



Surplus food redistribution guide



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Investing in a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Future

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Introduction

1.1 What is food redistribution?

Redistribution is the process whereby surplus food that would otherwise have ended up as waste is, instead, made available for people to eat. Around 250,000 tonnes of the food that goes to waste each year is still edible. That's enough for over 595 million meals. However, less than 30,000 tonnes of this edible surplus food is being redistributed for human consumption in the UK.

Companies, charities and individuals can all benefit from the redistribution of surplus food. There are many organisations that will help match your surplus food with people or businesses in your community that can make use of it.

1.2 The issue with food waste

Food waste is an issue that affects everyone in the food supply chain including cafés, restaurants and hotels, as well as wholesale, manufacturing and retail food organisations. The amount of food a business throws away is one indicator of the efficiency of the business.

If your business creates a lot of food waste, then you are not operating as efficiently as you could be.

There are huge opportunities to minimise food waste in food and drink businesses across Scotland. Research conducted by Zero Waste Scotland reveals that an estimated 20% of business waste is food, and Scottish businesses throw away more than 800,000 tonnes of food waste every year.

The first priority for businesses wanting to tackle food waste is to look at planning, purchasing, preparation and storage. This should identify where improvements can be implemented.

However, no matter how efficiently you run your business, you might still end up with some food waste, much of which is edible. This guide has been designed to show you how to redistribute that edible surplus food to benefit people or businesses in your community.

Did you know?

Households and businesses in Scotland throw away nearly an estimated 988,000 of food and drink every year.

The food purchase and waste disposal costs for a 240-litre wheeled bin filled with food waste amounts to around £240. On average, food that could have been eaten, but is thrown away, costs a business 38p per meal – or £10,000 per year.

When food waste breaks down in landfill it produces methane, a greenhouse gas that is many times more harmful to the environment than carbon dioxide. In fact, food and drink production accounts for approximately 20% of Scotland's carbon footprint.



1.3 The food and drink hierarchy

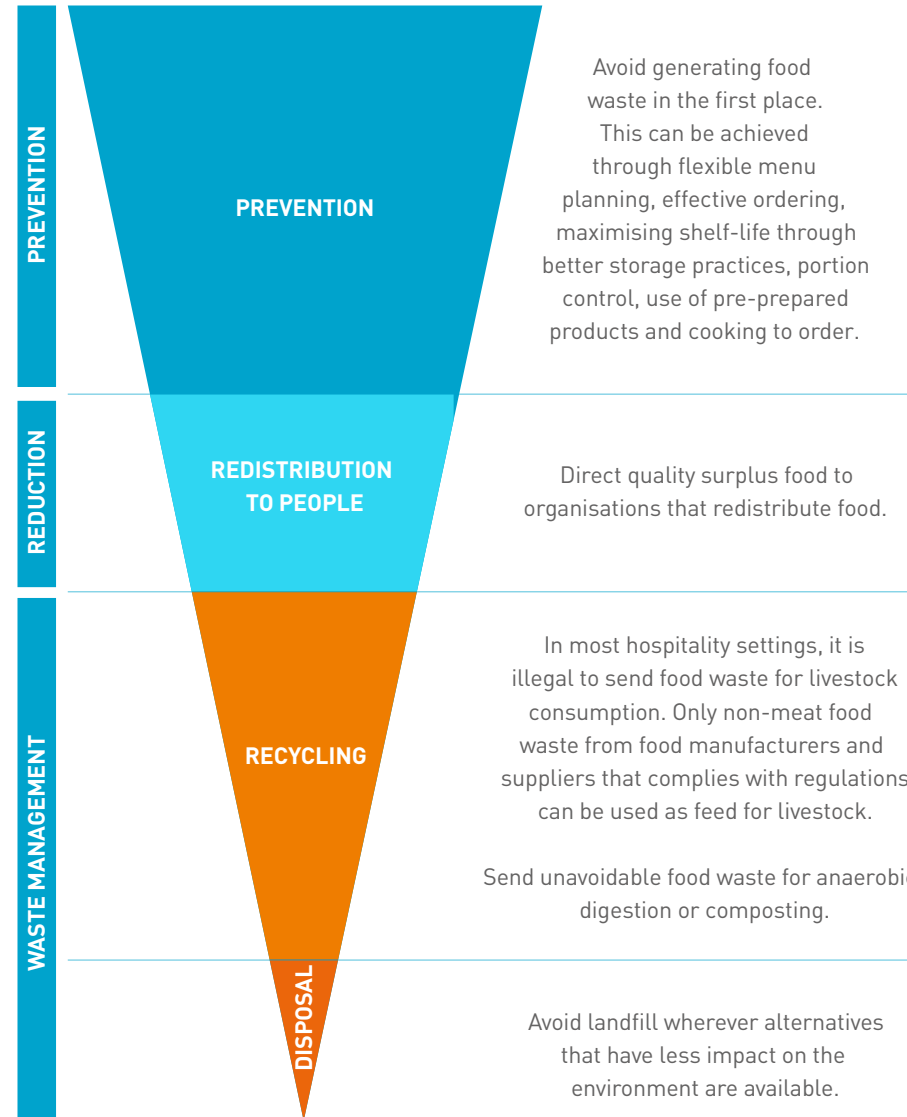
Food waste reduction can be accomplished using several approaches, including preventing waste at source, donating food to people in need, or diverting excess food for composting or other industrial uses.

The food and drink hierarchy was developed to help businesses prioritise food recovery opportunities. It shows that preventing food waste should be a priority but, where surpluses cannot be avoided, redirecting food to feed people should be a first consideration. Food waste recycling should be considered for food surpluses that are unsuitable for redistribution within the human supply chain.

1.4 Why redistribute surplus food

Food redistribution can offer many environmental, social and economic benefits, including:

- Saving on your waste disposal costs.
- Providing food directly to people in need.
- Impacting positively on staff morale.
- Enhancing your reputation with your customers.
- Helping achieve your business's environmental targets.



Food waste prevention

Whether you work for a small café, a large food manufacturer, a brewery, a hotel, a restaurant or a leisure facility, there are a variety of options that can help you to prevent food waste from occurring. If you would like further information, advice and support on how to prevent food waste in your business, please visit the Zero Waste Scotland website or call the team on 0808 808 2268.

Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012

Under the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012, any non-rural food business generating more than 5kg of food waste should be presenting food waste for separate collection. If you would like further information, advice and support on the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012, please visit the Zero Waste Scotland website or call the team on 0808 808 2268.

The true cost of food waste

Throwing food away has a financial impact that goes far beyond the commonly reported costs associated with waste collection. The true cost of food waste includes not only the purchase cost of food, but also the add-on operational costs associated with labour, water, energy and waste disposal. For hospitality and food service organisations, the true cost is estimated to be £3,000 per tonne, for retail organisations it is £1,300 per tonne and for manufacturing organisations it is £950 per tonne.

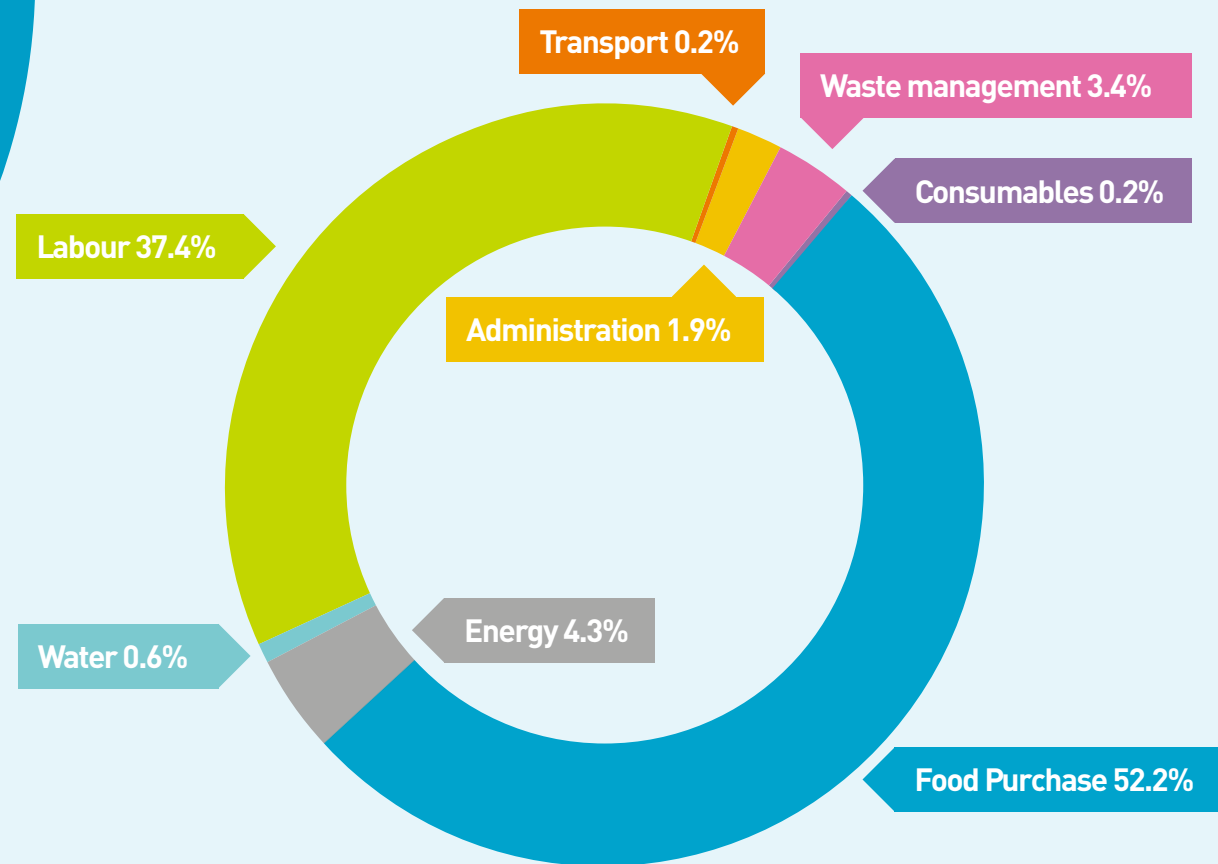


Figure 1. True cost of waste graphic Source: WRAP (2014) The true cost of food waste

What can I redistribute?

2.1 What is surplus food?

Surplus food can arise at different stages of food production processes, from ordering to quality control, and can include ambient, chilled and frozen foods. Food surpluses can arise for several reasons, including:

- An excess of products that are close to their 'best-before' or 'use-by' date.
 - Slow-moving stock or deleted lines.
 - Products that are incorrectly labelled or have no label (for further details, please see Section 2.5).
 - Products with damaged packaging.
- Ingredients and finished products that fall outside of a customer specification.
 - Food products that are left over from breakfast, lunch or dinner service (e.g. salads, sandwiches, muffins and cakes).





What can I redistribute?

2.2 How do I identify where surplus food occurs?

Carrying out a food surplus audit will help you to identify the different processes or operations that generate surplus edible food in your organisation. This can be done by using data sources such as invoices and reports from your waste contractor or interviews and discussions with your employees. Also, consider any terminology that is used in your organisation to describe surplus food such as residual stock, production overs, end-of-line products, rejections and quality control rejections.

When carrying out a food surplus audit, consider:

- Raw materials – any food that has been purchased, not used, but is still fit for human consumption.
- Durability dates – any food products nearing their best-before and use-by dates.
- Packaged food – non-perishable food products in unopened packaging (e.g. condiments, biscuits and fruit juices).
- Meals – if these have not been served, then they can be redistributed. However, it is

recommended that meals should not be donated if they contain raw fish or eggs, or have been cooked at lower temperatures unless appropriate time/temperature conditions have been met (for further details, please see Section 2.5).

- Manufacturing processes – products can be redistributed if they have not been in direct contact with customers.

Once you have identified where food surplus might occur, you should assess the likely quantity and how often it happens.

2.3 What can be redistributed?

Food can be redistributed provided that your organisation complies with the relevant food safety regulations and has a food safety management system in place to ensure potential hazards have been adequately controlled throughout the life of the product. Food must also be clearly labelled with date label, allergen information, storage and cooking guidance.

Subject to the considerations identified in Section 2.4, the following foods are suitable for redistribution:

- Fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables.
- Fresh and frozen meat and fish.
- Dairy products.
- Chilled ready meals and packaged food.
- Frozen processed foods (e.g. chips and ready meals).
- Hot and cold beverages (excluding alcohol).
- Ambient food including jars and tins.
- Bakery products.
- Fresh sandwiches .
- Eggs.
- Food with an expired best-before date.



What can I redistribute?

2.4 What cannot be redistributed?

Foods cannot be redistributed if they pose a food safety risk to the consumer and/or do not meet legal labelling requirements.

The following foods cannot be redistributed:

- Food with an expired use-by date (unless it has been frozen before the expiry date – see section 2.5.3 Freezing food). For more information, visit the updated food surplus redistribution labelling guidance, which has been checked and approved by [Food Standards Scotland](#).
- Food that has not been kept at the appropriate temperature.
- Food that has damaged packaging with a possibility of contamination.
- Food that lacks information on allergens. For more information visit [Food Standards Scotland's allergen guidance](#).
- Food that has been served to a customer.
- Food that has been in direct contact with consumers (e.g. buffet-type service).

2.5 Food safety comes first

Following good food safety practices is an integral part of managing food redistribution and is paramount to minimising the risk of distributing or serving unsafe food. To be suitable for redistribution, all surplus food must be fit for human consumption and compliant with relevant food hygiene, labelling and safety legislation. Key considerations are given in the following sections.

2.5.1 Food handling hygiene

- Have a food safety management system in place and adhere to all the steps.
- Only donate food that is good for at least 48 more hours.
- Make sure all storage containers have been cleaned and, where necessary, disinfected.

2.5.2 Temperature storage

- Always follow temperature directions on the label. If the food is chilled, store at the

correct temperature at all times.

- Make sure that any previously heated food is cooled as quickly as possible (to 5°C within 90 minutes) and then refrigerated.
- Chilled products should be refrigerated at the specified temperature - Food Standards Scotland recommends no more than 5°C.
- Any chilled food sent for redistribution should follow Food Standards Scotland's temperature control guidance when being reheated and served.
- Food that is being redistributed hot must be held at above 63°C.
- When transporting food, make sure it is kept at an appropriate temperature at all times.



What can I redistribute?

2.5.3 Freezing food

Freezing can act as a 'pause button' prior to the best-before or use-by dates passing. The organisation carrying out the freezing must:

- Ensure that the food is in an acceptable condition and suitable for freezing (e.g. as indicated by manufacturer's instructions).
- Ensure the food is frozen through to the core.
- Supply information to the receiving organisation that relates to the food and its freezing –including information about when the product was frozen, and instructions for defrosting and cooking.
- Remove the original use-by date on the food label (if the product had one) and add a new best-before date.
- Updated storage and cooking instructions should be applied, explaining clearly that food should be thawed in a fridge and used within 24 hours.
- Food operations storing relabelled food should have systems in place to record when the food was frozen so that, when inspected by local authority food safety

officers, they can demonstrate that such food is safe.

2.5.4 Best-before and use-by dates

- Only donate food before it reaches the use-by date, unless it has gone through a safe cooking or freezing process before the use-by date expired. Chilled food that is past its use-by date should never be presented to any person or organisation for consumption (regardless of whether or not they are a charity or business).
- Label any food that does not have a best-before or use-by date (e.g. surplus cooked food), stating what it is, when it was donated, when it should be used by and if it is safe to reheat.
- Food can be frozen up to and including the use-by date. How long it can be frozen for is a quality issue rather than a food safety one.
- If freezing food, ensure that it is in an acceptable condition, is frozen all the way through, is labelled appropriately to confirm when it was frozen, and includes instructions for defrosting and cooking.

Ultimately, the food should be treated as if it was being sold. If you have any questions about food safety legislation then refer to Food Standards Scotland. Further guidance on redistribution date labelling can be found [here](#).

Understanding the difference between a best-before and a use-by date

- Any redistributed food needs to be within the use-by date.
- Use-by labels indicate the date by which the food must be eaten. These dates are used on perishable foods that go off quickly and refer to food safety. After this date, food should not be used even if it looks and smells fine as it may contain harmful bacteria.
- A best-before date is about food quality rather than food safety, so after this date has passed, the food will be safe to eat, but its flavour, colour or texture might begin to deteriorate.



How do I redistribute my surplus food?

If you have done all you can to reduce the amount of food you waste, the next steps are to understand your available food redistribution options and then to implement a practical food-redistribution solution.

3.1 Have a responsible person

A responsible person (i.e. manager or another designated employee) should oversee food redistribution. This will avoid mismanagement of food surplus and minimise losses.

3.2 Select a reliable partner for redistribution

It does not matter whether you are a manufacturing centre, a distribution hub, a café or a restaurant, there are options available that will allow you to redistribute your surplus food. Surplus food can be redistributed to the local community, local businesses or to organisations and social enterprises that, in turn, provide food to people who can make the best use of it. Once you have identified your food surplus, you should select a reliable partner for your donations.

There are several options for redistribution partners. Apps for mobile devices and tablets (e.g. OLIO) allow you to share information about your surplus food. Once uploaded, everyone in the vicinity of your business will get a notification about the surplus food. Online

portals (e.g. Plan Zheroes and Neighbourly) allow you to upload information about your surplus food. Then, nearby charities and community projects will receive a notification of the available goods and can respond to your listing. You can also partner directly with food charities (e.g. FareShare and The Trussel Trust) and community organisations in your neighbourhood.

The redistribution can be done on an ad-hoc basis (i.e. whenever food surplus is available) or as part of a more structured partnership between yourself and the food redistribution partner. Such a partnership will help clarify expectations for both organisations and ease the process of redistribution wherever surplus food arises.

When considering potential partners, you will need to assess if they have the capacity to handle and redistribute your surplus food. The table below includes some of the key considerations that should be discussed with your potential partner.

	Questions to ask	Information you will need to provide
General information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the contact details? • What is your scale of operation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact information of the staff responsible for food redistribution. • Summary of company activities and opening hours.
Surplus food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What quantity and types of food are you able to handle, store and redistribute? • Do you have the ability and response time to deal with products with a shorter shelf life? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the types of food you will be donating? • How frequently will you be donating?
Storage, transportation and pick up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How and when will the transfer happen? • Does the partner organisation have its own vehicle? • Will a personal vehicle be used for the transfer or will it be picked up by another method? • What size load can be handled? • Will the vehicle used for the transfer be equipped with a refrigerated storage space or isothermal boxes? • If the food is to be delivered by your own means, where is it to be delivered? • How and when will the collection of food happen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long are you able to store surplus food before a collection? • Do you have the necessary infrastructure (e.g. storage space and blast chiller) to store food waiting for collection? • Is there any important information for collections (e.g. parking restrictions)?
Other information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you carry out food safety and hygiene training for your staff? • Do you have capacity to take care of the hygiene and safety aspects? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you keep track of your donations? • What records do you want to keep?

How do I redistribute my surplus food?



3.3 Set up a formal agreement with your partner organisation

You should set up a formal agreement with your partner organisation (even for ad-hoc or irregular donations). The agreement should describe your tasks and responsibilities (e.g. preparation and storage), and the tasks and responsibilities of the partner organisation (conditions for storage and transport). For more information on developing a formal agreement, please refer to the Framework for Effective Redistribution Partnerships guide on the Zero Waste Scotland website.

3.4 Storing the food to be redistributed

You should package your donation in sealed, food-safe bags or containers. The surplus food should be clearly marked ready for collection. All donated surplus food must be labelled with your organisation's name, a description of the item, the best-before or use-by date and potential allergens.

The surplus food must be kept separate from any food waste. The practicalities of this will differ for each food company depending on available space. For example, some organisations keep a small separate area within the kitchen, warehouse or fridge. Chilled

or frozen food will need to be stored in a fridge or freezer, as appropriate.

Ensure your staff are properly trained to identify, label and store food for redistribution.

TOP TIPS

- **Liability is a crucial aspect. The agreement should make clear that once you have transferred the food to your partner organisation, it takes over the liability in terms of health and safety.**
- **Arrange a trial before agreeing the final process.**
- **Prepare operating procedures for your staff covering what can be redistributed; what the hygiene, food safety and storage requirements are; and what the collection requirements are.**



How do I redistribute my surplus food?

3.5 Keep a record of the redistributed food

You should prepare and complete a template to record information relating to each surplus food consignment being donated. This is essential to ensure the full traceability of food products and will allow you to track your food waste. The partner organisation should also receive all the necessary information on the food given to fulfil its own legal

obligations (e.g. traceability requirements and information on allergens).

You should track and monitor the volumes of food set aside for redistribution. This will help to understand any trends and patterns of food surplus in your organisation and highlight the potential for food waste prevention.

3.6 Engage with your customers and staff

You should communicate the positive benefits of your organisation's redistribution activities with your own staff, your customers and your suppliers. You should work with your partner to agree on a format for feedback outlining where and how the food has been used and what has been the benefit.

Readiness to Receive Declaration: For Food Surplus Recipients

Readiness to Receive Declaration

Part A: Contact details

Name of organisation receiving surplus:

Charity Registration Number (or evidence of not-for-profit status)/ Company Number / VAT Number:

Key contact and contact details:

Address of organisation:

Number and locations of receiving depots/storage sites nationally:

Number of charity partners supplied with food surplus:

Part B: Nature of surplus able to receive

Statement of ability to handle, store and redistribute different food types:

Responsiveness to shorter shelf-life product:

Minimum lead time requirements after notification of surplus:

Scale of operation:

Ability to handle 'non customer-ready' product (including open-dated):

Number of meals served per annum:

Part C: Fulfilling requirements

Details of in-house food safety and hygiene training and levels achieved:

Details of internal audit process:

Details of ability to provide traceability evidence:

Details of required spot checks or auditing of supplier:

Part D: Logistics

Framework for Effective Redistribution Partnerships

Readiness to Supply Declaration: For Food Surplus Providers

Readiness to Supply Declaration

Part A: Contact details

Name of organisation supplying surplus:

Company Number / VAT Number:

Key contact name and contact details:

Addresses of sites with surplus to supply:

Part B: Statement of redistribution policies and preferences

Outline description of preferences for redistribution route:

Part C: Nature of surplus

Food types likely to occur as surplus:	Condition and shelf life, including nature of any damage:	Food temperature, handling and storage requirements:	Likely quantities and frequency (kg/boxes):	Other information including seasonal considerations and special requirements:

Part D: Logistics

Ability to transport surplus and details of arrangement:

Suitable collection/delivery day and time:

Conditional special transportation requirements:

Part E: Review, monitor and measure

Communication plan:

Framework for Effective Redistribution Partnerships

Redistribution Partnership Arrangement

Redistribution Partnership Arrangement

Part A: Contact details

Names of organisation supplying surplus: *Yellow cells: information to be extracted from the readiness to supply document*

Key contact and contact details:

Addresses of sites with surplus to supply:

Names of organisation receiving surplus: *Purple cells: information to be extracted from the readiness to receive document*

Key contact and contact details:

Address of depots/sites where food surplus is to be received:

Part B: Statement of purpose of the Partnership Arrangement: period in force and possible review period

Statement of purpose of the partnership Arrangement:

Length of Arrangement:

Review frequency:

Mechanisms to review, monitor and measure throughout arrangement:

Ability to measure/quantify donated food received:

Part C: Nature of surplus (add rows if necessary)

Food types likely to occur as surplus:	Condition and shelf life, including remaining shelf-life:	Food handling and storage requirements:	Likely quantities and frequency:	Other information including seasonal considerations:	Stated ability to handle food surpluses being made available:

Framework for Effective Redistribution Partnerships

TOP TIPS

- Agree the template document (download links can be found on the right side of webpage) that will be completed for each redistribution.
- The template should detail what is redistributed (e.g. type of food, quantities, best-before or use-by date (when applicable) and potential allergens).
- It should mention that the partner takes over the liability when receiving the donation.
- Keep a signed copy for you and your partner.




One-to-one advice and support

It can take time and experience to implement the type of project outlined in this guide. That is why Zero Waste Scotland provides free, ongoing, one-to-one support to every organisation in Scotland.

Zero Waste Scotland's team of experienced advisors has helped hundreds of organisations across Scotland save money on food waste. They can provide you with specialist advice; access to funding and suppliers; and in-person, on-site support to help you save money on energy, water and raw materials.

If you would like to contact the team or apply for a free food and drink opportunity assessment, get in touch at **food.drink@zerowastescotland.org.uk**



Zero Waste Scotland offers all businesses help not only to prevent food waste but to save money, tackle climate change and to show customers that you care.

We're here to help.

Call us on 01786 433 930

Email food.drink@zerowastescotland.org.uk

Visit www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/FoodDrink



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