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Britain exempts glass sold to hospitality venues from recycling fees in 2027

The government said the move will cut costs and paperwork for thousands of businesses where bottles are often reused

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The British government said on Wednesday, November 11, that it will exempt glass packaging sold directly to pubs, bars, hotels and restaurants from packaging recycling fees, a change it said is meant to lower costs for businesses, cut paperwork and

support the reuse of bottles and other glass containers.

The exemption is due to take effect in April 2027. According to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, producers will no longer have to pay the fees on glass packaging when it is sold straight to hospitality venues, where those containers are often reused rather than immediately discarded. The government said that pattern of reuse supports more sustainable business practices and should be reflected in the way the system charges companies.

The measure applies across the U.K. and is aimed at thousands of hospitality businesses, including restaurants, hotels and pubs. The government said the change should ease some of the financial pressure on those businesses while allowing them to put more money into operations and growth.

Officials also presented the move as part of a broader effort to make the packaging system fairer and more efficient. In its announcement, the government said it wants to remove what it sees as unnecessary costs for businesses while still supporting waste reduction and environmental goals.

The decision is likely to be closely watched by the drinks industry because a large share of wine, beer, cider and spirits sold in hospitality is packaged in glass. Suppliers that sell directly into pubs, bars and restaurants could see a change in their compliance costs once the exemption starts, while venue operators may also face a different balance of recycling-related obligations in those supply arrangements. The exact financial effect will depend on how individual companies structure their sales and distribution.

Ministers also said they plan to consult on lower charges for packaging that is easier to recycle. That could matter beyond the hospitality trade, especially for beverage producers weighing the cost and regulatory treatment of different packaging formats. Any change in fee levels for highly recyclable materials could influence future decisions on packaging design, sourcing and product mix.

The announcement comes as British hospitality businesses continue to face pressure on margins and administrative demands. By linking the exemption to direct sales into hospitality, the government appears to be targeting a part of the market where repeated use of glass is more common than in retail channels. Refillable and returnable practices have long been part of the trade for some pubs, restaurants and hotels, particularly where bottles are handled in closed supply loops.

The government did not publish full operational details in the announcement, but it said further guidance will be issued so businesses can understand how the exemption will work and how they can benefit from it. That guidance is expected to matter for producers, importers, distributors and hospitality operators that need to determine whether their sales qualify and how the rule will interact with existing packaging compliance systems.

For drinks companies, the change could become part of pricing and contract discussions well before April 2027. Producers that sell directly to hospitality customers may seek to reflect lower fee exposure in their commercial terms, while those that rely on intermediaries may look closely at whether their route to market affects eligibility for the exemption. Any later changes from the planned consultation on recyclable packaging could add another layer to those decisions.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said the policy is intended to support business growth while maintaining environmental aims, and it said more information will be provided to help companies prepare before the exemption takes effect.