



Market Report

A Snapshot of your Marketing Sector

Waste Management and Recycling

This pack has been designed to provide information on setting up a business in the **Waste Management and Recycling** industry in Scotland, as well as helping to inform the market research section of your business plan. You can find more information on how to write a business plan from the Business Gateway website (www.bgateway.com/businessplan), including an interactive template and tips to get you started.

This market report was updated by Business Gateway in **May 2026**.

What do I need to know about the Waste Management and Recycling market?

The following summary statistics have been taken from market research reports and reliable resources that the Information Service uses to compile industry information. They should give you an indication of how your industry is faring at present and whether there is demand for your type of business:

- ◆ **The growing emphasis** on sustainability, especially recycling and reuse of materials, has contributed significantly to the growth of the waste management industry. By **2029**, The United Kingdom waste management industry is forecast to have a **volume of 297,252.7 thousand tonnes**, an increase of **33.5% since 2024**. (GlobalData Explorer, *Waste Management UK*, June 2025, *This content is reproduced under license from GlobalData PLC, Copyright 2026*)
- ◆ **Industrial Waste** holds a dominant position in the waste management industry. This is due to the volume and complexity of waste generated by manufacturing, energy production, construction and chemical processing activities. These industries operate at a large scale, often producing both hazardous and non-hazardous waste requiring specialised handling and regulatory compliance. (GlobalData Explorer, *Waste Management UK*, June 2025)
- ◆ In 2023 **Packaging Waste stood at 65%** with metal and paper/cardboard packaging boasting the highest averages. Plastic packaging recycling remained the material with the lowest rate, however, after two consecutive years of growth, plastic packaging recycling saw a **record high of 52%**. (Statista, *Recycling UK*, 2025).
- ◆ In 2024, the UK exported **598,000 metric tons of plastic waste**, a slight decrease from 2023, with a decrease compared to the highest point of **880,000 metric tons** in 2011. In 2023, the highest recycling rates for packaging waste were **for metal (71.2%), glass (67.8%) and paper & cardboard (73.4%)**. The lowest rates were for **plastic and wood (52.5% and 44.4%** respectively). (Statista *Recycling in the UK* 2025)
- ◆ Work continues on Scotland's delayed Deposit Return Scheme. The four nations of the UK are working together to design and agree a scheme that will be aligned as much as possible. The revised implementation timetable is for a UK-wide launch in October 2027 ([Scottish Government, Scotland's deposit return scheme](#))
- ◆ The national organisation for this industry is [Chartered Institute of Waste Management \(CIWM\)](#). Other industry bodies include [Scottish Environmental Protection Agency \(SEPA\)](#), [The Recycling Association](#) and [Environmental Services Association](#)

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Where can I find more information on my market?

The Information Service has access to a number of databases which can offer more detail on this industry. Some of these reports are listed below - if you would like to be sent extracts from any of these reports, please contact us on **0300 013 4753** or email info@bgateway.com.

- ◆ **Statista** – *Recycling UK, 2025*: In April 2022, a plastic packaging waste tax was brought into effect in the UK. As part of the **Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility** scheme, producers and importers will be required to report packaging use and adjust labelling on products.
- ◆ **Statista** – *Waste Management UK*: There has been significant progress towards a reduction in waster generation in the United Kingdom. Recycling rates have increased since the turn of the century. Lack of infrastructure has seen recycling momentum stalling in recent years and jeopardizing the UK's transition to a circular economy.

There are also a number of online resources you may find helpful:

- ◆ [Scottish Government](#) For 2024, the Scottish household waste recycling rate was 44.3%, an increase of 0.7 percentage points from the 43.5% recycling rate achieved in 2023.
- ◆ Zero Waste Scotland (zerowastescotland.org.uk). This Scottish government initiative provides leadership and practical support to encourage growth of the circular economy in Scotland. The website offers information, research and latest developments in waste management.
- ◆ Environment Times Online (environmenttimes.co.uk). This website offers UK environmental business information.
- ◆ Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) – Waste Regulations (sepa). This website provides information on the key regulations affecting the waste management industry in Scotland.
- ◆ UK Government Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – Waste & Recycling (gov.uk/environment/waste-and-recycling)
- ◆ Materials Recycling World (MWR) provides news from the UK on the waste management and recycling industry

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How can I find out about my competitors?

Business Gateway's online guide to [Competitor Analysis](#) explains how to find your competitors, how to research what they're doing and how to act on what you learn about them.

Immediate competition will be from other businesses in your local area. There are several online directories which can be used to find company information and generate lists easily and at no expense. Many Local Authorities also publish local business directories on the web. Below are some key web resources:

- ◆ General business directories such as [Yell](#) ,[Thomson Local](#) or [Google Maps](#)
- ◆ Trade specialists like [EuroPages](#) (European directory), [The Wholesaler](#) or [Free Index](#)
- ◆ Business to business (B2B) specialists such as [Kompass](#)

Likewise, your local Chamber of Commerce may publish a members' directory; find your local Chamber on the [Scottish Chambers](#) website.

Once you've identified who your competitors are, the next step is to gather information on the way they do business. Which services do they provide? How do they market themselves? How much do they charge?

To learn about your competitors:

- ◆ Look for articles or adverts in local newspapers, trade press and directories.
- ◆ Try to read their marketing material; if the company has an online presence, visit the company's website as a first port of call. Not only does it give you a better understanding of the company's activities, it can also offer a wealth of information such as a company history or staff biographies, as well as the company's partners or suppliers
- ◆ Search for information on limited UK companies via the [Companies House](#) website
- ◆ Gain an insight into your competitor's performance using credit checks and the accounts that limited companies are required to submit to Companies House each year.

We can provide credit checks free of charge; if you are interested in using this resource, or looking for us to help you find relevant publications, please contact us by emailing info@bgateway.com or by calling **0300 013 4753**



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What about suppliers?

[Choosing and Managing Suppliers](#) can help you decide what you need from a supplier, how to identify one and how to choose one to deal with.

Trade associations or industry specific organisations may also be able to recommend suppliers or contacts. You can also use the aforementioned resources for finding competitors to find suppliers.

Once you have decided on a supplier, we can run a credit check on the company to help assess their financial stability. We provide credit checks free of charge; if you are interested in using the resource please info@bgateway.com or by calling **0300 013 4753**.

Who are my customers?

Your business plan should include information about the customers you would expect. Business Gateway's guides on [Market and customer research](#) will help you to identify new trends, opportunities, customers and competitors.

It can be useful to group your customers by geographical location, age or lifestyle. The websites listed below are freely available and can provide most of this information. If you can't find what you're looking for from these websites, please contact us and one of the team will be happy to help:

- ◆ Access the latest population estimates from the [National Records of Scotland \(NRS\)](#). NRS also offers demographic factsheets for each council area in Scotland, which can provide summary statistics for the area you will be based in.
- ◆ Information from the most recent census in 2011 is released via the official website. See in particular the [Census Area Profiles](#). Clicking on your area of interest will give the latest population figures, including estimates by age.
- ◆ [Understanding Scottish Places](#) has interactive profiles of towns and cities across Scotland. It can be useful for understanding the interrelationships and flows between towns, and also gives comparisons between two or more places.
- ◆ [Scottish Government Statistics](#) provide accurate and up-to-date statistics on Scotland, covering population, health, education and housing.
- ◆ [The Scottish Household Survey](#) provides information on the structure, characteristics, attitudes and behaviour of Scottish households, both at a national and local level.
- ◆ [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#) is the recognised national statistical body for the UK. ONS covers a wide range of demographic, economic and social issues at a UK level.



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How can you help me with other aspects of starting my business?

The Business Gateway website has guides, videos, online tutorials and tips on all aspects of starting up a business in Scotland. Follow the links below to explore each resource:

Accountancy

Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland's (ICAS) ["Find a Chartered Accountant"](#) tool

Funding

[Practical information](#) on finance and funding for starting and growing your business

Insurance

[Business insurance guide](#)

Legal Help

Gov.uk ["Licence Finder"](#) tool

Law Society of Scotland's ["Find a Solicitor"](#) tool

Pricing

Business Companion [Pricing & payment guide](#).

Please note: the most effective way to research pricing is to conduct your own research – visit wholesalers or suppliers to obtain price lists, find quotes from similar companies and work out what other businesses in your area are charging

Promotion

[BG guides to Marketing](#)

Training

[Skills Development Scotland's My World of Work](#)

[Funding for training](#)

[Small Business Bonus Scheme \(Scotland\)](#)

Your local Business Gateway can offer events, workshops and 1:2:1 support on all aspects of starting and developing your business. Call the helpline on **0300 013 4753** to find out what is available in your area.

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You must not rely on the information in the report as an alternative to advice from an appropriately qualified professional. If you have any specific questions speak to your Business Gateway Advisor or consult an appropriately qualified professional.

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