

Fact Sheet: Workplace Recycling Requirements in Wales

Waste Separation Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2023

Applies to: Local URC Churches, church halls, church offices and associated premises in Wales only

Important: This fact sheet applies only to churches and church premises located in Wales. The legislation does not apply in England or Scotland, where different waste and recycling arrangements operate.

Why Has This FACT Sheet Been Produced?

The Welsh Government introduced the Waste Separation Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2023 to improve recycling rates, increase the quality of recyclable materials and support Wales' commitment to becoming a zero-waste nation. The regulation came into force on 6 April 2024.

The regulations require workplaces to separate specific recyclable waste streams before collection, rather than disposing of them in general waste.

As charities and non-domestic premises, local churches in Wales are covered by these requirements.

Does This Apply to Our Church?

Yes, if your church premises are in Wales. The legislation applies to:

- Churches
- Church halls
- Church offices
- Community facilities operated by churches
- Charity premises
- Places of worship
- Premises used by church groups and organisations

The law applies regardless of whether the church employs staff or is operated entirely by volunteers.

What Does the Law Require?

Churches must ensure that certain waste streams are separated for recycling before collection.

The following materials must not be mixed together with general waste and should be presented separately for collection.

Paper and Card

Examples include:

- Office paper
- Church newsletters

- Service sheets
- Leaflets
- Cardboard packaging

Glass

Examples include:

- Glass bottles
- Glass jars

Metal, Plastic and Cartons

Examples include:

- Drinks cans
- Plastic bottles
- Food containers
- Milk cartons
- Tetra Pak-style cartons

Food Waste

Churches producing more than 5kg of food waste per week must separate and arrange for the collection of food waste.

Food waste may arise from:

- Coffee mornings
- Community lunches
- Catering events
- Food banks
- Children's activities
- Fellowship events

Small Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (sWEEE)

Since 6 April 2026, workplaces must separately recycle small unwanted electrical items. Examples include:

- Kettles
- Toasters
- Mobile phones
- Tablets
- Small printers
- Hairdryers
- Portable electrical equipment

These items should not be placed in general waste bins.

Unsold Textiles

This requirement is most likely to affect:

- Church charity shops
- Clothing projects
- Community reuse schemes

What Do Churches Need To Do?

1. Review Current Waste Arrangements

Churches should contact their waste contractor and confirm:

- What recycling services are available.

- Whether collections comply with Welsh legislation.
- Whether additional recycling bins are required.

2. Provide Separate Recycling Facilities

Churches should provide clearly labelled containers for relevant waste streams.

Depending on the activities undertaken at the premises, this may include separate bins for:

- Paper and card
- Glass
- Plastic, metal and cartons
- Food waste
- General waste

3. Inform Volunteers, Staff and Building Users

Those using church premises should understand how waste is to be separated. This may include:

- Volunteers
- Employees
- Ministers
- Church groups
- Hall hirers
- Community organisations using church premises

Clear signage is strongly recommended.

4. Update Hall Hire Agreements

Where church halls are hired to outside organisations, churches should consider including waste and recycling requirements within hall hire terms and conditions.

This will help ensure building users support the church's compliance arrangements.

Although hall hirers and user groups should be instructed to use the correct recycling facilities, responsibility for ensuring suitable waste separation arrangements are available at the premises remains with the church as the occupier of the premises. Churches should therefore ensure that appropriate recycling facilities are provided and that users are given clear instructions on waste segregation requirements.

5. Keep Records

Natural Resources Wales recommends keeping documentation which demonstrates compliance. This may include:

- Waste collection contracts
- Waste transfer notes
- Invoices from waste contractors
- Recycling collection records

These may be requested by regulators.

Who Enforces the Regulations?

The regulations are primarily enforced by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). NRW may:

- Request information about waste arrangements
- Visit premises
- Inspect waste management practices
- Investigate complaints
- Take enforcement action where necessary

What Happens If a Church Does Not Comply?

NRW is responsible for enforcing the workplace recycling requirements in Wales. NRW may request information, inspect waste management arrangements, investigate complaints and take enforcement action where non-compliance is identified.

Under the Waste Separation Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2023, NRW may issue

- Fixed Monetary penalties
- Variable Monetary penalties
- Non-compliance penalties
- Other enforcement action where appropriate.

The level of any penalty will depend on the nature, seriousness and circumstances of the breach. NRW's enforcement approach is intended to be proportionate and risk-based.

Churches should therefore ensure that appropriate waste separation arrangements are in place and that volunteers, staff, building users and hall hirers understand their responsibilities.

What Should Church Trustees Do Now?

Immediate Actions

- ✓ Confirm that recycling arrangements comply with Welsh workplace recycling requirements
- ✓ Check that suitable recycling bins are available
- ✓ Ensure volunteers and building users understand how to separate waste
- ✓ Review hall hire arrangements and user guidance
- ✓ Retain waste collection and recycling records
- ✓ Review arrangements for disposing of electrical items

Key Message

If your church is located in Wales, these regulations apply to you.

Churches are legally required to separate specified recyclable waste streams and ensure appropriate collection arrangements are in place. By reviewing waste management practices, providing suitable recycling facilities and communicating expectations to building users, churches can demonstrate compliance and support Wales' wider environmental objectives.

Further Information

- Welsh Government: Workplace Recycling Guidance
- Natural Resources Wales: Workplace Recycling Compliance Guidance
- Waste Separation Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2023