

# Factsheet 5 - On Pack Recycling Labelling

## Why have these symbols been developed when there is already a range of recycling symbols?

Householders need more practical advice about which packaging can be recycled in the UK. Most materials can be recycled in principle but only when a system exists to collect the material and get it reprocessed can it be recycled in practice. Recycling labels historically did not deal with this issue. For example, the well known recycling triangle "the Mobius Loop" encouraged people to include items in recycling collections even if they were not accepted for recycling.

## The On-Pack Recycling Label scheme (OPRL)

The Scheme, which is voluntary, was launched by the British Retail Consortium with support from WRAP. It has had a steadily growing membership since its launch in March 2009 and now has over 100 grocery and non-grocery brand and retailer members. OPRL is administered through a subsidiary company of the BRC and WRAP provides technical support. The new labels are already being used on over 60,000 product lines. This will continue to grow as packaging artwork is updated or redesigned. It will take time for stocks on shelves to be replaced with products carrying the new labels.

The labels were developed in conjunction with householder testing and industry consultation.

The OPRL label is intended for use on packaging which ends up in the household waste stream not the packaging used for deliveries to shops. This scheme is suitable for all household products, not just grocery, however they are sold.

## Quick Facts

- **The On Pack Recycling Labelling scheme was launched in March 2009 by the British Retail Consortium (BRC) with support from WRAP.**
- **It has been designed as an evidence-led standardised label to tie in with local authority communications using Recycle Now.**
- **It is being used on over 60,000 product lines by over 100 grocery and non-grocery, Brand and Retailer members, including ASDA, Boots, B&Q, Heinz, John Lewis, London 2012 Olympics, Pets at Home, the National Trust, Sainsbury's and Wilkinsons.**

Unlike some other labelling schemes the OPRL scheme is monitored to ensure that the information is backed by current data about local recycling schemes and is as accurate as possible. Quarterly checks are made to try to identify anomalies or errors and this is backed up by a reporting system. Any incorrect labels can be reported to OPRL along with details of brand, product and bar code number via the email: [enquiries@onpackrecyclinglabel.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@onpackrecyclinglabel.org.uk).

In April 2010 the OPRL scheme was extended to cover packaging that can be collected at bring banks and at Household Waste Recycling Centres rather than just kerbside collections.

## How does it work?

OPRL is based on the WRAP Recycle Now iconography and has been designed for use across the UK. It uses three simple symbols; each symbol indicates a different level of the availability of recycling facilities for the material specified below the Recycle Now symbol.



Underneath each symbol is a description of the particular item of packaging (e.g. sleeve, tray or film) and, below that, a one word description of the material used (e.g. card, metal, plastic, etc.).



**WIDELY  
RECYCLED AT  
RECYCLING  
POINTS**

**CHECK LOCALLY  
FOR KERBSIDE**

There is also a symbol used on a few items of packaging collected both at the kerbside and from bring sites, such as multi-material beverage cartons e.g. Tetra Paks and metal foil packaging.

**RECYCLE WITH  
CARRIER BAGS  
AT LARGER  
STORES**

**NOT AT  
KERBSIDE**

**FILM**

In addition to carrier bags, householders can now take other plastic film packaging back to supermarkets to recycle in front of store carrier bag banks. Householders simply need to look out for this label on packaging, which will be appearing on bakery, beverage, breakfast cereal, grocery produce and some household goods lines from mid-2011 onwards. The retailers participating in this initiative are Asda, the Co-operative, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose.

www.recyclenow.com



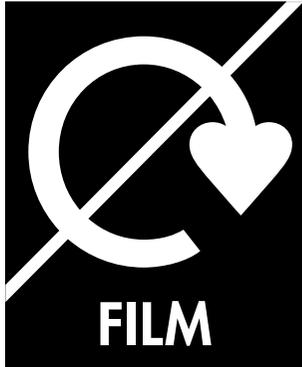
**SLEEVE**

**CARD  
widely  
recycled**



**TRAY**

**PLASTIC  
check local  
recycling**



**FILM**

**PLASTIC  
not currently  
recycled**

The 'widely recycled' label is used where more than 65% of local authorities collect that packaging material at the kerbside. Given this threshold 'widely recycled' does not necessarily mean that all kerbside collection schemes accept the material.

The 'check local recycling' label means that the specific packaging material is collected by between 15% and 65% of local authorities at the kerbside. This aims to act as a reminder to householders to check with their council to find out whether it is possible to recycle that material in their area.

The 'not currently recycled', crossed-through symbol does not necessarily mean that the material cannot be recycled but instead signifies that fewer than 15% of local authorities have kerbside collection facilities for the material.

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A simple summary of the type of classifications used to determine which symbols should be applied is shown in the table below:

<b>Packaging Material</b>	<b>Widely recycled</b>	<b>Check local recycling</b>	<b>Not currently recycled</b>
<b>Glass</b>	<b>Bottles and Jars</b>		
<b>Metal</b>	<b>Cans and Aerosols</b>		
<b>Paper and Card</b>	<b>All paper and card packaging</b>		
<b>Plastics (All Types)</b>	<b>Bottles</b>	<b>Pots, trays, tubs and lids</b>	<b>Bags, films, pouches and windows (see page 2 for exceptions)</b>
<b>Biodegradable/Compostable</b>			<b>All types</b>
<b>Composite Material (eg. Tetra Pak, Elopak and SIG liquid drink and food cartons)</b>	<b>See label on page 2</b>		
<b>Metal foil packaging</b>			
<b>Mixed Materials e.g. card and metal spiral tubes or complex laminates</b>			<b>All types</b>

A more detailed matrix of classification of materials can be found at <http://www.onpackrecyclinglabel.org.uk/downloads/Guidelines%20Matrix.pdf>

### Who can join the scheme?

Retailers and brand owners who put packaged goods on the market for householders are eligible to join the scheme. They pay a fee to cover the running costs of OPRL including the monitoring of the use of the label.

Examples of companies which have joined the scheme include the main supermarkets, Lakeland, Pets at Home and Focus DIY, along with Brands including Heinz, Britvic and PZ Cussons. A full list of members can be found on [www.onpackrecyclinglabel.org.uk/members](http://www.onpackrecyclinglabel.org.uk/members)

### How is the new labelling system being promoted?

WRAP and the BRC are working with retailers to communicate the scheme to householders. Retailers are encouraged to support the on-pack activity with additional communications to their customers – at national and local levels. So far the scheme is being supported through in-store magazines, point of sale materials, websites and leaflets. There are opportunities for joint working between local authorities and retailers to improve knowledge of what is collected locally. If you would like to work more closely with your local retailers then please get in touch with [enquiries@onpackrecyclinglabel.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@onpackrecyclinglabel.org.uk) as OPRL can provide an opportunity for cross-sector recycling communications in-store or at road shows.

### Isn't the 'not currently recycled' label potentially misleading?

The aim of the 'not currently recycled' label is to prevent contamination of other recyclable materials. If a local authority does offer recycling facilities for any of the 'not currently recycled' materials this should be made clear to residents through local publicity and on websites. Householder research has shown that residents see OPRL as a check, not a replacement to local authority communications.

### Does this mean all other recycling symbols will disappear from packaging and this will be the only system?

The On-Pack Recycling Label scheme is a voluntary scheme, and indications are that it will become the main system used in the UK to identify packaging which can be recycled. This will help to bring existing local authority communications more closely in line with messaging on-pack.

However, brand owners and retailers may also be required to continue using additional symbols such as the 'green dot' and the international plastic identification codes on packs that are also sold outside the UK.

In addition to OPRL, a label has been developed to show biodegradable packaging that can be composted at home in home composting bins. This is being managed by the Association For Organics Recycling (AFOR).

### Can a local authority promote the new scheme on its website and on other communications materials?

Yes, the more chances there are of educating householders about the new labelling scheme the better the chances that it will actually help to improve recycling rates. To get a sample of the label layout for use on a website or on other media please send an email to WRAP at the following address: [LGS@wrap.org.uk](mailto:LGS@wrap.org.uk)

### 2012 Onwards

In future the definitions of OPRL's categories will be changing to reflect the progress that local authorities and the recycling industry has made. From April 2012 for packaging to be labelled as 'widely recycled' it will have to be collected by at least 70% of local authorities at the kerbside. Similarly, any packaging that is collected by less than 20% of local authorities will be labelled as 'not currently recycled'. These category changes will be up from 65% and 15% respectively.



## What else can a local authority do to help?

Householders are encouraged to “check local recycling” by using the postcode locator on [www.recyclenow.com](http://www.recyclenow.com). Where possible this information should be kept up to date by informing WRAP ([LGS@wrap.org.uk](mailto:LGS@wrap.org.uk)) whenever changes are made to your collection arrangements. Please also update your information on the Valpak bring site survey when it is sent out each quarter as this information is used to inform how packaging is labelled under OPRL.

**For more information contact**  
**[lgs@wrap.org.uk](mailto:lgs@wrap.org.uk)**

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