



Vapes and electricals recycling: for festivals and events teams

June 2024

3 key take-aways

1. Vape sellers

Vape sellers on site have a legal responsibility to **take back customers' old vapes for recycling** and to **tell their customers that they offer this.**

2. Waste contractors

Waste contractors must ensure that **all waste batteries and electricals** left on site (including vapes) are **disposed of responsibly** using a registered AATF scheme

3. Festival-goers

The festival audience needs to know that they **should never bin their vapes or electricals, they must always recycle them.**

Update: British Metals Recycling Association (BMRA) call on music festivals to impose an outright ban on all disposable vapes.

16th May 2024

- If you choose this year to ban disposable devices at your event, **it is still important to consider how vapes which make their way on site will be handled.**
- Likewise, despite the forthcoming national ban on the sale and supply of disposable vapes, the issue of e-waste on site will not immediately disappear as **'pod devices' become more popular and disposable vapes continue to remain available during the phase out period.**
- **FastTech** like power banks, cables, and headphones should also be considered as a waste issue and will need to be handled appropriately

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Who are Material Focus?

We are an independent, not-for-profit organisation on a mission to get the UK fixing, donating and recycling all of their old and unwanted electricals. And stop precious resources from being lost forever. We do this through...

Insights

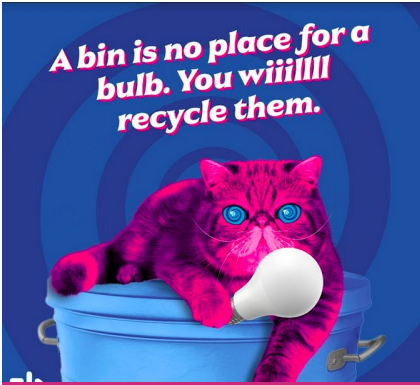
- Identifying, producing and sharing insightful, timely and impactful research to help build a better UK e-waste/ WEEE system.

Investments

- Identifying and funding projects which help make it easier for people to reuse and recycle electricals.

Inspiration

- Creating and delivering communications which help make it feel easier for people to reuse and recycle electricals through our [Recycle Your Electricals](#) campaign.



A bin is no place for a bulb. You wiiiiiiii recycle them.

Earth Hour



Never bin hidden batteries.

Battery fires



Spring cleaners, bag up 'THAT' box of old cables for recycling

Key moments



5 million+
single-use vapes are binned every week



Awareness



Give Back January



Giant toaster bring bank



Waste Week schools campaign



Ben wants to know what to do with his old electric toothbrush?



Education



What is e-waste and why is it relevant to festivals and events?



What is e-waste and what are the legal regulations?

- e-waste (WEEE) is old and unwanted electrical and electronic equipment
 - Most e-waste contains toxic chemicals and is classed as **hazardous waste**
 - If not handled properly at end-of-life they pose a **major threat to the environment**, human health, society, and costs the UK economy through losing precious resources
 - **Recovering materials** like steel, aluminium, copper, gold, silver, lithium and plastics means that we reduce demand for new materials that come from mining and drilling and therefore **protects land and sea environments**.
- e-waste is one of the **fastest-growing sources of waste in the world** – and the UK.
 - 103,000 tonnes of e-waste are thrown away each year by households
 - We are holding on to 880 million unused items of electricals in UK homes.
- Laws requiring producers and retailers to finance and support collection and recycling of electrical and portable battery products at end-of-life have been in place for 15 years.
- **Anything with a plug, battery and cable should always be recycled** as a minimum and should never be binned.

Vapes and e-waste at festivals and events

As disposable vapes and FastTech (cheap throwaway electricals) continue to increase in popularity amongst festival goers, they present **environmental** and **health and safety risks** for festival organisers, and a new challenge for ops teams and waste contractors:

- Increased **fire and health and safety risk** for staff and festival goers
- Increased **contamination** of compost and recycling waste streams
- **Waste management challenges** as electricals require hazardous waste processing methods and **increased costs** for event organisers having to provide these services
- **Environmental pollution** as littered vapes and electricals may remain within the natural environment post clean up, causing potential **damage to wildlife** and festival **sustainability credentials**
- **Resource waste** of some of the most **valuable resources** on the planet - steel, aluminium, copper, lithium

Why are discarded vapes such an issue?

- **Vapes = dangerous waste** - Safety issues with the lithium batteries inside them prone to causing fires if damaged when binned in general waste or recycling.
- **Sales have rocketed** - Many new products and market entrants over the past few years
 - Range of vape types - single use (disposable), rechargeable with single use chamber (pod) and rechargeable (tank).
- **Single use vapes are marketed as disposable, not recyclable** - Very little communications on options for recycling them being presented to the public.
- **An average of 7.7 million single-use vapes** are being sold every week in the UK - At least 5 million a week are being binned which is 8 per second.
- **Producers, importers, distributors and retailers of single-use vapes need to do more** - In order to meet their legal and financial responsibilities under UK waste electrical (WEEE) and portable battery regulations.



**Any 3
Disposables £10**



Vapes facts and figures

We are throwing away millions of vapes

In the UK we are **buying 7.7 million single-use vapes per week**, (doubled compared to 2022).

In the UK we are binning **5 million single-use vapes per week**, that is **8 per second** (quadrupled compared to 2022).

Single-use 'disposable' vapes are actually recyclable

- The vapes will be dismantled into parts: battery, casing electronics and nicotine pads which are then treated separately. **Up to 80% of materials within vapes can be recycled.**

There's hidden treasure inside vapes

- **Vape batteries contain lithium** (vital component inside electric vehicle (EV) and energy storage batteries), aluminium, steel, copper, plastics which could be recycled, saving precious resources from being lost forever.
- 5,000 electric vehicle batteries worth of lithium being thrown away per year

Source: [Material Focus research](#)

Vapes facts and figures

The lithium inside vapes that are thrown away could be powering the green economy

Our research has found that **5,000 electric vehicle batteries** worth of lithium being thrown away per year

Hidden batteries inside can cause fires if crushed or damaged

Batteries hidden inside vapes can cause fires if crushed or damaged in general recycling or waste streams. Vapes must be recycled separately.

Adding to the problem of e-waste

Binning vapes adds to e-waste which is the **fastest growing waste stream in the world**. In the UK alone we bin over 155,000 tonnes of electrical waste a year.

Source: [Material Focus research](#)

A large crowd of people at a festival, with a woman in a white top in the foreground. The image is split horizontally. The top half is a bright, overexposed sky with some faint vertical lines. The bottom half shows a dense crowd of people, many with their arms raised, suggesting a music festival or concert. A woman in a white top is prominent in the foreground, seen from behind, with her arms raised. The overall atmosphere is energetic and festive.

How can I encourage good practice as a festival/event organiser?

What can you do?

Establish a recycling system for vapes and electricals:

- Establish **separate [recycling bins](#)** for vapes and e-waste with clear signage. Reduce littering and waste stream contamination by making it clear to your audience where vapes need to go.
- Consider using **different shaped bins** for vapes and e-waste to reduce contamination.
- Ensure **litter pickers separate vapes** and e-waste from other waste streams.
- Ensure your messaging and communications align with what festival goers can expect to see onsite, so that vape bins are instantly recognisable.
- **Open a conversation with your [waste contractor](#)** to discuss how e-waste is processed back of house - Ensure they will work with a recommended [AATF provider](#) to handle e-waste.

What can you do?

Communicate with your retailers

- Ensure all on site vape sellers are aware of their **legal obligation to offer take back**
- Ensure retailers selling FastTech like electric fans, power banks, air bed pumps, are aware of where to sign post users with broken goods

Communicate with your audience

- Use volunteer crews to **interact with and educate your audience**
- **Check out our suggested audience communications approaches**

Communicate with your artists

- Offer artists **reusable vapes instead of disposables** if requested on riders
- Encourage artists to spread the message to their audience

Gather feedback

- **Collect data** using post event audience surveys
- **Analyse data** to learn what could be done better



How can I set up vape/e-waste bins on site?



Bin model options



Plastic wheelie bins - 240 L



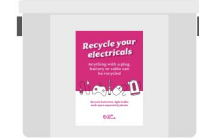
Plastic wheelie bins - 1100 L



Nexus 30 bin



Nexus 50 bin



Pop up bring banks based on 145 L bin



Box cycle recycling bin



C-Thru™ 15L Vape Recycling Bin

Bin supplier information

These are the suppliers we are already aware of:

[Soho Commercial](#) - 240 litres and 1100 litres

<https://uk.glasdon.com/> - Nexus style bins

<https://www.kingfisherdirect.co.uk/box-cycle-recycling-bin> - Box cycle bins

<https://totebox.co.uk/product/54l-tote-box-600-x-400-x-320h-mm-2/> - Tote boxes

<https://uk.glasdon.com/c-thru-15-vape-recycling-bin> - Vape bins

Bin signage

You can find our eye catching vape bin sticker designs within our [communications toolkit](#). These can be personalised with your add your logo (using InDesign templates), ready to print and use.

Our assets are free to download. If you're not already registered, [sign up today](#) - it takes less than 2 minutes!



Funding for vape bins

We have funding available for 3 festivals across the UK to go towards the cost of ordering separate bins for vape collection. We are able to fund up to £500 for each successful festival/production company.

In return, we request that you provide reporting data on the amount of vapes collected, and use our branding to promote electrical recycling.

Funding criteria:

- You must demonstrate that all vapes and WEEE collected will be recycled using an approved AATF
- Ideally organisers will ensure that bins are used at multiple events throughout the season

If you think your event could benefit from our funding, please get in touch with rowan@materialfocus.org.uk to discuss partnership options



How can waste contractors ensure e-waste is processed correctly?



Waste contractor obligations

Businesses have a **legal responsibility and duty of care** to ensure waste is **stored safely and disposed of appropriately**. Regulations require the following actions:

- › Pre-treatment (i.e. sorting recyclable and non-recyclable material) is also a duty business must fulfil. This can be onsite or completed by your registered waste collector at a sorting facility.
- › Safe onsite storage for all waste.
- › Collection by a registered waste carrier.
- › Disposal of the waste must take place at a licensed waste disposal facility.
- › Waste must be covered by a waste transfer note.

Source: [Vision 2025: Festival industry materials and waste briefing](#)



Working with your waste contractor

- Festivals need to ensure that their **policy and advance messaging** prevents or limits non-essential use of hazardous materials, and that they are confident waste materials are being dealt with legally. This means you will need to have **weighbridge certificates** for the materials removed from site on file to prove safe transfer.
- Batteries and e-waste are classed as **hazardous waste**. This means they must be kept separate by law and **cannot be put in general waste**. Work with contractors to ensure you have adequate and safe locations for storage of hazardous materials such as batteries and e-waste.
- For handling e-waste, **we strongly recommend that your waste contractor works with an approved vape recycling service**: Although there may be other charities or waste management companies offering a similar service, there is no guarantee that they will operate safely and environmentally responsibly.
- When processed through an approved AATF, vapes will be dismantled into parts: battery, casing electronics and nicotine pads which are then treated separately. **Up to 80% of materials within vapes can be recycled.**

Source: [Vision 2025: Festival industry materials and waste briefing](#), [Material Focus research](#)



Approved vape recycling services

These waste management companies can organise collection and recycling of vapes at Approved Authorised Approved Facilities (AATFs).

Biffa - contact: services@biffa.co.uk

Environcom - contact: Alison.mitchell@environcom.co.uk

GAP Group - contact: waste@gapgroupuk.com

Reconomy - contact: enquiries@reconomy.com

Recover - contact: info@eco-recycle.co.uk

SWEEP - contact: recycle@swEEP.co.uk

Veolia - contact: <https://www.veolia.co.uk/contact-us>

Waste Care - contact: recycling@wastecare.co.uk

Waste Experts - contact: info@wasteexperts.co.uk





How can onsite vape sellers comply with environmental regulations?



Seller responsibilities - for all retailers selling electricals

- **All retailers selling electricals** (including vapes) need to provide a way for customers buying new electricals to dispose of their old electricals **on a like-for-like basis**
- They must take back items that have the same function, regardless of brand
- Currently there is no distinction between the types of e-cigarettes or vapes that they sell in regards to takeback obligations e.g. stalls selling reusable vapes must take back disposables
 - All types count the same, therefore if they sell any type of e-cigarette or vape then they are legally required to takeback any type **on a like-for-like basis**
- They have 3 options to offer this take-back service to your customers
 - provide a **free, in store recycling service**
 - set up an **alternative recycling service**
 - join the **Distributor Takeback Scheme (DTS)** - if they sell electricals worth < £100k, or online only
- If they fail to comply with the waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) regulations, they **can be prosecuted and get an unlimited fine** from a magistrates' court or a Crown Court.

* Source: [Electrical waste: retailer and distributor responsibilities: Take back waste in store - GOV.UK](#)

Minimum requirement for Retailer Take-back communications

Retailers must accept consumers' old electricals in store for recycling - and **tell customers about this service**. We worked with OPSS/Dept for Business and Trade (DBT) to help **ensure consistency** across all consumer communications. Direct your onsite retailers towards our **OPSS/Dept for Business & Trade approved retailer take-back comms toolkit** which contains **ready-made and editable assets** and key messaging to enable retailers to meet their obligations. There are **like-for-like, recycle all, and recycle vapes** options.

Mandatory

- Strut cards and posters, Point of sale comms - for use on vape stalls
- QR code or web address - directing people to retailer websites or Recycle Your Electricals

Optional

- Recycle Your Electricals Recycling Locator link or widget - most comprehensive and accurate locator
- 'Proud supporter'/'recycle here' - available as window decal or stand-alone logo
- Receipt or till prompt
- On-packaging options
- Staff training support



How can I increase festival-goers awareness of e-waste issues?



Communications approaches

1. **Create social media posts and mailers** using our festival communications toolkit. It includes ready-to-use social media assets with suggested copy on recycling vapes, batteries and other posts relating to recycling at festivals. Download [here](#).
2. Increase audience awareness of the bins available onsite using **posters, stage side screens, bar signage, and signage on vape stalls**
3. **Ensure bins are clearly labeled** using our [bin stickers](#) (available within the festival communications toolkit)
4. Make information about vapes and e-waste available at **onsite information points**
5. Use **festival app to issue alerts** and reminders about the recycling facilities available on site
6. Promote our industry-leading [Recycling Locator](#) (22,000+ drop off points) to help your audience easily locate their nearest electrical recycling drop-off points for vapes and other electricals like power banks, headphones, and electric fans

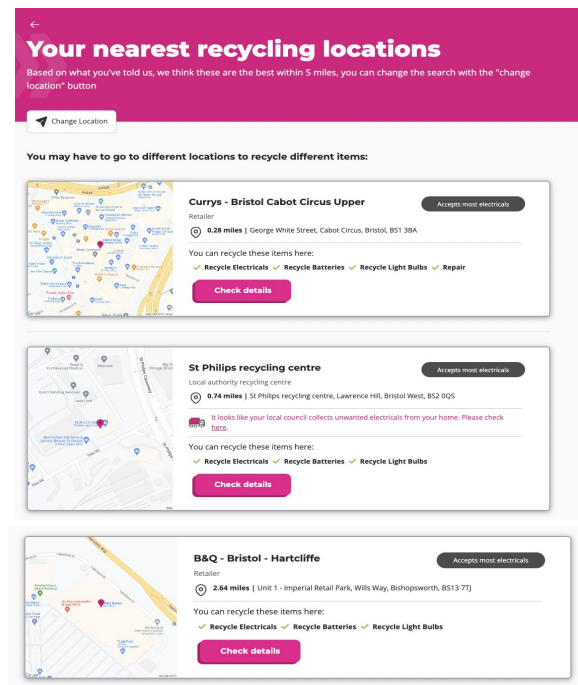
Our Recycling Locator makes it easy to find local drop off points

With **over 22,000 drop off points**, our best in class **Recycling locator** provides the most comprehensive collection of electrical recycling points in the UK.

Users can find local drop off points to recycle, donate or fix their unwanted electricals. It's so simple to use - simply:

1. Pop in your postcode or address
2. Select the items and whether you'd like to recycle, donate or fix them
3. View your nearest drop-off point that accepts your specified items

You can also add our recycling locator **widget to your website**. Get in touch with us to discuss coding options.



The screenshot displays the 'Your nearest recycling locations' section of the website. It features a pink header with the title and a sub-header. Below the header is a 'Change Location' button. The main content area is titled 'You may have to go to different locations to recycle different items:' and lists three nearby recycling points, each with a map thumbnail and detailed information.

Your nearest recycling locations
Based on what you've told us, we think these are the best within 5 miles, you can change the search with the "change location" button

Change Location

You may have to go to different locations to recycle different items:

- Currys - Bristol Cabot Circus Upper** (Retailer) | 0.28 miles | George White Street, Cabot Circus, Bristol, BS1 3BA
You can recycle these items here: Recycle Electricals, Recycle Batteries, Recycle Light Bulbs, Repair
- St Philips recycling centre** (Local authority recycling centre) | 0.74 miles | St Philips recycling centre, Lawrence Hill, Bristol West, BS2 9QS
It looks like your local council collects unwanted electricals from your home. Please check [here](#).
You can recycle these items here: Recycle Electricals, Recycle Batteries, Recycle Light Bulbs
- B&Q - Bristol - Hartcliffe** (Retailer) | 2.64 miles | Unit 1 - Imperial Retail Park, Wills Way, Bishopsworth, BS13 7TJ
You can recycle these items here: Recycle Electricals, Recycle Batteries, Recycle Light Bulbs

Festivals and events communications toolkit

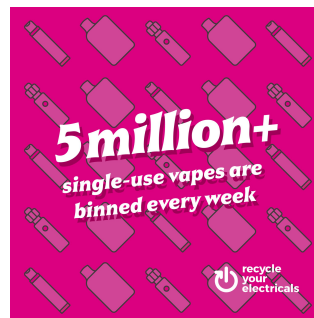
Download from the partnership portal on our [website here](#). If you would like to get in touch to discuss personalised assets, email rowan@materialfocus.org.uk



No vapes here
Nearest vape recycling
drop off point:



Thank you for recycling
your vapes safely here



Use HypnoCat to promote electrical recycling (optional)

HypnoCat is our fluffy-faced figurehead, on a mission to purrrsuade the UK to reuse and recycle their electricals.

HypnoCat delivers information in a concise way with a hefty dose of playful and persuasive personality. Using a character allows us to inject masses of personality into what could be a dry topic. Thanks to [our nationwide TV campaign](#), over half of the UK now recognise HypnoCat as the mascot for electrical recycling!

We are happy to work with you to create personalised hypnocat assets like the ones on this slide to suit your needs - get in touch with rowan@materialfocus.org.uk for more information



How to communicate vape recycling to the public

Never bin them - Recycle All Your Vapes

Batteries in vapes can cause fires when binned

Rechargeable vapes

Recycle the battery separately if it is removable

- If you can remove the battery, drop it in a **battery recycling bin**
- Put the rest of the vape in a **vape recycling bin**
- If there isn't a separate bin for vapes, recycle yours with other small electricals

If the battery is not removable, recycle the whole thing with vapes or other small electricals

How to communicate vape recycling to the public

Single-use vapes

Leave the battery inside and recycle the whole thing

- Drop the vape in a vape recycling bin
- If there isn't a separate bin for vapes, recycle yours with other small electricals

E-liquid/ vape juice pods

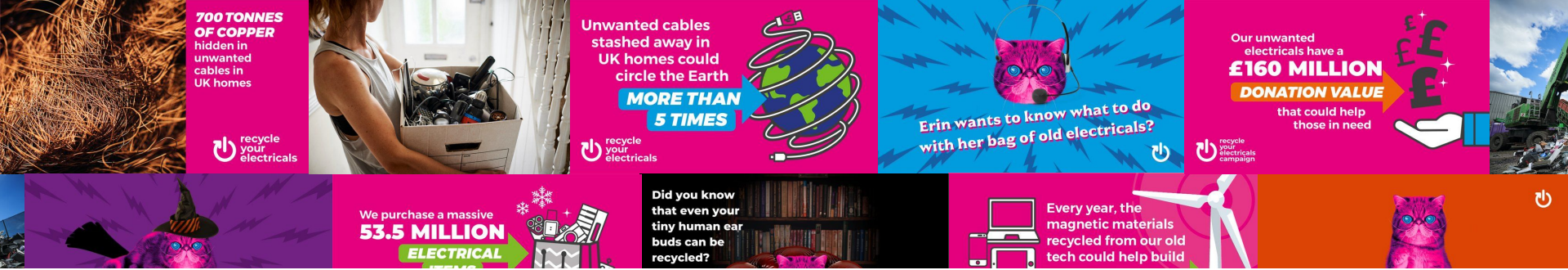
These may contain metals or electrical components

- Put pods in the vape recycling bin
- If there isn't a separate bin for vapes, recycle yours with other small electricals

Collecting audience data

Collecting audience data can result in key learnings for future projects and highlight successes. Think about collecting data within your post event audience survey on:

- Audience awareness of facilities on site
 - Did you notice any vape bins onsite?
 - Did you notice any posters onsite regarding vape recycling?
- Audience perception of vapes and e waste
 - What type of vaping products did you notice at festival?
 - How often do you use vape devices?
 - How do you dispose of your devices once they have been used?
 - Are you aware of how to recycle your vapes?
- How recycling facilities can be improved in future
 - What would make it easier/more likely for you to recycle your used vapes?
 - Did you feel that festival provided adequate information about vaping policies and recycling measures?



700 TONNES OF COPPER hidden in unwanted cables in UK homes



Unwanted cables stashed away in UK homes could circle the Earth **MORE THAN 5 TIMES**



Erin wants to know what to do with her bag of old electricals?



Our unwanted electricals have a **£160 MILLION DONATION VALUE** that could help those in need



We purchase a massive **53.5 MILLION ELECTRICAL ITEMS**



Did you know that even your tiny human ear buds can be recycled?



Every year, the magnetic materials recycled from our old tech could help build



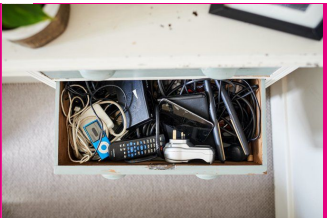
Partner with us



Kim from Essex wants to know if her son's remote control car can be recycled?



There are nearly **12 MILLION UNWANTED KETTLES** going spare in UK households



There are over **200 MILLION UNWANTED CABLES, LAPTOPS & SPEAKERS** stashed away across the UK



Rahul from Manchester wants to know what to do with his soaking wet phone?!

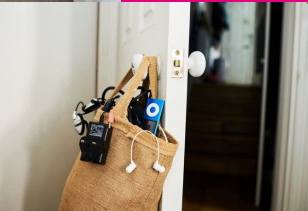


There are over **8 MILLION UNWANTED HAIR DRYERS**

in UK households, waiting to blow away the cobwebs



Nearly 1 in 3 of us have **SECRETLY DITCHED** a partner's old kitchen gadgets



44% of us **ADMIT TO CHUCKING** obsolete music equipment



UK households are hoarding



527 million small old electricals, an average of nearly 20 per household



Get in touch

If you would like to discuss creating personalised versions of our communications assets, applying for funding, or just for advice and support, please get in touch with rowan@materialfocus.org.uk to discuss partnership opportunities further.

Contact

The *Recycle Your Electricals* campaign is led by Material Focus.

Material Focus is a not-for-profit organisation - our vision is of a world where materials are never wasted.

Please follow us and share our content on social media



facebook.com/recycleyourelectricals



[@recycleelectric](https://twitter.com/recycleelectric)



[@recycleyourelectricals_](https://instagram.com/recycleyourelectricals)



www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk



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