ENVIRONMENT SEMINAR 2026 | SESSION REPORT

PackUK: From producer fees to measurable outcomes

The next phase of packaging EPR

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Jeremy Blake: Chief Executive, PackUK

Jeremy Blake is chief executive of PackUK, the scheme administrator for packaging extended producer responsibility across the four UK administrations. His Environment Seminar presentation reviewed the scheme's first year and set out priorities including fee modulation, local authority performance, evidence gathering and increased industry engagement.

KEY POINTS

- PackUK judged year one successful in establishing the scheme, while acknowledging remaining problems.
- New collection and sorting projects are emerging, including a Suffolk facility.
- RAM 2028 is expected to change only where evidence supports a business case.
- Local authority effectiveness assessments are expected to be published from 2028.

FULL SESSION REPORT

PackUK's first year established the foundations of packaging extended producer responsibility, but the scheme's long-term success will depend on whether producer funding delivers measurable improvements in collection, recycling and the wider circular economy, chief executive Jeremy Blake told the FPA Environment Seminar.

A functioning scheme – but not a finished one

Returning a year after his previous appearance, Blake reflected on the challenge of creating systems capable of issuing producer charges and distributing around £1.5 billion to local authorities. He described the first year as successful in making the scheme operational, while accepting that significant imperfections remained and that further years would be required to stabilise the arrangements.

The first phase had concentrated on financial transactions and administrative systems. The next, he said, would focus more heavily on recyclability, local authority performance and the environmental outcomes of producer investment.

Early projects across the four nations

Blake highlighted examples of improvements supported by EPR funding. In Scotland, collection changes were expected to extend glass recycling to approximately 25,000 additional households. In Wales, funding had created opportunities to adjust collection arrangements.

He placed particular emphasis on a new Suffolk recycling facility he had visited the day before the Seminar, describing it as an early example of infrastructure becoming operational following funding. The facility and associated changes in neighbouring authority areas use separate streams to improve the quality of recovered materials. Blake said further projects were developing across the UK.

His account illustrated the beginning of investment in collection and sorting, while also highlighting the broader question raised elsewhere during the Seminar: how funding would support the downstream reprocessing capacity and end markets needed to complete the circular economy.

Digital systems and producer experience

Blake acknowledged considerable frustration with initial data-reporting processes. In the earliest submission period, system problems and confusion had generated thousands of customer-service calls. He said the most recent submission had produced only tens of comparable enquiries, following improvements to digital processes and a more proactive approach to identifying problems.

The effort would continue, particularly as businesses still faced the substantial work of collecting packaging data across products and supply chains.

Local authority performance and consumer communication

Blake said PackUK would increase its attention to service effectiveness rather than rely solely on financial distributions. From 2028, effectiveness assessments were expected to be published for every UK local authority, with the purpose of identifying baselines, support needs and opportunities for improvement rather than simply penalising authorities.

The scheme also has a statutory role in coordinating public information across the four nations. PackUK intends to draw together existing good practice from local authorities, OPRL, WRAP and others so that consumers can understand where packaging should go.

RAM and evidence-led change

Blake discussed the Recyclability Assessment Methodology, stressing that assessments consider collection, sorting, reprocessing and market availability rather than design alone. Amber-rated packaging may still be recycled but face a constraint somewhere in that chain; green indicates more straightforward system-wide recoverability.

He reiterated that RAM 2028 was expected to follow RAM 2027 except where a clear business case and evidence justified changes. He also outlined alternative pathways, including qualifying take-back, self-managed consumer waste and prospective closed-loop arrangements, although the detailed rules and eligibility conditions would require careful attention.

PackUK plans to work with UK Packaging PRO to improve producer guidance and bring balanced industry evidence into the scheme's development.

The next phase of incentives

Blake said roughly one-fifth of household packaging reported in the first round of eco-modulation had been classified as red. Improving such materials could, in his view, contribute to much higher national recycling rates over time; the 80–85% figure he mentioned was an ambition or scenario, not a formal forecast.

He also anticipated a call for evidence in early 2027 on possible additional modulation factors, potentially including recycled content and excessive packaging. No decision had been made to adopt those factors.

The emerging five-year strategy would provide more visibility over these priorities. Blake closed by describing the changes as generational rather than achievable in a single year, calling for industry challenge and collaboration as the scheme evolves from an administrative framework towards measurable circular-economy outcomes.

SESSION PHOTOGRAPHY





PRESENTATION MATERIALS

Download a PDF of the presentation slides here

Source and publication note

This session report is intended to be an overview and is not a verbatim transcript.