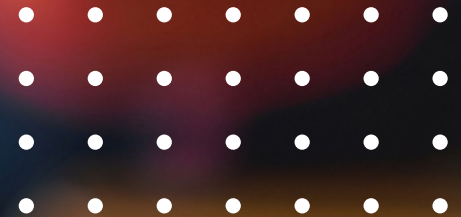


# Reverse Vending Machine Study



Trialling an incentive to increase recycling

November 2025



## Reverse Vending Machine study

To increase usage of Reverse Vending Machines (RVMs) across college campuses, a 20p voucher was offered for every can and plastic bottle recycled through the existing machines at New College Lanarkshire's Motherwell, Coatbridge and Cumbernauld campuses for five weeks.

This trial, a partnership between Keep Scotland Beautiful, New College Lanarkshire and Coca-Cola Europacific Partners, rewarded students and staff for recycling and resulted in a huge increase in recycling rates through the machines.

### Results across 5 week trial period



**20,177** items recycled



**11,293**  
cans recycled



**8,884**  
plastic bottles  
recycled



**7,812%** increase in machine usage compared to same period last year



**£4,035** worth of vouchers issued



**80%** voucher redemption rate



## Activating an incentive

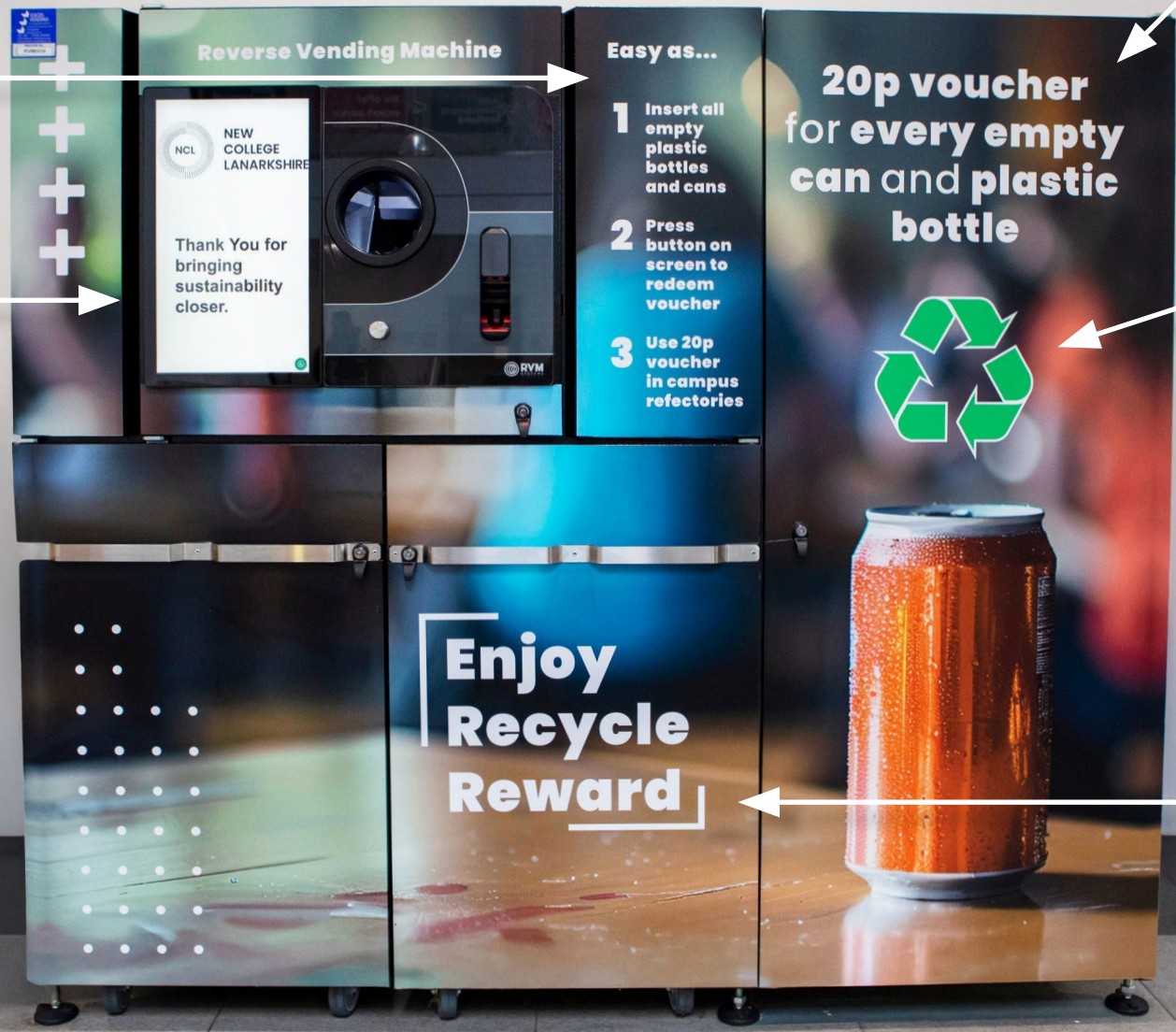
The three college campuses already had Reverse Vending Machines installed. However, with low usage rates an opportunity was found to trial an incentive and increase usage.

The 20p voucher, redeemable in the college refectories, was the key driver for increasing usage. The incentive was supported by redesigning the look and feel of the RVMs and deploying advertising across the colleges to remind students to use the machines.

Focus on the 20p incentive on both the front and side of the machines

Clear and simple instructions

New College Lanarkshire branding and wider sustainability messaging



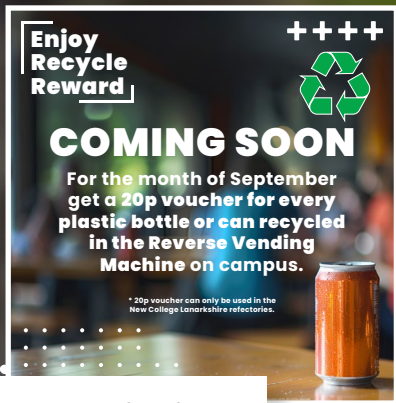
Recognisable recycling symbol

Large slogan to reinforce the reward element



# Communications journey

Campaign materials were deployed throughout the customer journey to increase awareness of the new incentive. The messaging was reinforced at several points in their journey, from point-of-sale materials in the refectories to table toppers and disruptor banners around the existing bins. Alongside the physical materials promotion was complemented through direct emails to students, digital screens and social media posts.

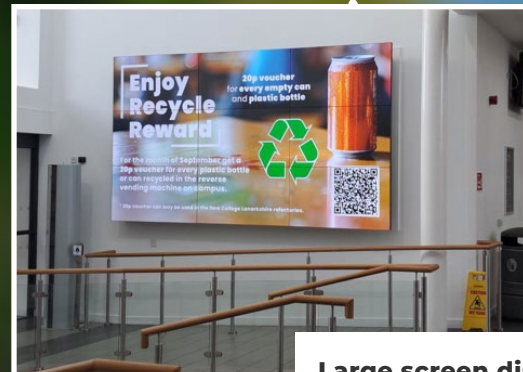


Communications pack rolled out to share message online

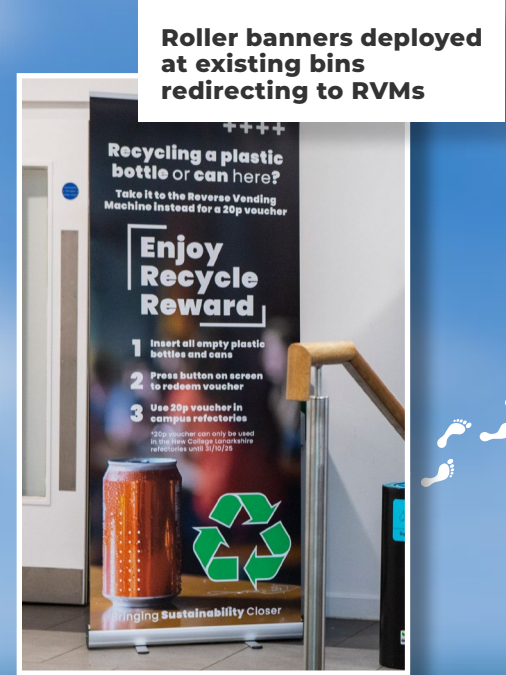
Table toppers across seating areas



Point of sale posters and stickers in refectories



Large screen displays in common areas



Roller banners deployed at existing bins redirecting to RVMs

## Key takeaways from staff

### LESS WASTE SAVING MONEY

"I found the RVM beneficial within the cleaning department, I found we had less waste, saving money on bin bags it also was time saving not having to pick up bottles and cans from the tables at lunchtime. It gave the students an incentive to use the RVM machine by receiving money back they could spend at the canteen saving them money."

Liz O'Byrne  
Cleaning supervisor, coatbridge campus

### TREATING THEMSELVES

"It was good to see the customers getting an incentive to recycle cans and bottles. We noticed lots of students and staff treating themselves to products they wouldn't normally buy as they made savings with the RVM vouchers. It also reduced the number of times the catering team had to empty bins in the refectory seating area, as they were not full of empty cans and bottles."

Annamarie Reilly  
Food service assistant, coatbridge campus refectory

## Key takeaways from students

### PICK IT UP AND GET 20P

"I love using it, it rewards you, so even if it isn't your rubbish and someone else has left it you can pick it up and get 20p, you get rewarded for cleaning the place up."

### GET SOMETHING OUT OF IT

"I think it's great, I think more people are likely to use it because they get something out of it, I've been keeping my empty bottles in my bag to put them in."

### ENCOURAGES PEOPLE

"I think it encourages people not to throw their rubbish away or leave it about college."

Ahead of the launch of the UK's Deposit Return Scheme in 2027, this trial has shown that Reverse Vending Machines are successful in this type of setting with these three aspects in place:



An incentive or reward is provided.



Information is communicated effectively to reach the target audience.



Infrastructure is suitable and redemption points are convenient to use.

It is crucial that we continue to refine our messaging and approach to ensure that the public are aware of its introduction to ensure it is a success from the start and becomes an integrated part of everyday life.



For more information on our work to increase recycling please get in touch:

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Campaigns and Social Innovation Manager

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Easy as...

1 Insert all empty plastic bottles and cans

2 Press button on screen to redeem voucher

20p voucher for every empty can and plastic bottle





We support the Sustainable Development Goals.

Keep Scotland Beautiful is your charity for Scotland's environment. We work with you to help combat climate change, reduce litter and waste, restore nature and biodiversity and improve places.



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