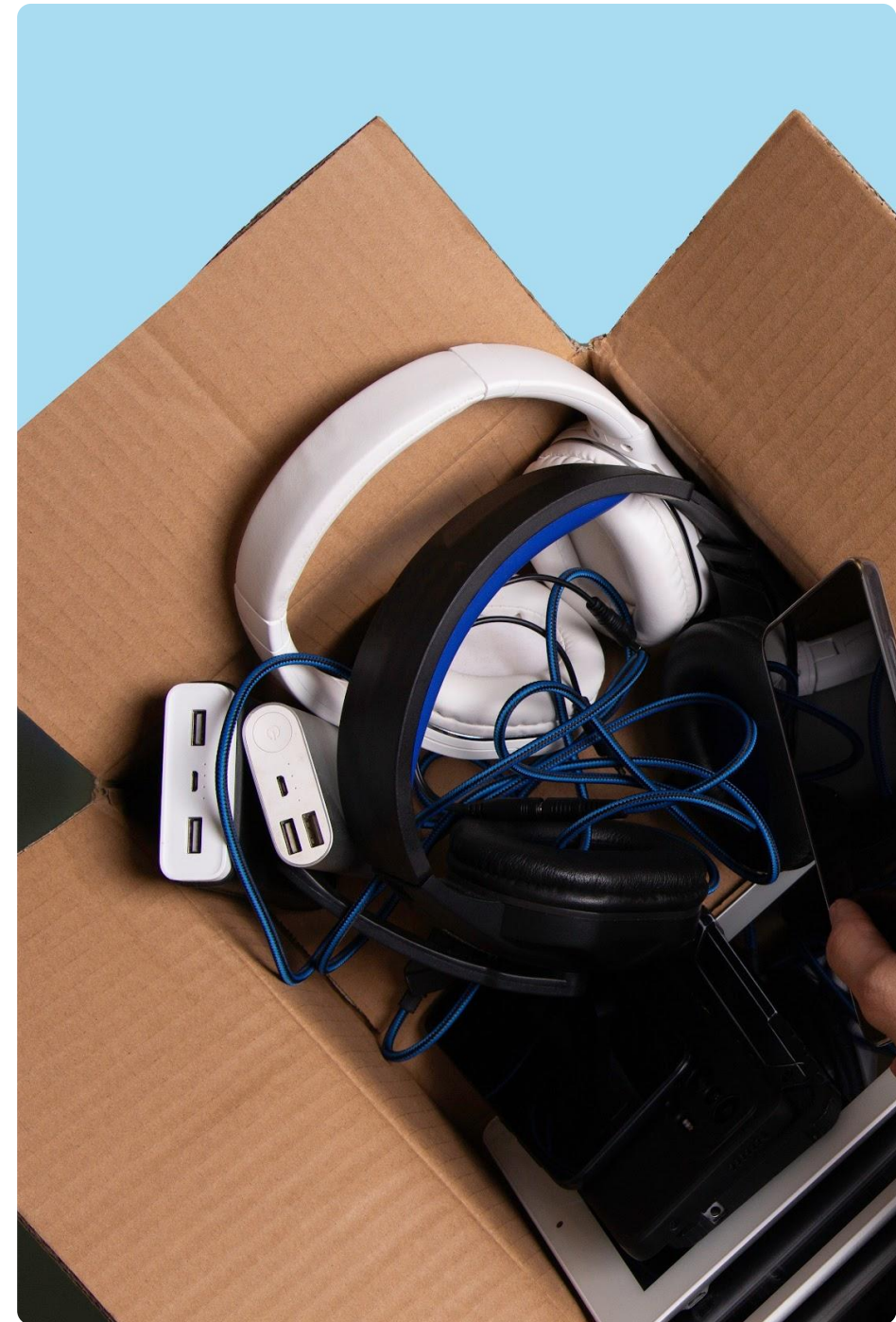




Industry briefing

Retailer take-back: industry briefing for retailers

June 2026



Contents

3 key takeaways: electrical retailer responsibilities

What is electrical waste and why is it relevant?

Retailer and distributor obligations

Who is Material Focus?

3 key takeaways

Electrical retailer responsibilities

3 key takeaways



Retailers must legally take back old electricals

All electrical retailers are legally obliged to help customers recycle their electricals - and tell your customers you offer this.

Retailers selling over £100k of electricals per year need to take back old electricals in store or set up an alternative collection point.



Consumers are actively seeking out these recycling services

Over 1 million people a year visit [Recycle Your Electricals](#) to find their nearest recycling drop off point.

The majority of the UK public tell us they would use supermarket, charity and electrical retailer drop off points if they were available.



We're here to help

Download our [comms toolkit](#) from our website, created with OPSS/Department for Business Trade, to ensure your comms are compliant.

Add your locations to our [Recycling Locator](#) to make it easier for consumers to find recycling drop off points, and help your staff by [requesting our staff training guide](#).

What is electrical waste and why is it relevant?



E-waste is one of the fastest growing sources of waste in the world.

What is electrical waste?

Electrical waste/ e-waste is also known as **Waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE)**.

- Most e-waste contains toxic chemicals and is classified 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 in the UK

- 103,000 tonnes of e-waste are thrown away each year by households
- 880 million old electricals stashed away in UK homes

Binning electricals adds to e-waste. **Anything with a plug, battery, or cable (including vapes) should always be recycled** at a minimum and should never be binned.

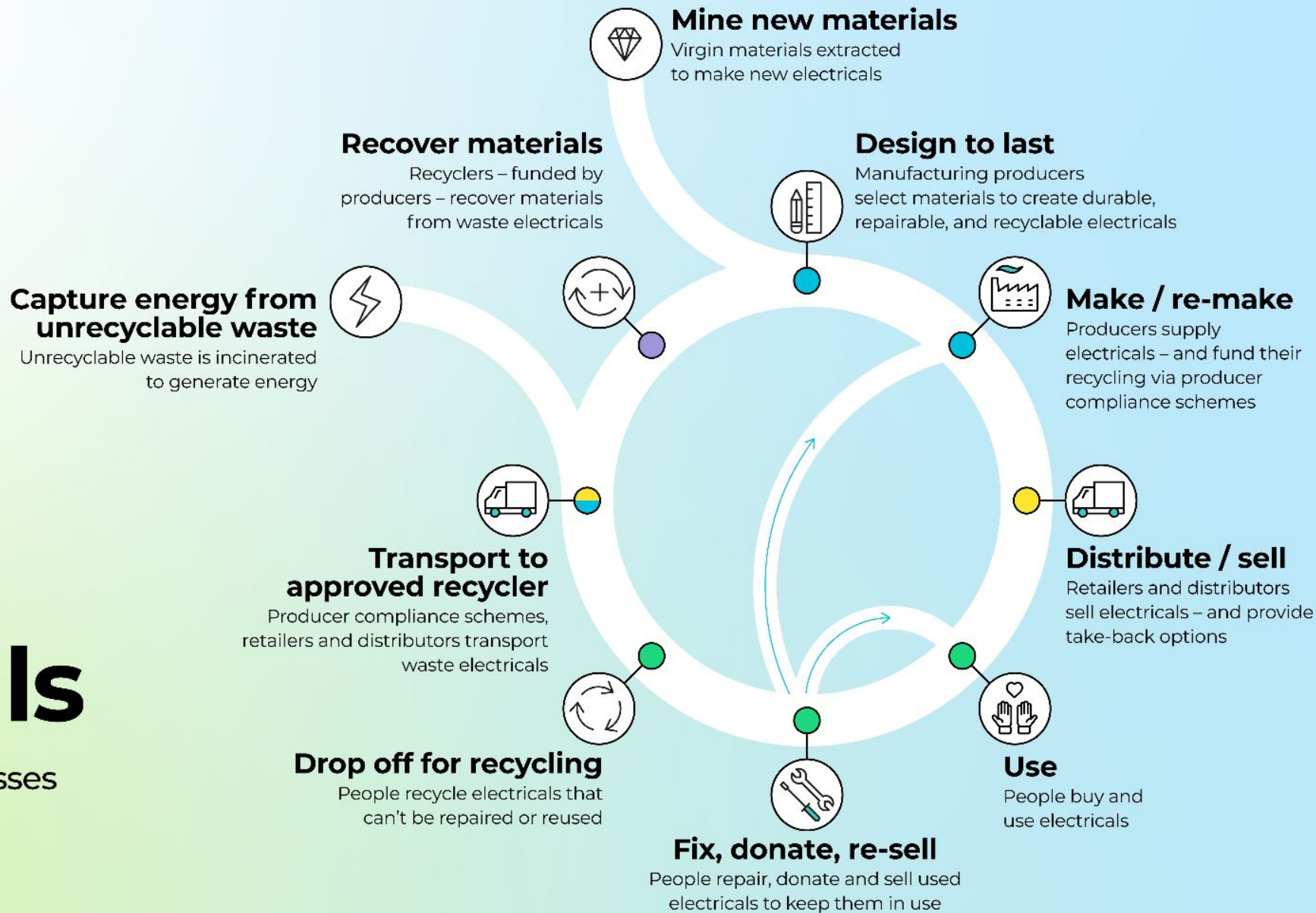
Laws requiring producers and retailers to finance and support collection and recycling of electrical and portable battery products at end-of-life have been in place in the UK since 2007.

Source: [Material Focus research](#)



Circular Electricals

How responsible UK businesses keep electricals – and their materials – in use for longer.



● Producers

● Retailers & distributors

● Public

● Approved recyclers

Key terms

- **Electrical and electronic equipment (EEE)** - Equipment which is dependent on electric currents or electromagnetic fields to fulfil its basic function. This includes products that are not connected to a mains supply but are wind-up, battery-powered or solar-powered
- **Producer** - The first UK registered company who places EEE on the market. This can include different types of companies. Producers must register with a PCS or with their environmental regulator
- **Placed on the market** - EEE is placed on the market the first time it becomes available for distribution or use in the UK. It is not the act of supplying or selling the EEE products but rather making the product available for supply or sale
- **Producer compliance scheme (PCS)** - Schemes take on producers' obligations to finance the collection, treatment, recovery, and environmentally sound disposal of WEEE. The PCS will charge fees for its services, including fees for collection and treatment costs of WEEE on behalf of producers
- **Distributor** - Any person in the supply chain who makes EEE available on the market, usually a retailer who makes it available for purchase by the end user. A distributor may also be a producer
- **Waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE)** - Old or unwanted EEE which has become waste and can't be repaired or reused. Also known as e-waste
- **Distributor take-back** - All electrical retailers and distributors must provide a way for customers buying new electricals to recycle their old electricals for free on a like-for-like basis
- **Designated collection facility (DCF)** - Collection points for WEEE before it is sent for treatment, reuse and recycling, including collections set up by local authorities and distributors
- **Approved authorised treatment facility (AATF)** - A licensed (or exempt) site carrying out treatment on WEEE. Processes WEEE ready for recycling, making it a commodity that can be sold in the UK or abroad. Frequently known as an approved recycler
- **Evidence note** - Proof of reuse or treatment issued by an AATF per tonne of WEEE. Producer compliance schemes buy evidence notes on behalf of producers to pay off their obligations

Sources: [Various Government guidance](#)

Who are the key players?

Enforcement bodies across the UK

- [Environment Agency \(EA\)](#) - England
- [Natural Resources Wales \(NRW\)](#) - Wales
- [Northern Ireland Environment Agency \(NIEA\)](#) - Northern Ireland
- [Scottish Environment Protection Agency \(SEPA\)](#) - Scotland
- [Office for Product Safety and Standards \(OPSS\)](#) - enforces the regulations for distributors and retailers of EEE

Other agencies

- [The Chartered Trading Standards Institute](#) - product safety and compliance

Retailer and distributor responsibilities

Our resources for electrical retailers



Take-back obligations briefing

An explanation of the environmental obligations for all UK retailers of electricals. Find out more about the regulations and how to meet your take-back obligations.

- [Read from the start](#)



Take-back comms toolkit

Ensure your take-back communications are compliant with the regulations. Designed with OPSS, the ready-made assets include posters, strut cards, website copy and more.

- [Access our take-back comms toolkit](#)



Staff training for take-back

Let your staff know how to carry out your responsibilities to take-back customers' electricals. Tailor the guide to explain your store's take-back process to employees.

- [Request our staff training guide](#)

Options for offering take-back service

Free in-store recycling service

In-store take-back must:

- Be free (but can charge for collecting items from customers' homes)
- Give customers at least 28 days to bring back their waste item
- Take back all types of EEE that you sell - you can choose to extend your service to cover all kinds of WEEE (as more and more retailers are opting to do)

If your EEE sales area is >400m² including aisle, display and shelf space, you must accept any very small electricals* at any store for free, regardless of whether someone buys a new electrical item there.

* *Items <25cm on their longest side*

Alternative free take-back service

- You can set up a 'designated collection facility' (DCF) where your customers can take all kind of WEEE
- You can do this on your own or with other distributors
- You must follow the waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) regulations, other waste management legislation, and local planning requirements when managing a DCF
- You must agree with a producer compliance scheme (PCS) to return the WEEE direct to an Approved Authorised Treatment Facility (AATF)

Distributor Take Back Scheme (DTS)


You can use the Distributor Take Back Scheme (DTS) instead of providing a take back service, if either:

- Your business sells less than £100,000 of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) per year
- You only sell online

You pay a fee that covers your WEEE obligations until 31 December 2026 and the money goes towards supporting the recycling centres run by local authorities.

The amount you pay depends on the size of your business, whether you only sell online, and how much EEE you sell.

Source: [Retailer and distributor responsibilities GOV.UK](#)



Vapes should be collected and stored separately from other small electricals and batteries.

In-store take-back: storing and disposing of waste electricals

Check the conditions to see if you can store the waste temporarily before you dispose of it. To dispose of the waste you've collected you can do one of the following:

1. Contact a producer compliance scheme (PCS)

- Contact a PCS and agree arrangements and fees
- The PCS will arrange for the waste to be recycled or prepared for reuse at an Approved Authorised Treatment Facility (AATF)
- You may be charged for the collection and transportation of the waste to the AATF or the PCS collection point

2. Transport the waste yourself

- You can transport the waste to an AATF or PCS collection point yourself
- You need to register as a waste carrier
- You may also need to follow the rules on transporting hazardous waste in:
 - England and Wales
 - Scotland
 - Northern Ireland

See the [list of approved PCSs and AATFs](#).

Source: [Retailer and distributor responsibilities GOV.UK](#)

Keeping records

- Keep records of all electrical and electronic waste that you collect and dispose of
 - You can use a template to keep these records
 - Include the number of units you've received through take-back and say how many of these were returned to a PCS
- Keep all the documents you make, or are given by the PCS or the AATF, when you dispose of electrical and electronic waste
- Keep records of how you tell customers about your take-back scheme
- Keep all your records for 4 years

Source: [Retailer and distributor responsibilities GOV.UK](#)

Government regulation for take-back communications

You must provide free written information to your customers on:

- Which take-back service you provide, including collect on delivery
- How they can reuse and recycle electrical and electronic equipment
- Why this waste needs to be separated from other waste
- The damaging effects of not recycling electrical and electronic equipment
- The meaning of the crossed-out wheelie bin symbol

Brands with **multi-site stores** selling a variety of different products may need to communicate differently in different stores (and should ensure that store staff advise consumers that larger goods can only be returned to specific stores).

Retailers which sell electricals in stores and online must display this information both in-store and on your website.

Shops

You can provide this information by, for example:

- Displaying posters in your store about which service you provide
- Including information leaflets with the electrical and electronic equipment you sell

Our [comms toolkit](#) has a poster that includes all of the information you need to display in your store in order to be compliant.

Online retailers

You must publish this information on your website.

Our [comms toolkit](#) includes legally compliant copy with all the information you need to display on your website.

Source: [Retailer and distributor responsibilities GOV.UK](#)

Fully compliant OPSS approved take-back communications toolkit

- Access compliant take-back comms

Recycle your electricals here

If you have old unwanted electricals you can recycle them in-store for free

Anything with a plug, battery or cable can be recycled and turned into something new.

Simply hand your electricals to a staff member, and they'll do the rest.

Take back everything

Recycle your electricals here

Buying a new electrical item? Recycle the one you're replacing in-store, for free

Anything with a plug, battery or cable can be recycled and turned into something new.

Simply hand your electricals to a staff member, and they'll do the rest.

Like for like

Recycle your vapes here

If you have old vapes, you can recycle them in-store for free

Vapes, and anything else with a plug, battery or cable, can be recycled and turned into something new.

Simply drop off your old vapes for recycling here.

Recycle vapes

Recycle your batteries here

If you have old batteries, you can recycle them in-store for free

Batteries can be recycled and the materials inside turned into something new.

Simply drop off your old batteries for recycling here.

Recycle batteries

Source: Retailer take-back communications toolkit

If you fail to comply with the WEEE regulations, you can be prosecuted and get an unlimited fine.

The UK government is exploring new, strengthened take-back obligations on all retailers, including internet sellers. Retailers across Europe are already mandated to take back all electricals in-store.

Material Focus is receiving an increasing number of customer complaints about their local retailers not taking back electricals, which we are passing onto OPSS for follow-up.

Find out more about legislation and regulations here:

- [WEEE Regulations 2013](#)
- [Retailer and distributor responsibilities](#)

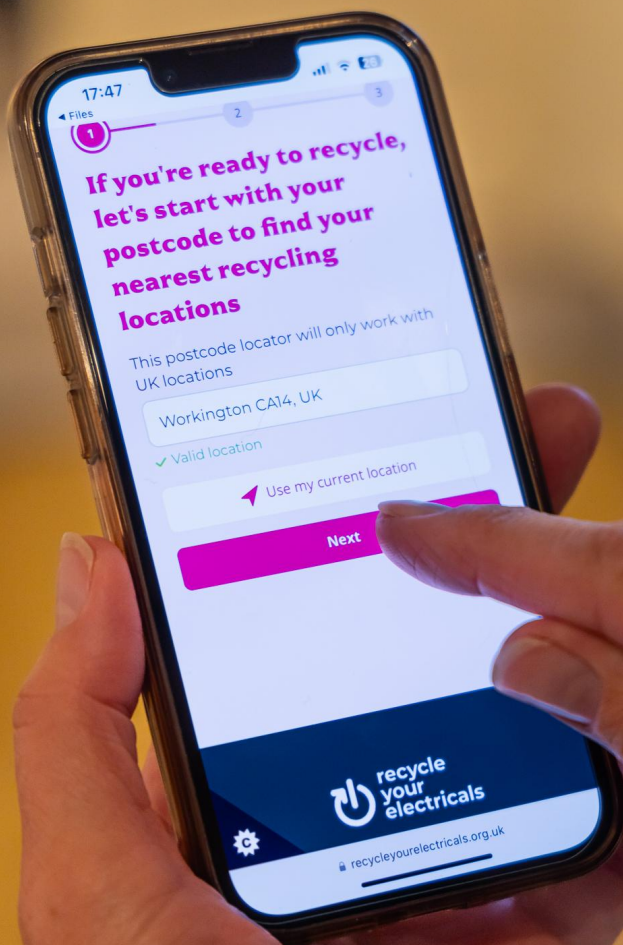
Source: [Retailer and distributor responsibilities GOV.UK](#)

Recycling Locator

Include links to our [Recycling Locator](#) or use our widget on your website.

Add your stores to help consumers easily locate their nearest recycling drop off points

- The UK's leading Recycling Locator for recycling, donating and repairing electricals
- Almost 30,000 searchable locations, and almost 300 types of devices
- Data is cleaned and scrutinised before being added, and regularly updated
- Reviewed weekly, adding new organisations, updating existing and removing any that have shut down
- All locations searchable by item and activity type - recycling, donating or repairing
- Featured on Channel 5's *The Gadget Show*, *Shop Smart Save Money*, BBC 1's *Rip off Britain* and major news sites including the BBC and Sky
- Also **available as a widget** for your website
- Email Nick our Brand Partnerships Manager at nick@materialfocus.org.uk for more information



recycle your electricals

Enter your postcode below to find your nearest location.

Your postcode

Search

Frequently asked questions

Regulation questions

Q: What are the 2026 WEEE take-back regulations for online marketplaces?'

A: As of Aug 2025, WEEE regulations were extended to cover online marketplaces.

UK Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) regulations, taking effect from August 12, 2025, now mandate that online marketplaces (OMPs) act as producers for products sold by non-UK sellers, forcing them to take financial responsibility for waste collection and recycling.

Store related questions

Q: Where should retailers put the poster/strut card?

A: The most important thing is that customers buying electricals are made aware that they can also recycle them. And that one of the options for recycling is in store. Display the strut card or poster at the checkout and points in store where you sell electricals.

Q: Where should retailers set up an in-store WEEE take-back collection point?'

A: Customers should drop off in a place that is easily findable - your service desk, or kiosk outside store/in lobby are common options.

Enforcement questions

Q: Which UK authority enforces WEEE retail regulations?

A: The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) enforces the regulations for distributors and retailers of EEE. You can contact them if you have any questions on compliance or suspected non-compliance - OPSS.enquiries@businessandtrade.gov.uk

Q: Does the OPSS conduct in-store compliance audits for WEEE?

A: Yes, OPSS regularly carry out checks on stores to check that the legal obligations, such as store signage, are being met in the correct manner.

**Who is Material
Focus?**

We are an independent, not-for-profit **saving valuable, critical and finite materials from going to waste** by making it easier for everyone across the UK to fix, donate and recycle their electricals. We do this through..

Insights

We identify, produce and share insights to improve the UK e-waste system and inform policy decisions.

Investments

We identify and fund projects that make it easier to reuse and recycle; or that encourage circular design.

Inspiration

We inspire, educate and encourage the UK public to fix, donate, sell and recycle their unwanted electricals through our Recycle Your Electricals campaign.

Frequently asked questions: Material Focus

Q: How is Material Focus funded?

A: Our funding comes from UK WEEE Regulations Compliance Fees. These are paid by electrical producers if they don't meet annual recycling targets set by the government. The fees are set higher than the average costs of collections to encourage collections to take place. We manage spending of the fees to support reuse and recycling of electricals in the UK.

Q: Is Material Focus a regulator?

A: We are not a government body nor a regulator, and work separately to the regulators across the UK. But we will regularly share information with them to help improve the e-waste system - to make it as easy as possible for the public to reuse and recycle their electricals.

Q: Is your work across the UK?

A: We work across the UK. We are a not-for-profit organisation with expertise in the electrical waste sector. Our role is to help improve the UK e-waste system through improving the reuse and recycling rates of waste electricals - this includes working with organisations across the UK sector to increase awareness of obligations and how to meet them.

Disclaimer: This document aggregates information from a number of sources and presents it as guidance to enhance understanding of the subject matter. It also provides a link to other third party sites where detailed information and guidance may be available. It is not intended to be a definitive report or a substitute for taking professional advice on regulatory, legal and other related issues.

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