that, wherever possible, steps are taken to ease the burden on business.

It is crucial that RPOs do not have the added burden and cost of long and drawn-out issues with planning regulations for Reverse Vending Machines (RVMs) and that the rules, as set out, are as clear and accessible as possible.

## Consultation

**Question 29: Do you agree with the proposed amendments to PDR for reverse vending machines? Please add any comment in support of your answer.**

SGF previously raised concerns that the Scottish Government had not made any amendments to the PDR planning regulation to support local convenience stores, parades, or local return points.

The Order, set out in section 6.1.3, designed subsequent to discussion between the Scottish Government and retailers, do not clearly state this was for supermarkets only and, in addition, do not provide provisions for local community parades and high streets. This potentially created a

disadvantage for convenience retailers by forcing RPOs to remove selling space, while supermarkets were supported through the regulations. Creating a market advantage over community stores.

SGF welcomes the proposed additions to the PDR, as set out in section 6.1.9, and allowance for on-street installation of an RVM. However, we note that, given the unknown details of the scheme at present, including assumptions on uplift and administration, we believe that 6.1.9 does not go far enough.

The limitation of at least '400m from any other on-street RVM' may result in a trading disadvantage for stores that are within 400m but significantly further from the location of the RVM in relation to other stores. SGF would argue that the placement of RVMs should be based on community need and the capacity for retailers to manage them, over an arbitrary separation of 400m.

Furthermore, no allowance to place an RVM within 15 metres of a residential property may rule out over 50% of all convenience stores by automatic exemption. In particular, stores with flats above.

We would also wish to see the planning process simplified for those who seek to make applications. With a reduction to the high level of fees attached, including the associated costs such as the requirement for professional support for applications. Likewise, the planning process still requires a road adoption process and recognition of fees attached to it, which can be very expensive and can take up to 12 months with no guarantees of success.

In addition, as things stand there is no clear guidance for local authorities to follow, in respect of planning applications for RVM's and permitted hours of operations, in order to ensure nationwide consistency.

Similarly, there are presently no clear rules on exemptions for collections from RVM's by scheme administrator which would need special permissions for parking and collection.

SGF welcomes the progress made by the statement of limitations set out in section 6.1.9. However, we hope that the concerns above will also be taken forward and implemented alongside the proposed additions to the PDR.

# SGF

Scottish Grocers' Federation

[www.scottishshop.org.uk](http://www.scottishshop.org.uk)

Promoting Responsible Community Retailing Since 1918  
*to ensure a sustainable and prosperous convenience industry in Scotland*



We trust that you will find our comments helpful and are happy to engage further with you on this important matter.

Yours sincerely

Jamie Mackie

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- SGF gives permission to the Scottish Government to publish its consultation response and to share this response internally with other policy departments, that may be addressing the issues discussed.
- SGF is also content to be contacted again in the future, in relation to this consultation exercise.

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Find us on



# SGF

Scottish Grocers' Federation

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