

## **PRESS NOTICE**

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### **OPRL: Defra decision to retain current labels offers important clarity for consumers**

OPRL (On-Packaging Recycling Label) has welcomed the government's announcement of plans for labelling under EPR for packaging, saying the decision to adopt the recycling 'swoosh' and consumer information around recycling offers important continuity that will help to drive recycling participation.

Executive Director Margaret Bates described the move as reassuring. She said: "Consumers need clear messages, and this commitment to familiar imagery and messaging will help to avoid any confusion. It is also encouraging to see that Defra, the devolved administrations and OPRL members – including many international brands – understand the value of the label."

From 2026, brand owners and importers will be required to label the majority of packaging products with a label instructing consumers to 'Recycle' or 'Do Not Recycle', and an accompanying logo. While the 'swoosh' and instructions will be mandatory, packaging producers can choose whether to manage the application themselves, or sign up to a scheme.

Asked about the government's decision to offer the logo free of charge, Bates was unconcerned. "Our ongoing engagement with Defra means this outcome was not surprising. Instead, OPRL is focused on helping our members to prepare, by assessing the recyclability of their packaging, and navigating the intricacies of labelling.

"You could compare it to filling out a tax return – it is possible to do it yourself, but if you are looking for a guarantee that you have ticked every box, then it is safer to hire an accountant. Managing labelling requirements for a vast range of products is challenging; getting it wrong can have a huge impact on consumer relations, as well as the regulatory consequences."

At the recent 'visioning sprint' for EPR, organised by Defra to explore stakeholders' vision for EPR in 10 years' time, Bates responded to questions from businesses on the impact of labelling rules. She concluded: "The sprint was a



THE ON-PACK RECYCLING LABEL

welcome opportunity to provide up to date information, and our members were relieved to find that the existing OPRL labels will still be applicable as part of the mandatory labelling system.”

**Editors notes:**

1. OPRL Ltd operates the UK-wide On-Pack Recycling Label scheme used by over 750 member companies and charities. It is the leading independent expert in packaging recyclability, providing recycling and refill labels – and advice – to 95 per cent of the UK groceries market.
2. OPRL is an independent, not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, established to help retailers and brands engage their customers in recycling.
3. The company’s guarantors span ACE UK, Alupro, British Glass, CPI, INCPEN, LARAC, MPMA and RECOUP.
4. OPRL was launched in 2009, as a not-for-profit limited by guarantee as part of the British Retail Consortium (BRC). The move followed work between BRC, the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) and their leading members, and WRAP. The aim was to devise a labelling system that would engage consumers with recycling, as local authorities started to roll out basic services. Three of the founding directors are still on our board.

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