ENVIRONMENT SEMINAR 2026 | SESSION REPORT

Growth and circularity in every postcode

Opening and closing reflections

05 November 2026 | Stationers' Hall, London



Paul Synnott: FPA interim executive chair

Paul Synnott is managing director of Seda UK and interim executive chair of the FPA. He joined Seda UK in 2009 and became managing director in 2016. His packaging career spans more than 30 years across manufacturing and sales in flexible packaging, rigid containers and folding cartons. He also serves as co-chair of the Alliance for Fibre-Based Packaging.

KEY POINTS

- The sector can support environmental progress and economic growth together.
- Effective EPR requires fairness, evidence, transparency and measurable results.
- Policy certainty is central to manufacturing investment and innovation.
- The FPA will continue challenging policy while working constructively with government.

OPENING AND CLOSING COMMENTS

Environmental progress and economic growth must be treated as complementary objectives rather than competing priorities, FPA interim executive chair Paul Synnott told delegates at the Association's Environment Seminar at Stationers' Hall, London, on 5 November. His opening address framed the day's discussions around regulatory certainty, industry collaboration and the need for measurable outcomes from packaging reform.

A fair and effective producer-pays system

Reflecting on concerns raised at the preceding year's Seminar about compliance and enforcement, Synnott pointed to progress in identifying businesses that had not met their packaging obligations. He said engagement with policymakers and regulators had contributed to a further 1,800 business registrations. This figure should be independently confirmed before being used in publicity as a verified performance measure.

The Association, he explained, supported the producer-pays principle. However, non-compliance undermined both the integrity of the system and the fairness of its funding arrangements: businesses complying with their obligations risked carrying costs that should be shared more widely.

The concern extended beyond registration and fee collection. Producers needed to understand whether the substantial sums being collected were generating measurable improvements in collection, waste management and recycling, and whether changes to recyclability assessments and fee modulation would provide the predictability necessary for long-term investment.

Growth and circularity in every postcode

Synnott highlighted the nationwide reach of the foodservice packaging supply chain, describing the manufacturers and distributors serving everything from major hospitality brands to independent cafés,

schools, hospitals and takeaway businesses. The sector's contribution, he argued, went well beyond placing packaging on the market. It supported food security, skilled employment, supply chains, convenience and local economies.

Drawing on the government's wider growth ambitions, he called for both growth and circularity in every postcode. His central argument was that environmental progress should not be pursued at the expense of domestic manufacturing and investment; rather, good regulation should help create the conditions for both.

He suggested that packaging EPR, delivered well, could stimulate investment in domestic recycling capacity, improve collection consistency and create skilled jobs. Achieving that would require collaboration across government, local authorities, waste operators, trade associations, manufacturers and obligated producers.

What the day revealed

In his closing reflections, Synnott drew together the day's contrasting perspectives. He welcomed the speakers' openness and their ability to make complex policy issues easier to understand. He reiterated the importance of bringing consumers along through clear communication, citing the Talking Rubbish presenters and Adam Read's practical "mum test" for recycling information. He also highlighted Adam's warning that policy uncertainty can restrain investment, and Eamonn Bates's reminder that UK packaging businesses operate within a much wider European market.

Synnott also reflected on the opportunities and cautions raised in the artificial intelligence discussion, the need for trustworthy recycling labels discussed by Jude Allan, and Ben Worth's warning that environmental claims need to withstand scrutiny. He echoed Sebastian Munden's encouragement for obligated producers to join UK Packaging PRO so their voices can contribute to improving the scheme. The FPA, he said, would continue representing members, challenging where needed and working constructively with policymakers to place practical industry experience at the heart of decisions.

The central message was that EPR should not simply be a mechanism for collecting fees. With effective delivery, accountability and robust evidence, it could become a catalyst for a more circular economy and stronger British manufacturing.

SESSION PHOTOGRAPHY





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This is an editorial account and not a verbatim transcript.