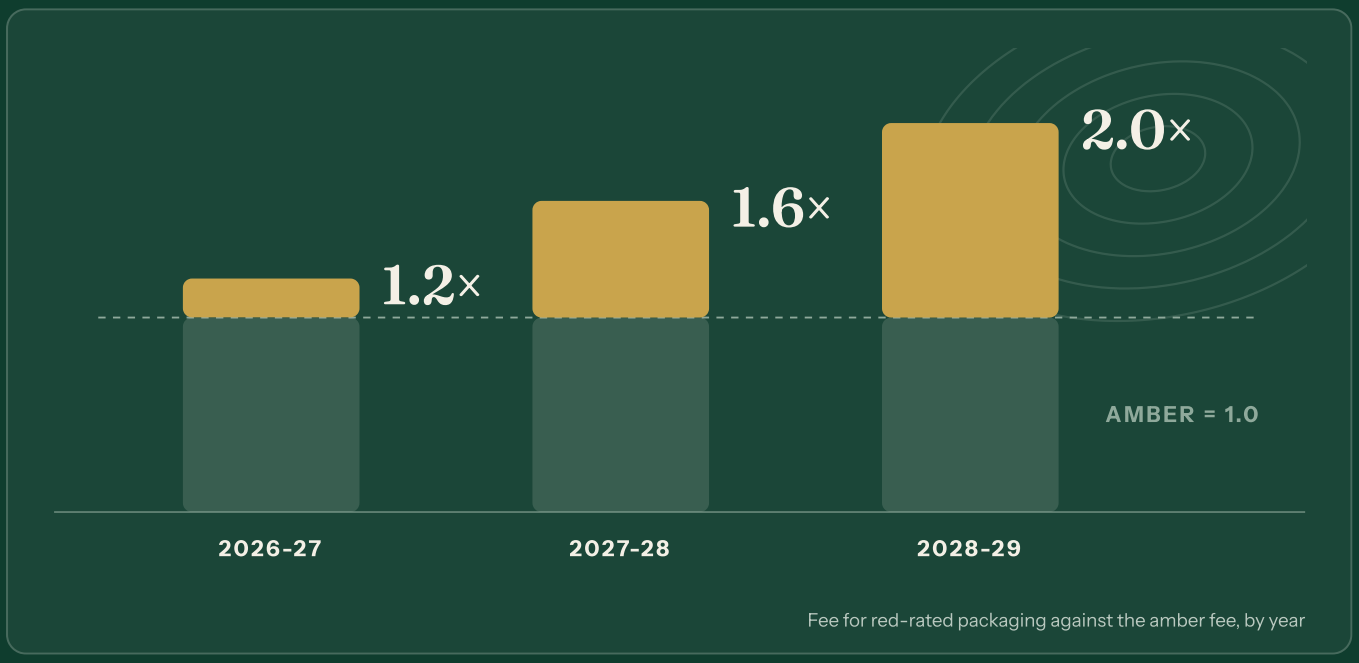
NAVIGATE INSIGHTS • NO. 07 • NOVEMBER 2026

FREE TO SHARE

Your packaging has a price tag

Large producers now pay for the packaging they put on the market, and hard-to-recycle packs pay more each year. This guide shows what you pay, why it is rising, and how to bring it down.



Fee for red-rated packaging against the amber fee, by year

2×

the standard fee: what hard-to-recycle packaging is set to pay per tonne by 2028-29, up from 1.2 times this year.

PackUK modulation statement

INSIDE

2 Who pays, and how
3 The fees by material and rating
4 Why red gets more expensive
5 Five actions and a pack fee register

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Strategic consultancy for UK food and drink

Who pays, and how

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Since 2025, the businesses that put packaging on the UK market pay for collecting and recycling it. From this year, the fee also depends on how easy each pack is to recycle.

DO YOU PAY? PACKAGING SUPPLIED EACH YEAR, BY TURNOVER

DEFRA, UPDATED AUG 2026

	TURNOVER £1M OR LESS	£1M TO £2M	OVER £2M
Under 25 tonnes	No obligation	No obligation	No obligation
25 to 50 tonnes	No obligation	Small producer	Small producer
Over 50 tonnes	No obligation	Small producer	**Large producer: pays fees**

Disposal fees apply to household packaging: packs likely to end up in household bins. Small producers report their packaging but do not pay disposal fees. Turnover is worldwide annual turnover.

HOW THE FEES ARE CHARGED

1 Report

Large producers report the packaging they placed on the UK market, by material and recyclability.

2 Notice

At the end of each calendar year PackUK sends a notice of liability. Treat it as your invoice.

3 Pay

Usually in instalments, by direct debit, transfer, card or standing order.

4 Late

More than 50 days late can bring interest and a penalty.

For a large producer, every pack design is now a cost decision.



Own-label packs count too. Who is the producer depends on who owns the brand and who packs, so check with your customers.

Recyclable packs pay less

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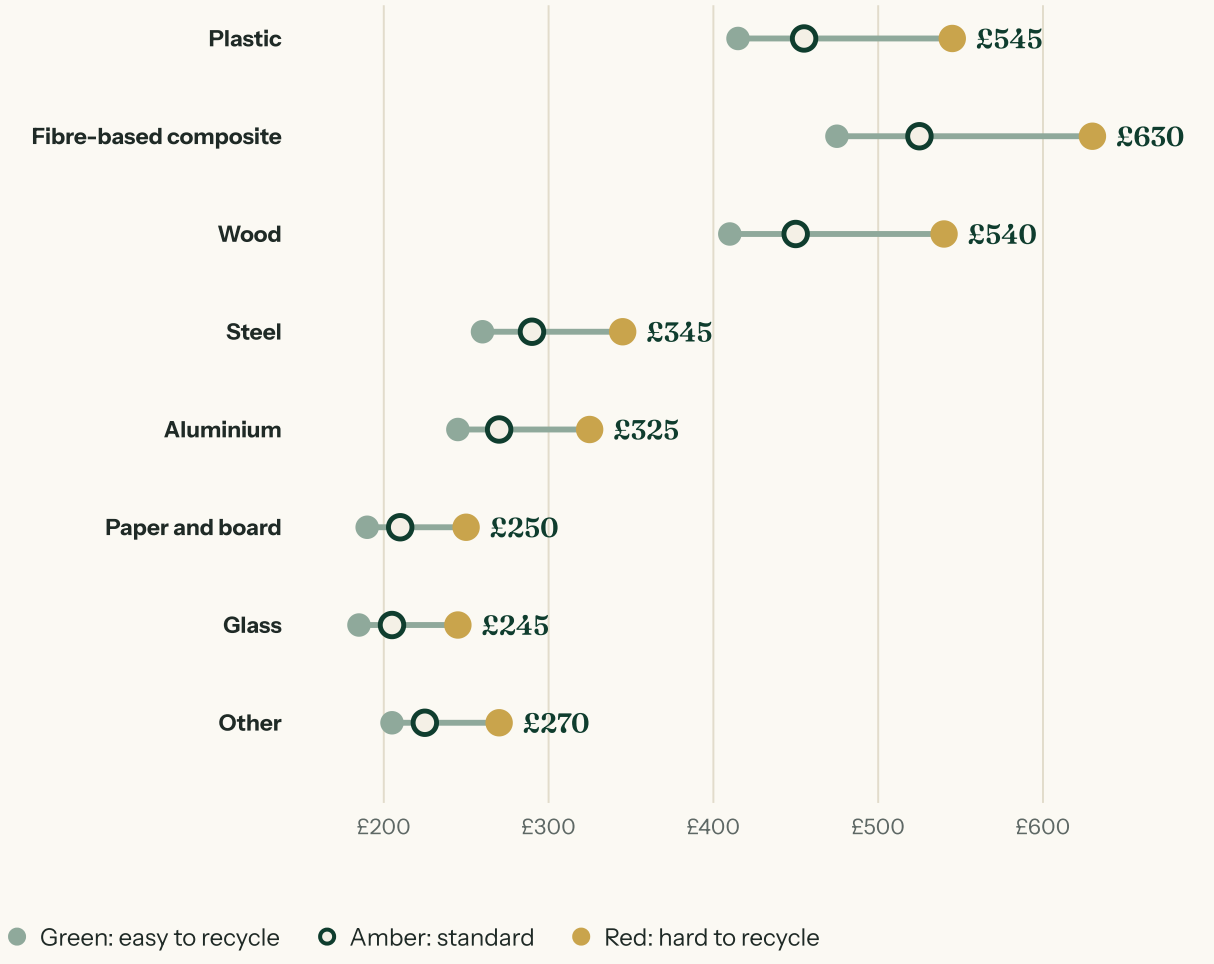
Each pack gets a rating: green, amber or red, depending on how easily it can be recycled. Amber pays the standard fee, red pays more, and green pays less.

FEE PER TONNE, 2026-27, BY MATERIAL AND RATING

ILLUSTRATIVE FEES



Year 2 illustrative fees, rounded to £5, published by Defra and PackUK, December 2025. Final fees are published with the invoices.

PLASTIC, RED

£545

a tonne in 2026-27, against £423 for all plastic last year.

Defra and PackUK

PLASTIC, GREEN

£415

a tonne. The same material, £130 a tonne cheaper.

Defra and PackUK

WOOD

+61%

the standard fee rises from £280 to £450 a tonne, the biggest jump.

Defra and PackUK

THE TREND

Red gets more expensive every year

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The penalty for red packaging is set to grow each year. Red pays 1.2 times the amber fee in 2026-27, 1.6 times in 2027-28 and twice in 2028-29.

100 TONNES OF RED-RATED PLASTIC: THE YEARLY FEE

WORKED EXAMPLE



Navigate calculation. Uses the 2026-27 illustrative amber fee of £455 a tonne in every year, so later years show the effect of the rating alone.

WHAT THE RATING LOOKS AT

Each pack is scored on whether it can actually be collected, sorted and recycled in the UK. Your packaging supplier or compliance scheme can tell you the rating of each pack.

WHERE TO LOOK FIRST

- Your heaviest packs, by tonnes a year
- Packs rated red today
- Packs due a redesign anyway

THE DECISION

A red pack that stays red could cost twice the fee of an amber one by 2028-29.

A pack redesign takes months, with customer approvals and new tooling. Packs changed in 2027 pay less from then on.

WHAT TO DO

Bring the fee down

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THIS MONTH: FIVE ACTIONS

1 Check if you are a large producer

More than 50 tonnes of packaging a year and over £2m turnover. Include own-label packs you are responsible for.

2 Get the rating of every pack

From your packaging suppliers or compliance scheme. List tonnes, material and rating.

3 Rank packs by fee

Tonnes times fee per tonne. In many ranges a few heavy packs make up most of the bill.

4 Plan redesigns for the worst

Start with heavy red packs. Agree timings with customers and suppliers.

5 Budget for the notice

Put this year's fee and next year's in the budget and cash plan, and agree who pays on own label.

Pack fee register

Seven columns for every pack you sell.

- [ ] Pack name and the products it is used for
- [ ] Material, or main material
- [ ] Weight per pack and packs a year
- [ ] Tonnes a year
- [ ] Rating: green, amber or red
- [ ] Fee per tonne and fee a year
- [ ] Redesign possible, and by when

A pack changed once pays a lower fee every year after.

Lighter packs, fewer mixed materials and formats rated green all bring the bill down.

SOURCES (opened 20 November 2026): Defra and PackUK, Year 2 illustrative waste disposal fees, updated 19 Dec 2025; Extended producer responsibility for packaging: 2025 base fees, 30 Jun 2025; PackUK producer disposal fees modulation statement, updated 17 Feb 2026; Waste disposal fees for large producers, updated 28 Oct 2026; Check if you must comply with EPR for packaging, updated 19 Aug 2026 (all gov.uk). Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

GET IN TOUCH

Talk to us. The first call is free.

We are Tom Baker and Amanda Wright. Between us we have 50 years in UK food and drink businesses, most recently at board level. If any of this guide sounds like your business, book a call.



FIRST CALL, FREE

An hour on Teams about your pressures and plans. We will tell you plainly whether we can help.



AN HONEST VIEW

Whether we can help, or more scoping, still free, if it isn't clear yet. We work from the data you already have.



THE WAY THAT FITS

Fixed fee, shared savings or a monthly retainer: we agree the way of working that suits you best.

Amanda Wright

CO-FOUNDER & COO

Hands-on food and drink director with 25 years across procurement, supply chain and operations, most recently at board level, managing up to £300m of direct spend.

Tom Baker

CO-FOUNDER & CFO

Board-level finance and strategy director with 25 years in food and drink. Turnarounds, acquisitions and investments delivered across the UK and Ireland, Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

- The two directors you meet are the two who do the work.
- No supplier commissions and no software to sell.
- We report what we find, including what you may not want to hear.

Our success is linked to yours.

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