



INFINITUM

ANNUAL REPORT
2024



Infinitem owns and manages the Norwegian deposit return scheme (DRS). Our aim is for all DRS-labelled bottles and cans to be returned and recycled into new, high-quality products.

In 2024, Infinitem achieved a deposit return rate of 93 per cent and a total collection rate of 98 per cent. All returns are recycled, and Norway is a role model for other countries.

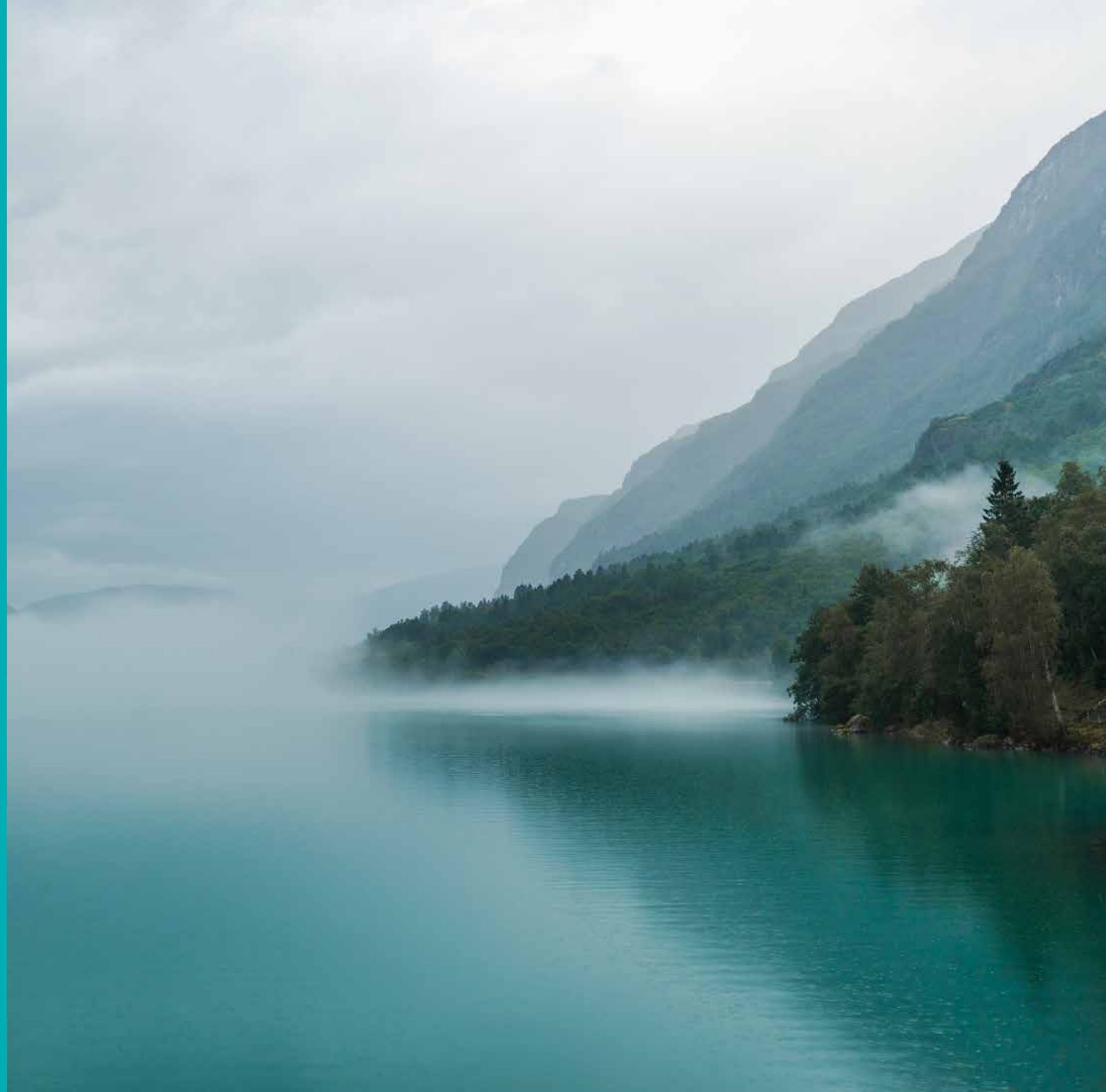
Choosing products with the DRS label and returning all drinks containers is one of the easiest and most important things we can all do for the environment.

Return everything.

INFINITUM

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Demolish the pyramid!

In our anniversary year of 2024, it became abundantly clear that the fabled waste pyramid needs to be demolished and rebuilt. In Norway's deposit return scheme, recycling with material reuse is far more sustainable than traditional reuse.

Everyone in the waste management business is more than familiar with the pyramid that ranks what's best for the environment: waste reduction, followed by reuse, materials recycling, energy recovery, and finally, landfill. This framework continues to guide our industry.

However, this hierarchy was developed in the 1970s and has not kept pace with technological progress – especially when it comes to efficient deposit return schemes.

When it comes to packaging for beer, soft drinks and water, Norway has transitioned from exclusively using refillable bottles up until 1999, to today's system of recycling cans and bottles. Yet in 2024 – which marks the 25th anniversary for both recyclable packaging and Infinitem – we still found ourselves needing to defend this model.

The EU has adopted the PPWR Directive, which makes reuse a mandatory part of packaging policy. Unfortunately, the directive does not take account of the technological advances that have transformed modern recycling systems. That is why here at Infinitem, we commissioned the researchers at Norsus (the Norwegian Institute for Sustainability Research) to carry out a comprehensive comparison of the environmental impact of reuse versus recycling.

After more than a year of dedicated work, their conclusion was clear: our system – based on recycling cans and bottles – outperforms a comparable system based on refillable bottles. Recycling requires far less transport, leaves a smaller climate footprint, consumes less energy and causes significantly less pollution than a reuse system involving refillable bottles.

The reason is simple: technology has come a long way. Today's recycling processes are highly advanced, and the logistics chain is much more efficient. Empty packaging is compacted at the point

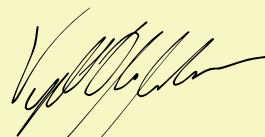
of return, minimising the volume during transport for recycling. On the way back to the breweries, lightweight cans and inflatable bottle preforms take up only a fraction of the space that refillable bottles would require.

Refillable bottles take up seven times more space than compacted cans and bottles. They also need to travel much further for sorting and redistribution, and require significantly more energy for washing, storage and handling.

The Norsus study was based on real-world data from Infinitem's deposit return scheme, along with statistical analyses that reflect how often refillable bottles are actually reused in practice. The results were unequivocal: recycling is the best solution.

In 2024, Infinitem achieved a 93 per cent deposit return rate and a total collection rate of more than 98 per cent. Even more importantly, plastic bottles contained an average of 71 per cent recycled material, which equates to an energy saving of 350 million kilowatt-hours.

These findings reinforce a key principle: smart environmental decisions must be based on up-to-date scientific analysis, not old and crumbling pyramids. The waste hierarchy may have served its purpose in the 1970s, but it cannot be the sole basis used to make decisions today. We hope and trust the EU will take this into account.



Kjell Olav Maldum
Managing Director, Infinitem





EVENTFUL YEAR: Randi Haavik Varberg is delighted with the activities and events organised in 2024.

25 years of success

2024 was an eventful year for Infinitem, marked by celebrations, new initiatives and growing public enthusiasm for recycling. More bottles and cans than ever before were given a new lease of life, thanks to a continually evolving and increasingly sustainable scheme.

Infinitem turned 25 in May, and what better way to celebrate than aboard the iconic sailing ship *Christian Radich*? The grand anniversary celebration brought together partners, environmental advocates and deposit return enthusiasts for an evening filled with inspiration and a shared commitment to a circular future.

“Excitement was through the roof – or rather, up the mast – as we looked back on how Norway’s deposit return scheme has evolved into the best in the world,” recalls Randi Haavik Varberg. She adds that it was especially rewarding to reconnect with familiar faces who have contributed to that success.

Inspiring and informative

“Countries around the world want to learn how we do things here in Norway,” says Varberg. “With help from Pulse Communications, we created the ‘Little Norway’ campaign. In 2024, we launched a follow-up initiative to share the blueprint behind the world’s best deposit return scheme – inspiring others to replicate its success.”

Once again, the Roaring Panther took to the road, touring Eastern Norway and delighting children, who roared with excitement while learning about recycling.

“Recycling saves vast amounts of energy – and to illustrate this, we invited children and adults to step inside the Roaring Panther and generate the same amount of energy themselves. It’s an extremely effective way to make people



AIMING FOR ZERO STRAY CANS: The “Deposit for the Animals” campaign aims to help prevent cans from ending up in the wrong places.

feel just how much effort it takes to match the energy saved by recycling,” Varberg explains.

“It’s deeply rewarding to see children take the message to heart and embrace recycling as a natural part of everyday life.”

Putting animal welfare on the agenda

Energy savings are just one of the sustainability areas Infinitem aims to highlight. The successful awareness campaign “Deposit for the Animals” (*Pant for dyra*), which highlights the risk of stray aluminium cans being shredded and ending up in animal feed, returned to Norwegian cinemas this year.

“We often hear that many people are unaware of this issue, so we’re glad to help raise awareness. Our goal is to ensure that no cans go astray – so livestock can graze in safe, clean surroundings,” says Varberg.

Skiers join the cause

At High Camp Vatnahalsen and Turtagrø, skiing enthusiasts have embraced the climate cause through the “Deposit for Powder” (*Pant for pudder*) initiative. With a shared dream of preserving winter for future generations, recycling-minded skiers made every bottle count, inspired by renowned skier Nikolai Schirmer.

A recycling champion

“I’m proud that we still have Karsten Warholm as a deposit return ambassador,” says Varberg. “Once again, he proved he’s not only fast on the track, but just as quick when it comes to recycling. In this year’s campaign videos, Warholm challenges Norwegians to match his speed in returning bottles and cans, turning everyday recycling into a race worth winning.”

“This anniversary year has given us the opportunity to reflect on our successes so far – and renewed our motivation to keep pushing toward the goal of getting everyone to return everything,” she concludes.



AMBASSADOR: Karsten Warholm challenges everyone to return everything.



We've done everything we can to lay the groundwork for a solid solution. Now we hope that the authorities realise the value of preserving a scheme that works.

Erlend Fuglum

The industry unites to defend the deposit return scheme

The EU's new packaging regulation could threaten the Norwegian deposit return scheme. "The industry is fighting to preserve it. Together, we can have a greater impact," says Erlend Fuglum, Director of the Norwegian Brewery and Beverage Association (BROD).

The new EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) sets out requirements for a portion of drinks packaging to be reusable, something Norway moved away from entirely in the 2010s, when the industry shifted fully to a recycling-based model.

"There's a lot of merit in the regulation when it comes to addressing littering issues across Europe," explains Fuglum. "But for Norway, reverting to washable bottles makes little sense. It's a more resource-intensive system that would negatively impact both the climate and the environment."

A shared starting point

After tackling the issue on their own, Norwegian drinks industry players came

to a key realisation.

"We all saw the situation the same way. We shared the same analysis, the same concerns and the same drive. So it only made sense to join forces rather than go it alone," says Fuglum.

This marked the beginning of a unique collaborative project led by Infinitum, with broad participation from all major grocery chains and drinks producers, including organisations such as the Norwegian Food and Beverage Industry Association (DMF), the Federation of Norwegian Enterprise (Virke) and FoodDrinkNorway. While not every party has taken an active role in the project, everyone has supported the partnership and contributed to the shared goal of securing the future of the

deposit return scheme.

New method yields results

The project group has maintained close dialogue with the Norwegian Environment Agency, the Ministry of Climate and Environment and the Standing Committee on Energy and the Environment in Parliament.

"The authorities have really welcomed our joint input. This simplifies their work and gives our voice more weight in the process," says Fuglum.

The core focus has been on showing how the PPWR could realistically be implemented in Norway, and highlighting the potential consequences of various implementation models. The goal is to find a solution that allows the regulation



LOOKING TO INFLUENCE THE EU: Erlend Fuglum is the Chair of the Norwegian Brewery and Beverage Association (BROD).

to be introduced without undermining Norway's deposit return scheme.

Changes in Brussels bring new hope

When work began last summer, most people felt that the outcome had already been decided – and not in our favour. Nevertheless, the industry chose to examine the legal room to manoeuvre ahead of the court rulings that are expected to flesh out the regulation.

"We knew the road ahead would be long, but we hoped to influence how the regulation would ultimately be implemented," says Fuglum.

Over the past year, EU policy has shifted significantly. Following the election last summer, the focus has moved

toward simplification and avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy.

"This gives us a fresh chance to argue that there's no reason to fix something that isn't broken," says Fuglum.

"Our efforts are fully aligned with the new political direction in Brussels."

The industry has also strengthened international coordination by establishing a new European deposit return organisation, while forging partnerships across the Nordic region and with various trade associations.

Support from the Storting

In the autumn, the Norwegian Parliament (Storting) unanimously adopted a resolution underscoring the importance of protecting the deposit return scheme.

"There's clearly broad political backing for the scheme, and it's crucial that it continues to rise above party lines," says Fuglum.

The next step will be to await the Norwegian Environment Agency's solution proposal, which is expected during the spring of 2025. After that, the government will decide how to proceed.

"We've done everything we can to lay the groundwork for a solid solution. Now we hope that the authorities realise the value of preserving a scheme that works," Fuglum concludes.



COMPARISON: Nora Røhnebak Aasen and Solveig Engebretsen at the Norwegian Computing Center have looked at the differences between reuse and recycling.

Counting on plastic

Many people think that reuse is always the best solution for the environment, but a new report shows that recycling actually uses and consumes significantly less plastic.

“Plastic consumption is a hot topic, especially when it comes to the EU’s new regulation on packaging and packaging waste (PPWR),” says Infinitum’s Kjell Olav Maldum.

“That’s why we wanted to explore the potential consequences of any reuse system on plastic volumes in circulation, and so we contacted the Norwegian Computing Center,” he explains.

The Center carried out an analysis comparing the amount of plastic used and tied up in the current recycling-based system with a potential reuse model – one where single-use bottles are replaced by refillable containers that are washed and used again.

“The main findings are clear,” says Nora Røhnebak Aasen from the Norwegian Computing Center, who co-authored the report alongside Solveig Engebretsen and Anders Løland. “In a Norwegian reuse system, plastic consumption would be 38 per cent higher than in the current recycling system, and the amount of plastic tied up in the system would be nearly five times greater.”

Cutlery analogy

In the current recycling system, plastic bottles are compressed, transported for recycling and transformed into new raw material used to make new bottles. By contrast, bottles in a reuse system aren’t crushed – they’re manually sorted and

returned to the producers in plastic crates. They’re made thicker to endure repeated washing and refilling, and the crates help protect them from damage during transport.

“To get a clearer picture of what bundled plastic means in a reuse system, think of it like the cutlery drawer in a big household,” explains Røhnebak Aasen.

“You need one set of cutlery for each household member, but since it’s not washed immediately after use, you actually need more cutlery in practice. That’s the logistical imbalance. Then you might have guests, which means you’ll need even more cutlery on hand. Then let’s say this household throws a large party in the middle of summer – suddenly they need enough cutlery for all the guests. Altogether, the household has a large amount of cutlery tied up – some is in use, while the rest sits in a drawer for most of the year,” she explains.

Surprising findings

Although the two systems differ noticeably in overall plastic use, the experts found that the differences were smaller than expected when the bottles were assessed on their own.

“We were surprised by how little difference there actually was when looked at the bottles in isolation,” says Røhnebak Aasen.

“The amount of recycled material in

single-use bottles plays a big role. On top of that, having a high deposit return rate is key for both systems in Norway – but it’s especially critical in a reuse model. Without it, the bottles won’t be used to their full potential,” she adds.

To provide as complete a picture as possible, the Norwegian Computing Center has used open calculations with adjustable parameters. This means the analysis can easily be updated as new assumptions or data become available.

Calculations open to everyone

“We’ve been very transparent in this report. All assumptions are listed so readers can see how we reached our conclusions. A lot of people might skip this section, but for us, it’s the most important part – it’s where the real thinking takes place,” says Engebretsen.

The report from the Norwegian Computing Center provides a solid scientific foundation for further discussions on the best way to reduce plastic consumption and environmental impacts in packaging systems. For Infinitum, the analysis offers valuable insight into how the current recycling system minimises plastic consumption – ensuring the most efficient use of resources.



RESEARCH COLLABORATION: Ole Faye from Infinitum, Torben Bech from Veolia and Naveen Singh from Norner are some of the experts working to identify the optimal ratio of recycled to virgin plastic in drinks bottles.

New research to further develop the deposit return scheme

What is the optimal share of recycled plastic that can be used in bottles? That is the question researchers are now looking into. “We know that bottles cannot always be made from 100 per cent recycled plastic, but we want to determine how high we can aim while still using materials as efficiently as possible,” says Kjell Olav Maldum.

The research is being financed by the Norwegian Retailers’ Environment Fund and conducted by three key partners: Infinitum, who operate the deposit return scheme; Veolia, who are responsible for plastic recycling; and the plastics research institute Norner.

Recycling alone is not enough

Demand for products made entirely from recycled plastic is growing. However, according to researchers at Norner, this is not a long-term solution.

“No matter how efficient the recycling process is, some material loss is inevitable,” says Thor Kamfjord, Director of

Sustainability and Corporate Responsibility at Norner. “And after multiple rounds of recycling, the plastic’s properties begin to degrade. To maintain consistently high quality, we need to add a certain amount of virgin plastic to the mix.”

Determining how much recycled plastic can be used – without compromising on quality – is a key focus of the ongoing research. Norway is already well ahead of the EU’s recycling target, which requires all plastic bottles to contain at least 30 per cent recycled plastic (rPET) by 2030. In 2023, Norway achieved an average rate of 55 per cent, and the figure for 2024 is an impressive 71 per cent rPET content.



If we succeed in increasing the share of rPET from 80 to 90 per cent, we can reduce carbon emissions by 35 per cent and double the number of bottles produced from the same volume of plastic.

Kjell Olav Maldum

Major transfer value

“We are searching for the optimal balance between recycled and virgin plastic in bottles,” says Thor Kamfjord. “The goal is to push the limits while preserving quality, so that bottles can be recycled as many times as possible.”

The Norwegian Retailers’ Environment Fund, who are financing the research, believe the findings could be of significant value to other countries in Europe and beyond.

“The deposit return scheme is perhaps the best example of closed-loop plastic recycling we have in Norway,” says Lars Brede Johansen, Head of Plastics and Environment at the Norwegian Retailers’ Environment Fund. “It gives us a unique opportunity to study how we can maintain the quality of plastic while increasing the share of recycled content. While the system is uniquely Norwegian, with exceptionally high collection rates, we believe the project will yield valuable insights for anyone involved in plastic recycling.”

High expectations for long-term impact

Maldum is eagerly awaiting the results of the research, which are expected to be ready in a couple of years.

“We are constantly looking for ways to optimise every part of the circular value chain,” he says. “Today, we collect enough material to produce bottles with approximately 85 per cent rPET, based on the total returns through the deposit system and the efficiency of the recycling process. To maintain consistently high quality, the ideal blend in each bottle is currently a maximum of 80 per cent rPET. We aim to use this project to determine whether we can continue using 80 per cent recycled content annually, while also exploring improvements in how we sort, recycle and manufacture bottles. The ultimate goal is to increase the share of recycled plastic even further. If we succeed in moving from 80 to 90 per cent rPET, we can reduce carbon emissions by 35 per cent and double the number of bottles produced from the same volume of plastic,” says Maldum.



PROJECT MEETING: Talks between the project participants have already started. “We are constantly looking for ways to optimise every part of the circular value chain,” says Kjell Olav Maldum.



EXPERT GROUP: The research is being funded by the Norwegian Retailers’ Environmental Fund and carried out by a number of experts from Infinitum, Veolia and the plastics research institute Norner.



Taking to the sea to celebrate 25 years of the deposit return scheme

In June, Infinitem welcomed 150 guests aboard the Christian Radich to mark the company's first 25 years of operation. The world's best deposit return scheme was celebrated by the world's best partners, friends and colleagues.

Convivial conversations, delicious food and refreshing drinks were complemented by engaging speeches and lively entertainment as the ship carried guests on a scenic cruise round the Oslofjord.

"I want to thank all of you who have served – and still serve – as part of the crew on this 25-year-long voyage," said Kjell Olav Maldum.

He gave special thanks to Jarle Grytli, the first manager of the deposit return scheme, and Tor Guttulrud, who has served as Director of IT and Finance from the outset.

Two others who received special recognition were former Minister of the Environment Thorbjørn Berntsen and former Environmental Economist at the Norwegian Environment Agency Espen Langtvet. Although Berntsen was unfortunately unable to attend, Langtvet was present to accept a special diploma honouring them both for their pivotal role in introducing the smart and decisive environmental tax that laid the foundation for Norway's modern deposit return scheme. Notably, Berntsen fully trusted the business sector to develop the deposit return scheme, rather than insisting on a theoretical, top-down solution imposed by politicians.

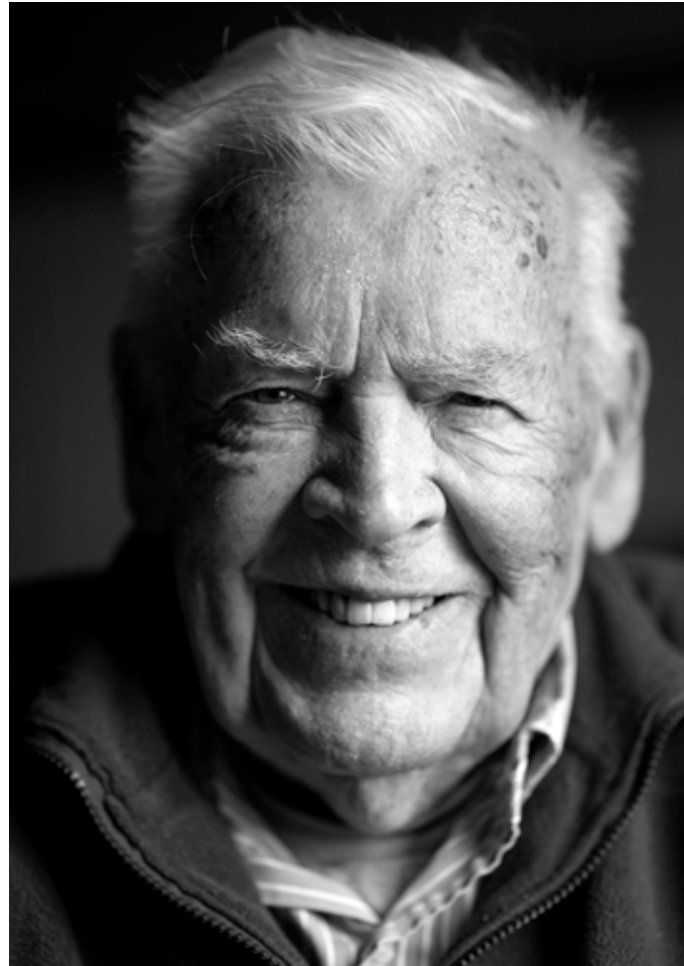
During the evening, comedian Jon Niklas Rønning made several appearances, delivering sharp and amusing musical performances – including a custom-written Infinitem song.

"In 1977, I set sail with this magnificent vessel for six unforgettable months at sea. Back then, I had no idea I would one day return as captain – not as the captain of the *Christian Radich*, but as the captain of the team behind the world's best deposit return scheme. Today, we celebrate what we've achieved together," proclaimed Kjell Olav Maldum.









Thorbjørn Berntsen – the man behind the high-tech system

The man behind the environmental tax, which was crucial to the establishment of the modern deposit return scheme, was honoured with a symbolic “certificate of paternity” for his role in shaping the scheme.

While many countries once relied on deposit return schemes based on refillable bottles that were cleaned and reused, the 1990s saw a shift towards recyclable single-use bottles and cans. As single-use packaging became more widespread, deposit return schemes were increasingly seen as redundant and were phased out in many places. Norway was the exception.

“We’re bright people up here amidst the mountains and the fjords,” says Thorbjørn Berntsen, former Minister of the Environment.

Berntsen and the Norwegian Environment Agency were the driving forces behind the introduction of an environmental tax on single-use packaging in the 1990s. This laid the foundation for the world’s most resource-efficient deposit return scheme.

The tax that changed everything

“When the shift to single-use packaging took place, there were no systems in place to collect it,” explains Kjell Olav Maldum, Managing Director of Infinitum. “That resulted in significant littering issues.”

In Norway, however, the environmental tax provided an incentive for businesses to develop an entirely new system for collection and recycling.

“The tax made producers accountable for the packaging they

introduced on to the market. The tax is reduced if producers can document that the packaging is retrieved and recycled. In addition, the accompanying regulation clearly states that anyone selling drinks is also obliged to accept returned packaging. This gives businesses the freedom to act – along with the responsibility to come up with effective solutions,” says Maldum.

Today, Infinitum hosts delegations from across the globe, who are eager to learn how Norway successfully tackled the challenge of recycling drinks containers.

“We couldn’t have achieved this without Thorbjørn Berntsen. It was the introduction of the tax that laid the foundation for the deposit return scheme as we know it today,” says Maldum.

Berntsen was clearly impressed during his visit to Infinitum’s facility at Heia in Fetsund, where he was honoured for his contributions.

“It’s a very high-tech system now. I can’t think of a better way to deal with the environmental issue than this. It’s recycling, it’s a circular economy,” says Berntsen.

Initial resistance

The introduction of single-use packaging and the environmental tax was initially met with resistance – from environmental organisations, politicians and businesses alike.



CONVIVIAL MEETING: Last autumn, Kjell Olav Maldum, Tor Guttusrød, Espen Langfeldt and Thorbjørn Berntsen met for a formal lunch, where Berntsen was presented with his “proof of paternity” for the Norwegian deposit return scheme.

“The reuse scheme was extremely labour-intensive. It involved extensive transport for both pick-up and delivery, along with sorting and washing. The scheme employed many people. Developing a new scheme for single-use packaging was far more efficient. Many felt that their livelihoods and jobs were under threat,” says Espen Langtvet, former Environmental Economist at the Norwegian Environment Agency.

Langtvet worked closely with Thorbjørn Berntsen during the introduction of the environmental tax and clearly recalls the early resistance.

“Thorbjørn gathered all the key stakeholders at Gamle Logen and started the meeting by saying, ‘I’ve brought you all together at once, so none of you can come and lie to me one by one,’” Langtvet recalls, drawing laughter from the audience.

Creating a consensus

“Thorbjørn Berntsen succeeded in uniting businesses and the trade unions. He is the father of the environmental tax that led to the establishment of the deposit return scheme,” said Kjell Olav Maldum during the presentation. “To recognise his outstanding contribution as a politician, we are presenting him with a symbolic certificate of paternity.”



RETURNING EVERYTHING: Thorbjørn Berntsen is impressed by how far the deposit return scheme has come since its inception.



“We are constantly improving and digging deeper”

As part of its obligations under the Norwegian Transparency Act, Infinitem has reviewed its largest suppliers. Now, it's our customers' turn.

2024 was the second year Infinitem has reported in accordance with the Norwegian Transparency Act. During the year, the company conducted a comprehensive review of its largest suppliers and introduced formal whistleblowing procedures.

“Working with the Transparency Act is an ongoing process – one where we’re constantly improving and digging deeper,” says Plamena Nikolaeva, Sustainability Officer at Infinitem. “We prioritise areas with the highest risk, and last year we focused on assessing our largest and most frequently used suppliers.”

No violations of Infinitem’s ethical guidelines were identified among suppliers in 2024.

Production must move from China to Europe

In addition to assessing existing suppliers, Infinitem also conducted thorough evaluations of companies it considered entering into supplier agreements with.

Last year, the company signed an agreement with a new supplier of plastic bags who use a subcontractor in China. As part of the evaluation, Infinitem reviewed the new supplier’s certifications. The Chinese manufacturer was confirmed to hold certification under the Global Recycled Standard (GRS), which sets requirements for recycled content, environmental practices and social and ethical responsibility.

“We also stipulated that production must be relocated to a European subcontractor within two years,” explains Plamena Nikolaeva. “This is because European countries have more established frameworks in place for complying with the

requirements of the Transparency Act, which makes it easier to ensure compliance. The supplier was approved based on its GRS certification and acceptance of the relocation requirement.”

Whistleblowing channel introduced

In 2024, Infinitem implemented a whistleblowing channel that can be used by both internal and external parties. It can easily be accessed on the company’s website, and notifications can be made either anonymously or confidentially.

“The whistleblowing channel has been clearly communicated to all Infinitem employees. If someone, for example, observes a breach of our guidelines or feels they have been subjected to inappropriate treatment, they can report it, and the matter will be addressed. So far, no reports have been submitted,” says Plamena Nikolaeva.

Veolia and Novelis

In 2025, Infinitem will start mapping its customer base. Our largest customers are Veolia, who purchase bales of plastic bottles, and Novelis, who buy bales of aluminium cans.

“Our customers are mainly recyclers who process the materials we collect and sort. We’ve developed a targeted survey tailored to our customers. While, as a foreign company, Novelis is not subject to the Norwegian Transparency Act, we’ve found that many European companies are aware of the issues addressed by the Act and include them in their own codes of conduct,” Nikolaeva explains.



ROBOT AT WORK: After some initial teething problems, the robot has now mastered the bag-cutting process.



DELIGHTED: Torgeir Schawland is the Manager of Klæbu's new sorting facility.

New technology pilot in Trøndelag

“The first year of operations has been both rewarding and eventful,” says Torgeir Schawland, Manager of Infinitum’s new sorting facility.

Infinitum’s new facility, which is located in the Vassfjellet Industrial Park in Klæbu, receives approximately 220 million bottles and cans each year. A dedicated team of eight employees operates the 1,950-square-metre facility, preparing around 50 tonnes of aluminium and 60 tonnes of PET plastic for recycling each week.

Driven to excel

On 29 February, Mayor Kent Ranum had the honour of pressing the start button. He was keen to highlight the broader

significance of Norway’s deposit return scheme.

“I’m proud that we are leading the way in such a crucial field – working to save the planet and pass it on in a better condition than we found it. Hearing about the technology and the relentless drive to innovate and stay ahead truly warms a mayor’s heart,” said Ranum.

The new facility has now completed its first full year of operation.

“Everything’s gone very well, and we’ve achieved the production levels



WORK OF ART: The Mayor brought a specially selected gift – a homemade vase made from PET bottles.



EXPERT INSTRUCTION: Thor Kamfjord from Norner shared his expertise in plastics technology.

we expected. We’ve encountered a few challenges along the way, but we’ve tweaked a few things to improve operations. This includes replacing the ‘cutting table’ where the robot opens the bags, which now works much better than when we started,” says Schawland.

Robotic pilot project

The Klæbu facility has served as a pilot site for robotic automation designed to streamline operations. The robots, which were developed in collaboration with Nordic Recycling Systems and Skala Robotech, lift the bags of empty bottles and cans, drag them across a cutting table to open them and then shake out the contents using a robotic arm.

“When we first received the robot, the cutting table didn’t function as well as it could, and we noticed the robot struggled to empty the bags completely. But after some fine-tuning, it now performs exactly the way we want. So now we’ve installed the same robot at our new facility in Skurve in Rogaland,” he explains.

Effective communication

As a manager, Schawland prioritises building a positive working environment through open and honest communication.

“It’s important for me to spend time with my team and share as much information as I can. I believe that’s key to building trust, so people feel comfortable speaking up when something isn’t working. Making sure our employees thrive and work well together is key to running a successful operation,” he says.





GRAND OPENING: Mayor Frode Fjeldsbø (centre) attended the official opening of Infinitum's new facility in Rogaland. On the left is Department Manager Cathrine Sundt and on the right is Kjell Olav Maldum. Behind him is conference host Hans Morten Hansen.

Rogaland acquires the world's most advanced sorting facility

Infinitum's new sorting facility for cans and bottles in Skurve can process up to 35 tonnes of empty containers in a single day. "That translates into significantly less transport and a major reduction in carbon emissions," says Kjell Olav Maldum.

In 2023, we collected and recycled 954 million aluminium cans and 590 million plastic bottles in Norway. Of these, 142 million came from the Rogaland region and previously had to be transported to Eastern Norway for processing. That all changed in November 2024, when Infinitum opened its new facility in Skurve, where cans and bottles are now crushed with the force of 24 elephants.

"We've established the world's most advanced sorting facility for cans and bottles. This facility allows us to serve all of Norway far more efficiently. Collecting and sorting directly in Rogaland cuts down significantly on transport, which of course benefits

both the climate and our bottom line," says Kjell Olav Maldum, Managing Director of Infinitum.

All of Rogaland covered

Infinitum operates four sorting facilities across Norway, where bottles and cans are received, sorted and sent for recycling. The main facility is located in Heia in Lillestrøm Municipality. The other three facilities are situated in Bjerkvik in Nordland, Vassfjellet just outside Trondheim and Skurve in Rogaland. The company has invested approximately NOK 100 million in the new Skurve facility.

The Skurve team consists of seven employees, including Department Manager Cathrine Sundt, one production coordinator, four production workers and one mechanic.

"It's been incredibly rewarding to build this team from the ground up and ensure the facility runs at its best. While most of the staff were recruited locally, we've also brought in a couple of experienced hands from Infinitum's main site near Lillestrøm to share their experience," says Sundt.

The 1,600-square-metre facility receives DRS-labelled bottles and cans from a large region stretching from Haugesund in the

north, through Stavanger and down to Flekkefjord in the south. The facility has a processing capacity of five tonnes of empty containers per hour and 9,000 tonnes per year. This is equivalent to 800,000 units per day, or 200 million annually.

Reducing transport and emissions

Cans and bottles are crushed flat at the Skurve site using a powerful industrial press. Each aluminium bundle contains 23,000 cans, while each plastic bale holds 11,000 bottles.

"Norway has one of the highest return rates for drinks bottles and cans in the world. We collect large volumes, and by compressing the material to save space, we cut down on transport runs, which in turn significantly cuts carbon emissions," says Kjell Olav Maldum.

Once the bottles and cans have been collected and sorted at Skurve, they move on to the next stage in the recycling loop. The plastic is sent to Veolia PET Norge's recycling facility, located next to Infinitum's main facility in Lillestrøm Municipality. The aluminium from the cans is sent to Novelis in the UK, the global leader in can-to-can aluminium recycling.



Successful launch of recyclable festival cups

Bergenfest has used recyclable festival cups since the product was launched in 2021. In 2024, together with the Feelings Festival in Bergen, they collected 581 bags of used cups. In total, 6,391 kg of plastic was processed by Infinitem and recycled into new products.

“We want Bergenfest to be Norway’s greenest festival, and we are constantly looking for solutions that can make the event even more environmentally friendly,” says Frida Rød, Sustainability Officer at Bergen Live, which stages both festivals.

Part of the solution

Kaizers Orchestra and Gabrielle were among the headliners at last year’s Bergenfest, which sold 36,500 tickets over its four-day run – during which large volumes of drinks were served in specially designed, recyclable festival cups.

“We were the first to introduce this type of plastic cup back in 2021. Before that, we used traditional plastic glasses that ended up mixed in with general plastic waste. Now, we purchase recyclable cups, which we collect and return to Infinitem. That way, we can be confident the plastic is actually recycled into more plastic,” says Rød.

At the festival, guests pay a small environmental fee for their cup on top of the price of their drink. As long as they return the cup when ordering a new drink, they only pay the charge once. This approach ensures that nearly all cups are collected, rather than being left behind or thrown away.

“The system works very well and has become a well-established solution – both for those of us working behind the scenes and for the audience. So this is something we’ll definitely continue with,” says Rød.

Significant environmental benefits

The festival reinvests the income from the environmental fee in other sustainability initiatives, such as replacing diesel generators with mobile battery units to significantly reduce emissions. In addition, electric vehicles are used for various transport tasks, efficient sorting procedures help reduce residual waste and all merchandise is now made from reused textiles.

“The goal of our environmental initiatives is to minimise our impact on the environment and climate, and to protect our local natural and cultural heritage. Our recyclable festival cups play a really important role here,” explains Rød.

In total, 2,339 bags of festival cups were collected from 17 different festivals last year. As a result, Infinitem processed over 25,000 kg of plastic, making sure these resources were returned to circulation.

“The feedback from the festivals has been overwhelmingly positive, and more and more organisations are looking to join the scheme. Collecting and recycling these cups delivers significant environmental benefits. This method of serving drinks actually has the lowest environmental footprint of all. With a strong logistics network and efficient sorting facilities already in place, this fits perfectly into our established system for handling traditional bottles and cans,” says Kjell Olav Maldum.



ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES: In recent years, Bergenfest has invested in a range of environmental initiatives, including waste sorting and recycling efforts, such as collecting plastic cups, which are repurposed into new products.

Almost 1.5 million cans and bottles strengthen emergency response services in Hallingdal

“Deposits mean a great deal for our emergency response services,” explains Terje Hanserud, Deposit Coordinator at Nesbyen Red Cross Search and Rescue Team.

Nesbyen Red Cross Search and Rescue Team has placed containers for collecting returnable bottles and cans at nine strategic collection points. The containers are emptied weekly, and last year alone, the team collected 170,000 bottles and cans – making a significant contribution to local emergency response services.

“We’ve been collecting returnable bottles and cans for about 25 years. For a long time, the volume increased year by year, but now things appear to have stabilised,” says Terje Hanserud. “Any further growth will probably depend on the development of more holiday cabins in the area. The great thing is that everyone who donates their deposits helps strengthen a vital emergency service.”

The customised collection containers are placed near waste recycling stations serving cabin areas around Nesbyen. This means that most of the bottles and cans are returned by visitors, and it is noticeable that the volume spikes during autumn break, Christmas, winter break, Easter and summer.

“On average, we collect around 20 deposit bags a week, but during the holidays, that amount doubles. People’s

willingness to support us with their deposits is not something we take for granted – we’re truly grateful,” Hanserud adds.

Supporting emergency response services and school students

The large volume of returned bottles and cans also requires extensive sorting. For this, Nesbyen Red Cross Search and Rescue Team receives help from year nine students at the local lower secondary school. The students are raising money for a “White Buses” trip – an educational journey to former concentration camps in Europe, named after a World War II rescue mission that saved Scandinavian prisoners.

“NOK 35,000 goes to the students, who do such an outstanding job for us throughout the winter. The remaining deposits are used to purchase essential equipment for the rescue team and to provide training for our volunteers,” says Terje Hanserud.

The Nesbyen Red Cross Search and Rescue Team must be equipped to respond in both winter and summer. Winter attracts skiing enthusiasts, while



GRATEFUL FOR ALL THE SUPPORT: Nesbyen Red Cross has been collecting returnable bottles and cans for about 25 years. “This will greatly help the emergency response services,” says Terje Hanserud.

summer transforms the area into a hub for cycling and outdoor adventure – often requiring the team to help bring people safely back down from the mountains.

“We’re fortunate to have such beautiful natural surroundings in Nesbyen, and it’s great that people make the effort to return their bottles and cans to us. In doing so, they’re also helping to maintain our emergency response services,” says Hanserud.

A joint effort across the region

The Red Cross rescue teams in Gol and Hemsedal, Geilo, Hovet and Hol, Ål and Flå also collect large volumes of deposit return containers. Last year, between them they collected almost 1.5 million empty bottles and cans.

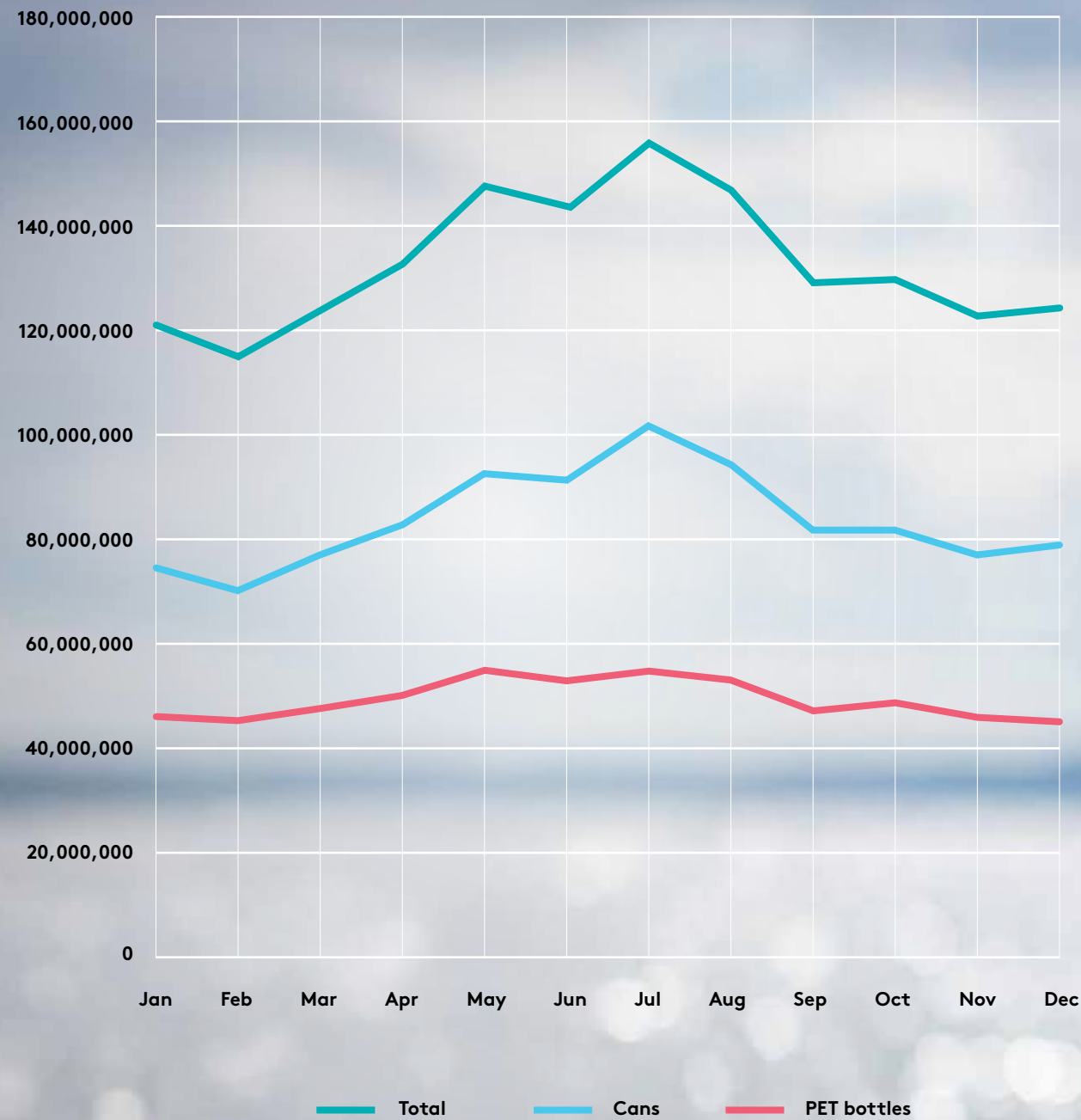
The many bags collected by Red Cross teams across Hallingdal are sent to Infinitum’s facility, where the containers are recycled into new bottles and cans. Infinitum greatly appreciates the support it receives in collecting returnable bottles and cans.

“We’re impressed by the volume of deposits collected by the Red Cross teams in Hallingdal and other parts of the country,” says Infinitum’s Randi Haavik Varberg. “It’s fantastic to have return collection points in cabin areas throughout our beautiful countryside. They make it easy for people to return bottles and cans – and help ensure that everything is properly recycled.”

Total number of bottles and cans returned to Infinitum in 2024:

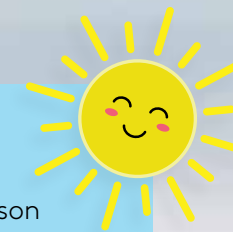
Gol and Hemsedal Red Cross Search and Rescue Team:	525,000
Geilo Red Cross:	477,000
Nesbyen Red Cross Search and Rescue Team:	170,000
Hovet and Hol Red Cross Search and Rescue Team:	104,000
Ål Red Cross Search and Rescue Team:	90,000
Flå Red Cross:	77,000
Total number of bottles and cans:	1,443,000

Bottles and cans returned during the year



Deposit returns for the Red Cross:

At Easter, there's nothing quite like enjoying a refreshing soft drink on a skiing trip – and many of us make a point of donating our empty bottles and cans to the Red Cross teams while we're up in the mountains.



Thirsty work:

Summer is high season for thirst-quenching drinks and deposit returns! In July, a total of 155,834,229 bottles and cans were returned for a deposit.



Christmas drinks:

Christmas soda, mulled wine and aquavit bottles can all be taken to the reverse vending machine too. An increasing number of Christmas drinks now come in bottles and cans that can be returned for a deposit!





During last year's Arendalsuka – Norway's week-long annual political festival and democracy forum held each August – deposit return barrels were placed throughout Arendal city centre. By the end of the week, the Arendal Red Cross Search and Rescue Team had collected over 20 bags, generating approximately NOK 12,000 in deposit return revenues.

"We've noticed that the weather makes a difference – the barrels filled up much faster on sunny days. We're delighted with the volume of bottles and cans collected," says Frans Thu, Deposit Coordinator for Arendal Red Cross Search and Rescue Team.

"A valuable service for visitors"

2024 was the second year the Red Cross, Infinitum and Arendalsuka have collaborated on collecting returnable bottles and cans in the city centre.

"We're very pleased with our partnership with Arendal Red Cross Research and Rescue Team and Infinitum. It's a valuable service for our visitors," says Brit Maria Marcussen, Project Coordinator for Arendalsuka.

Multiple call-outs this summer

The deposit return funds will be used to train volunteers in the Arendal Red Cross Search and Rescue Team and to purchase essential equipment.

Deposits from Arendalsuka strengthen emergency response services

At the annual Arendalsuka political festival, the Arendal Red Cross Search and Rescue Team operates 15 collection bins for bottles and cans. These provide vital extra financial support for local emergency response teams.

"We need to provide thorough training for new volunteers, while also offering continued learning opportunities for our more experienced team members. These funds are extremely helpful and directly support our emergency response services. Our volunteers are frequently called out to participate in search operations, and this summer was particularly busy. In addition, we provided cover on the water, at concerts and during various events – summer is a particularly busy period for us," explains Frans Thu.

More than 120,000 bottles and cans collected

Throughout the year, Arendal Red Cross Research and Rescue Team collects deposit return containers at several locations around Arendal, including in cabin areas and marinas. In 2023, they collected a total of 123,000 bottles and cans – over 40,000 more than the previous year.

"We regularly send large volumes of returnable bottles and cans to Infinitum, and the funds we receive in return are essential to our operations," says Thu. "In addition, the entire Arendal Red Cross organisation benefits from the Pantelotteriet (Deposit Lottery), which provides another important source of financial support."

"Our partnership with Arendal Red Cross Research and Rescue Team ensures that bottles and cans are recycled, while the deposit return funds go to a vital cause. We greatly appreciate Arendal Red Cross's sterling efforts during Arendalsuka," adds Infinitum's Randi Haavik Varberg.



CEREMONY: When the new footpath opened in November, representatives from the Fet Business Association, the municipality and several other contributors were on hand to mark the occasion.

Joint effort for popular footpath

"The footpath is a shining example of what a community can achieve when everyone works together toward a common goal," says Svein Skuseth of the Fet Business Association. In 2024, a new footpath was opened next to the Heia facility, offering safer and wider access to the surrounding forest near Fetsund.

The local footpath initiative is the result of a partnership between local businesses, the municipality and Infinitum.

Back in 2018, the local business association started the ball rolling, approaching landowners and the local authority with a proposal to build a footpath linking the new residential developments in Granåsen to the Heia Industrial Park. The route – originally an overgrown farm track – was envisioned as a community asset for residents in and around Fetsund.

Positive response

Both landowners and Fet Municipality welcomed the idea. Hiking associations, sports clubs and local businesses soon

joined the effort, with Infinitum providing financial support.

"For us, it's about giving something back to the local community, while improving the safety of everyone using the area," says Ståle Maldum, Manager of Infinitum's sorting facility at Heia.

The new path, which is just under one kilometre long, allows residents to walk from Fetsund to the industrial area without having to use the main road.

"From here, you can also connect with other walking trails and cross-country ski routes," adds Maldum.

Multiple opportunities

The new path has seen steady use

since the day it opened. Custom-made signs from local firm HeiaVita line the route, complemented by two info boards designed by Styrk, a non-profit organisation that focuses on enhancing local hiking and recreational areas by clearing and marking trails. Morten Likvern, Volunteer Coordinator at Styrk, is pleased that the path can now be enjoyed by casual walkers – not just seasoned hikers.

"We came up with the route and have worked to raise awareness about more hiking options. Now, people looking to undertake a longer walk, like the hike to Bjonnehi, can start right here," says Likvern.

Making a success of talking bins

Towards the end of the year, new green bins started appearing on the streets of Oslo. The bins feature an external rack for deposit bottles and cans, and also thank users in a variety of languages.



NEW SOLUTION: Pål Erik Gulbrandsen from the Agency for Urban Environment demonstrates how the municipality's new smart bins are making bottle returns easier than ever.



SMART: The newly introduced smart bins have foot pedals, making them hygienic to use. They are also equipped with a digital alert system that ensures bins are only emptied when they are full. This leads to fewer collection runs, contributing to further emissions reductions.



“Each time you open the hatch and drop in your bottles and cans, you’ll receive a friendly message in return. So far, we’ve programmed the machine to say thank you in nearly 30 different ways,” says Pål Erik Gulbrandsen, Operations Manager at the Agency for Urban Environment.

The fact that the bins talk is mostly a novelty – but the idea isn’t entirely new. Gulbrandsen explains that the inspiration came from neighbouring countries that use similar solutions. After years of testing, the City of Oslo selected Namdal Ressurs as its supplier. So far, 60 smart bins have been installed in the city centre, and more are on the way.

Smart bins, smart collection

The new bins are part of a more efficient collection system powered by electronic data. Each bin contains a 240-litre container, equipped with sensors and a built-in compactor that compresses the waste.

“We’re still in the early stages, but this marks the beginning of a completely new waste collection regime for us,” says Gulbrandsen.

Thanks to integrated sensor technology, the agency can now remotely monitor bin

capacity and only empty the bins when necessary.

“That means we no longer have to drive around the whole city each trip – we go where we need to,” Gulbrandsen explains. This results in fewer collection rounds, reduced traffic in the city centre and lower emissions.

Keeping vermin out

In addition to improving efficiency, the new waste bins also help keep the city cleaner. Because they are sealed, their contents are inaccessible to rats and birds, which would otherwise scatter the rubbish.

On the outside of each bin, there is a holder for returnable bottles and cans. The concept is simple: people who don’t want to return the containers themselves can leave them there for someone else to take to a reverse vending machine.

It’s a solution that Infinitum’s Marketing Director strongly supports.

“We’ve found that this works extremely well – for both people who want to drop off their bottles and cans on the go and those happy to return them for the deposit,” says Randi Haavik Varberg.

Minor change in thinking required

Pål Erik Gulbrandsen notes that while people used to have to rummage through entire bags of residual waste to find deposit return containers, now they can find them easily and hygienically.

“Keeping bottles and cans out of the residual waste stream and instead returning them through the deposit return scheme is a win-win for everyone,” says Varberg.

However, the new system does require some adjustment. To throw something away, users must either lift a handle or press a foot pedal – something that may take a little getting used to.

“So far, the response has exceeded all expectations,” says Gulbrandsen.

Deposit champions – for the second year in a row!

Top ten deposit return sites

	Total number PET and cans
1. OBS City Lade:	9,398,189
2. OBS Tromsø:	8,571,848
3. OBS Lillestrøm:	8,392,166
4. OBS Mariero:	8,256,827
5. OBS Haugesund:	8,178,969
6. OBS City Syd:	7,895,681
7. OBS Haugenstua:	6,782,547
8. MENY Saga:	5,621,995
9. OBS Bodø:	5,810,924
10. OBS Bryne:	5,597,467

Last year, City Lade in Trondheim collected a total of 9,398,189 cans and bottles through its reverse vending machines – a new record, and the highest number in Norway. “We’ve invested significant time and resources to achieve this,” says Store Manager Anders Næss.

Still, the Store Manager isn’t particularly surprised that City Lade receives more bottles and cans than any other store in Norway.

“We’re the largest OBS store in the country, located in one of Norway’s biggest shopping centres. On top of that, we have two large reverse vending machines that can handle multiple bags full of bottles and cans at once – so naturally, a lot of returns flow through our system,” he explains.

As convenient as possible

In the past year alone, OBS City Lade has seen a 9 per cent increase in the number of bottles and cans returned to the store. The busiest periods tend to be around Easter, in May and after Christmas.

“Our customers appreciate how easy it is to return their bottles and cans here. We have a dedicated deposit return station right next to the car park, where people can bring their bags of empty containers straight to the machines,” says Næss.

And yes – they often bring large bags.



BIGGEST COLLECTOR IN NORWAY: City Lade receives more returned bottles and cans than any other store in Norway. “Of course we want to be number one, so I’m absolutely delighted to have got there,” says Store Manager Anders, shown here in the front, together with (back row, left to right): Grete, Karoline, Terje, Jonas, Jørgen, Erik, (front row) Grete, Marianne and Kristin.

Store Manager Næss explains that bulk returns are common at Lade, particularly from workplaces, clubs and associations.

“These customers know about our efficient deposit return station. We’ve made it a priority to make the process as convenient as possible,” says Næss.

Filling up fast

In 2024, more than 1.5 billion cans and bottles were returned through Norway’s deposit return scheme. Every single item returned is recycled.

At OBS City Lade, the volume of returns has grown so much in recent years that, at one point, their containers were filling up long before they could be collected.

“And we’re talking about massive containers! Now they’re collected three times a week, and we’ve had to reschedule the final weekly collection to late Thursday evening. That way, we can be reasonably sure we’ll make it through the weekend,” Næss explains.

Look for the deposit return label

Infinitum greatly appreciates the efforts made by everyone who helps return all empty cans and bottles.

“We’re truly grateful for the work that stores and customers are doing to ensure all deposit containers are returned. Their efforts play a crucial role in maintaining the world’s best deposit return scheme,” says Randi Haavik Varberg.

“People also seem to have learned that they also can return ‘odd-shaped’ cans and bottles – like juice and mulled wine bottles, or some products sold by Vinmonopolet. Most people now look for the deposit return label, which helps ensure that we don’t waste either money or resources,” she says, before adding: “In Norway, we have legislation that guarantees consumers can return deposit containers at any location that sells drinks – whether petrol stations, cafés or supermarkets.”



// We've got our mega-machine – and most customers love using it. People drive quite a distance to return their bottles and cans here.

Retailer Glenn Berggren

Rema 1000 Lambertseter

Last year, more than 2.5 million bottles and cans were returned through the store's reverse vending machine. This is a new record, and the second-highest total in all of Oslo. The store saw returns rise by 13 per cent – from 2,217,916 bottles and cans in 2023 to 2,510,358 in 2024.

// It's really taken off – people are coming from far and wide with trailers full of empty bottles and cans at the weekends. We rely heavily on Noah and Oliver, who make sure the machines keep running and that the bottles and cans are transported out in containers.

Store Manager Rune Dissrud

Extra Kallerud

The store saw returns rise by 163 per cent – from 1,405,585 bottles and cans in 2023 to 3,699,569 in 2024. This is a result of the investment in an R1 machine, which was installed in autumn 2023.



// I believe that as the return process gets quicker, we'll become even better at returning everything. The bottles and cans go straight into large containers, so the machine doesn't need to stop because a bag is full. Customers don't have to battle with our reverse vending machine.

Retailer Petter Mortveit

Spar Frakkagjerd

The store received a total of 1,876,237 cans and bottles through its reverse vending machine – 15 per cent more than the previous year. That's the highest number in all of Tysvær municipality, and seventh-highest in Rogaland.



// – We are very happy to have such great customers and to be among the best in the DRS-system. It means that many people come here both to return their bottles and cans, and to shop. We do what we can to ensure a good customer experience.

Store Manager Tone Gustafsson

Kiwi Lundehagen

The store collected the most in all of Sandnes, receiving a total of 1,384,705 cans and bottles through its reverse vending machines. The store is experiencing strong growth and is located in an area undergoing major development. With a new residential area nearby set to be completed in 2026, the amount of returns is expected to increase significantly as early as next year.



// Handling such large volumes of deposit containers involves a fair amount of work, but it's worth it. We've seen a solid increase in turnover since investing in a new reverse vending machine, and the investment has already paid off. It's rewarding to see that our commitment is paying off, and it's important for the environment that as many bottles and cans are returned.

Store Manager Aud Kirsti Osborg

Eurospar Ørsta

More than 2.5 million bottles and cans were returned through the store's reverse vending machine. This is the highest number in Søre Sunnmøre and the third-highest in the whole of Møre og Romsdal.



// The reverse vending machines are working at full capacity almost all the time, and we do everything we can to keep them running. This involves both cleaning and maintenance. Over time, I hope to establish a 24-hour deposit return scheme with even greater capacity.

Store Manager Dag Arild Bakken

Meny Helgeroa

Last year, the store collected a total of 2.7 million cans and bottles through its reverse vending machine. This is a new record – the highest number in Larvik and the third-highest in the whole of Vestfold.

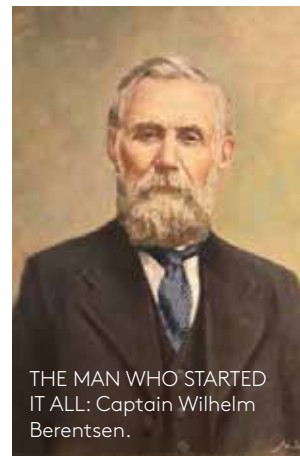




BREWING BERRIES: Jone Ellingsen is Deputy Managing Director at Berentsen Brygghus.

From raspberry soda to whisky

The family-owned Berentsens Brygghus is celebrating its 130th anniversary this year. “We are committed to preserving our history, but at the same time we must constantly modernise,” says Deputy Managing Director Jone Ellingsen.



THE MAN WHO STARTED IT ALL: Captain Wilhelm Berentsen.

Berentsens Brygghus was established in Egersund in 1895 by sailing ship captain Wilhelm Berentsens, originally as a soft drinks factory.

“Raspberry soda was our very first product, and today – 130 years later – we’re still producing it using the same recipe,” says Jone Ellingsen.

Since its founding, the company has expanded its portfolio to include a variety of soft drinks and mineral waters, grown into a brewery with full-scale beer production, and, in 2018, launched its own whisky distillery.

Fourth and fifth generation

Today, the company employs the equivalent of 30 full-time staff, including four members of the Berentsen family. Managing Director Harald Berentsen represents the fourth generation in

//

Raspberry soda was our very first product, and today – 130 years later – we’re still producing it using the same recipe.

Jone Ellingsen



the family business, while his children Fredrikke and Fred, from the fifth generation, are responsible for administration and beer brewing respectively.

“The family’s strong engagement and desire to maintain its role as a challenger in a major market truly stand out. Their enthusiasm is contagious and inspires the rest of us who work here – it’s a real strength,” says Jone Ellingsen, who has been with the company since 2007.

He describes the drinks industry as both incredibly exciting and demanding.

“Everyone seems to have an opinion about our products – whether it’s families holding Christmas soft drink tastings at home, or our Christmas beer topping the annual rankings in the Norwegian newspaper VG. We see strong engagement both locally and nationally, and it’s inspiring to be part of that,” says Ellingsen. “It motivates us to keep delivering great taste experiences. We take pride in using only the finest ingredients. Product development can be resource-intensive – but it’s also incredibly rewarding.”

Sparkling apple juice leads the way

With nearly 70 per cent of their products now part of the deposit return scheme, Berentsens Brygghus is steadily making more of its offerings available in cans. All the products are available in Rogaland and most of the range is available in several other regions.

“Our best-selling product is sparkling apple juice, which is

quite popular in Rogaland but less well known in other parts of the country. We offer a wide variety of apple juices, including variants flavoured with rhubarb and ginger, and naturally in returnable cans,” says Ellingsen.

The opening of Infinitum’s new sorting facility at Skurve in Rogaland in 2024 was warmly welcomed in Egersund, which is located about 40 km from the new plant.

“Rogaland is a major market for drinks. It’s great that cans and bottles no longer need to be transported long distances to reach a sorting facility. Infinitum are an important player in our industry who make it easier to adopt sustainable solutions,” Ellingsen notes.

Welcoming healthy competition

Berentsens Brygghus, which is now 130 years old, is the third-largest Norwegian-owned brewery and soft drinks producer after Aass and Mack. The company welcomes the emergence of new microbreweries.

“It’s been a tough time for many small breweries in recent years, and the market has consolidated somewhat. But we’re pleased to see many new players entering the industry. We fully support the establishment of new Norwegian breweries that contribute to diversity. Healthy and vibrant Norwegian competition benefits all parts of the value chain,” says Ellingsen.

Race for the environment

More people experienced the energy-saving impact first-hand as the Roaring Panther hit the road for its summer tour. “This is a fun way to learn about energy conservation,” says Atle Hovi, CEO of Beitostølen Resort.

The Roaring Panther (*Brølepanteren*) is a giant wheel you can run inside – much like a human-sized hamster wheel. As you run, your energy powers the wheel, which in turn is converted into the amount of energy saved through the mechanical recycling of a number of plastic bottles. The faster and longer you run, the higher the bottle count. It’s tough work, and that’s the point: it’s a practical demonstration of how important recycling is for saving both energy and the environment. The Roaring Panther was conceived by Infinitum, with the machine itself developed and built by Vitenparken Campus Ås. The Norwegian Olympic gold medallist Karsten Warholm is among those who have tested it.

To put things in perspective: recycling just one plastic bottle saves enough energy to fully charge a smartphone 70 times. The more energy you generate through running, the louder the machine roars – hence the name.

“The Roaring Panther has proved popular, especially among

children and young people. To make it accessible to more people – including those outside the Ås area – the machine goes on tour every summer. It’s a fun way to showcase the environmental benefits of recycling and inspire more people to contribute to our goal of 100 per cent return of bottles and cans,” says Infinitum’s Haavik Varberg.

2024 marked our second consecutive summer tour. Several of the locations where the Roaring Panther was a crowd favourite in 2023 were revisited this summer, including Beitostølen Summer Park.

“Since the Roaring Panther was such a popular attraction here last year, we were thrilled to have it back again. Both locals and tourists got to test their fitness – and found it both fun and challenging,” says Hovi.

The Roaring Panther also called in at Hunderfossen, Moysand Family Camping in Grimstad, Kragerø and Ål in Hallingdal.



SUMMER TOUR: Victoria Resar and Eli Lager took the Roaring Panther on tour across Norway, meeting people of all ages eager to give it a spin.





Canned beer is the fastest-growing product category in terms of unit sales. It's also the area where we are seeing the widest range of new products.

Svein Rune Haugsmoen

The way into the deposit return scheme

Nearly a thousand new products are registered in the deposit return scheme each year. More than 75 per cent of these are canned beers from small and medium-sized breweries.

Before a new product can be sold with a DRS label in Norway, it must be approved by Infinitum. The process is straightforward for cans, but a little more complex for bottles. It is not just a question of weight, height and width – components like the cap, label, adhesive, PET quality and rPET content must all meet specific requirements. There is also an upper limit on how much mechanically recycled material plastic bottles can contain.

Conditions to be met

“All of Infinitum’s criteria must be met. That goes without saying. For instance, only certain types of adhesive are approved,” says Svein Rune Haugsmoen, who oversees product approvals at Infinitum.

Each week, he reviews all newly submitted products. At peak periods, as many as 50 new bottles and cans may be going through the approval process.

If, for example, the wrong adhesive is used to attach the label, the product may receive temporary approval – but will be subject to an additional fee of NOK 0.10 per unit sold. According to Haugsmoen, this typically prompts producers to switch to compliant solutions.

“The system is based on self-reporting by producers, so it fundamentally relies on trust,” he says. “However, Infinitum



PROCESS: Each week, Haugsmoen tests around 50 new products. From the moment a new product is registered and submitted for testing, the process takes up to two weeks.



maintains an ongoing dialogue with all their recycling partners. If they, or we, identify anything indicating that the packaging does not meet requirements, it must be corrected immediately.”

“Ghost products”

In Norway, participation in the DRS label scheme is voluntary, but most producers recognise the value of signing up. Drinks producers that join the scheme are exempt from the environmental tax, thanks to a well-documented collection rate exceeding 95 per cent.

Before a DRS-labelled product can be sold in stores, it must be registered with Infinitum. There is no limit on how many products a producer can register, and according to Haugsmoen, the system contains lots of “ghost products” – items that are no longer on the market but still occasionally resurface from holiday homes, storage rooms or old stock. “We are even still receiving refillable bottles that were phased out back in 2012,” he adds.

In 2024, Infinitum registered a total of 954 new products – 746 cans and 208 PET bottles. “Canned beer is the fastest-growing product category in terms of unit sales. It’s also the area where we are seeing the widest range of new products,” says Haugsmoen.

Not all products make the cut

Before products can carry the DRS label in Norway, they undergo an approval process. Each producer submits a number of product samples to Infinitum, who then forward them to the reverse vending machine suppliers for testing. Here the bar code and packaging are checked to ensure the machines can scan and process the bottles and cans.

At Vinmonopolet, Norway’s state-owned alcohol retailer, things take a little longer, as new products are only introduced into the system once a month. For most stores, the process typically takes one to two weeks from registration to testing and final approval.

Not all products make the cut. While most are approved, some are rejected. “A number of importers have tried to register PET bottles for champagne. The issue is that pressurised champagne requires thicker plastic bottles, which the machines can’t compress. In those cases, we have to say no,” explains Haugsmoen.

Suppliers of reverse vending machines update their systems every week, so new products are added without delay. After approval, the product can launch with the DRS label, which is often a key to succeeding in the Norwegian market.

More environmentally friendly deposit bags on the way

Starting in spring 2025, all grocery stores will receive new deposit bags for their reverse vending machines. The new plastic bags are more environmentally friendly, smarter and more cost-effective.



Switching from rolls to boxes allows 75 per cent more bags to be loaded onto each pallet.

Kjell Olav Maldum

The deposit bags – also known as pallet bags – were introduced by Infinitum back in 2013. They replaced the large, unwieldy corrugated cardboard boxes that had previously been used, making the job significantly faster and easier for store employees. The new bags were also sturdier and fully sealed, minimising problems with moisture and odour while streamlining transport.

At the time, the bags represented a major improvement. They were lighter, more cost-effective, and five times more efficient to distribute to stores compared to the cardboard boxes.

“We’re constantly working to develop better solutions for our customers, the environment and for Infinitum. So now we’re delighted to be able to introduce yet another improvement – one that benefits all interested parties,” confirms Kjell Olav Maldum.

Thinner and just as strong

The new product has been developed in collaboration with Infinitum’s supplier, Smart Supply. The bags are now more environmentally friendly, more affordable and easier to handle.

“The new bags are thinner and therefore use less plastic, while remaining just as strong and easy to use. This delivers significant environmental benefits. Until now, purchasing these bags has been a major item in stores’ operating budgets. That’s why the lower price of the new bags is such a welcome development,” he says.

The bags come in two sizes – for full- and half-pallets. The choice of bag depends on the type of reverse vending machine the store uses. The bags now have a bar code, QR code and RFID

chip, to provide full traceability throughout the logistics chain.

One of the most noticeable changes for stores is that the bags are no longer delivered on rolls, but packed in boxes measuring 30 x 45 x 15 cm. Each box holds the same number of full-pallet bags as a roll did, and even more when it comes to half-pallet bags. As a result, the boxes take up significantly less space.

“The new boxes are compact and easy to store in back rooms. Previously, few stores had customised stands for the rolls, which meant they were often placed along walls or directly on the floor. The rolls also had a non-recyclable core that had to be disposed of as residual waste, and wooden rods were included to hold the rolls in place on the pallet – waste that served no real purpose. With the new solution, stores avoid unnecessary waste handling, making the system both simpler and more practical,” says Maldum.

200 tonnes less CO₂ each year

Switching from rolls to boxes allows 75 per cent more bags to be loaded onto each pallet. This increases efficiency and makes transportation more environmentally friendly. Even though the bags are shipped by sea all the way from China, the carbon footprint is lower compared to the previously used method – lorry transport from Denmark.

The new transport method alone cuts greenhouse gas emissions by more than 20 tonnes of CO₂ per year. Factoring in the reduced plastic consumption – thanks to the thinner bags – the total annual reduction in emissions amounts to approximately 200 tonnes of CO₂.

When returnable bottles and cans are sent back to Infinitum, the plastic bags are collected and returned along with them. These bags are separated at the facility and recycled into raw materials used in the production of new deposit bags and other plastic products. Since the bags are transparent and clean, the recycling process is both simple and efficient.

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY: Kjell Olav Maldum from Infinitum and Frode Bremnes from Smart Supply proudly present the new deposit bags, which are both more affordable and environmentally friendly.

Smart idea becomes a fund for good initiatives

In 2016, Niklas Barre hit upon the idea of collecting deposit returns on bottles and cans sold during the Holmenkollen Ski Festival. The result was Flaskefond (the Bottle Fund), a fund financed entirely through deposit returns on empty bottles and cans. At this autumn's Clima Tech Summit, hosted by Startuplab, the fund made its first NOK 500,000 award to a start-up with a compelling and sustainable business idea.



Flaskefond receives its funding from bottles and cans collected from more than a hundred Norwegian businesses. Today, the initiative generates several hundred thousand kroner in deposit returns annually. The driving force behind the fund is Niklas Barre, who manages Flaskefond alongside his role at Flow Technologies.

Half a million kroner for a smart idea

In 2016, Barre spotted an opportunity to earn money by collecting deposit returns on bottles and cans sold during the Holmenkollen Ski Festival. By gathering the empties, he raised NOK 50,000 in deposit returns. His idea led to the foundation of Flaskefond.

"I didn't want to spend the deposit money on myself. I wanted to donate it to others who could do something meaningful with it," Barre explains. "We started

with humanitarian organisations, and last year, for the first time, the fund awarded a grant to a start-up with a compelling and sustainable business idea."

At last year's Clima Tech Summit, a jury of experts in environmental innovation and entrepreneurship reviewed over 40 start-up ideas – all focused on solving environmental and climate challenges. The winner, Litech, received a cheque for NOK 500,000.

"It's incredibly inspiring and important for us to receive this kind of support. The funding will make a real difference in enabling us to continue our work," says Synne Sauar, CEO and co-founder of Litech.

Preventing explosions

Founded in 2021, the company has developed a sensor based on electromagnetic induction spectroscopy, specifically

designed for the waste management industry. The goal is to detect misclassified and potentially hazardous waste – items that, in the worst-case scenario, could cause explosions at recycling facilities.

"The sensor could be described as the world's smartest metal detector," explains Synne Sauar. "It's the first technology of its kind that can be installed in existing facilities without major modifications, and it's capable of identifying hazardous waste even when it's hidden in the waste stream."

The sensor is installed beneath conveyor belts at waste reception stations, where it transmits and receives electromagnetic signals. As metal passes by, a "fingerprint" of the material is generated and sent back to the sensor. With the help of artificial intelligence, the system can distinguish between complex



WINNERS: In September, Litech was named Climate Tech Start-up of the Year and received NOK 500,000 from Flaskefond. Left to right: Synne Sauar from Litech, Mons Langaard and Niklas Barre from Flaskefond and Ida Marie Pedersen from Litech.

combinations of materials – for example, batteries or gas canisters – and separate them from other types of metallic waste.

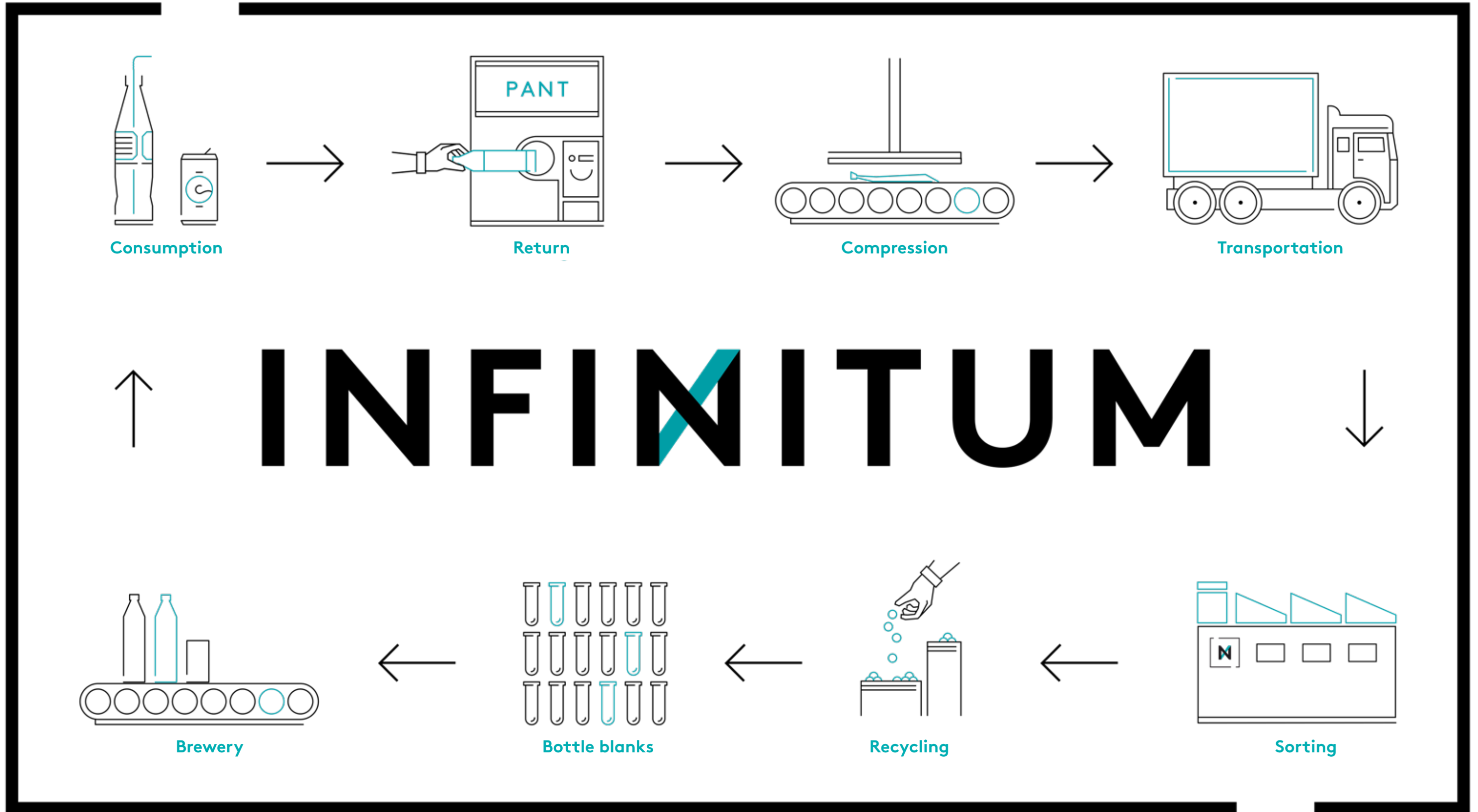
A smart combination

Infinitum has supported Flaskefond since its launch. The company collects bags of returnable bottles and cans from businesses free of charge and transfers the deposit returns directly to the fund.

"It's fantastic that Flaskefond – and the deposits from empty cans and bottles – can help tackle such challenges," says Randi Haavik Varberg, Communications and Marketing Director at Infinitum. "At the same time, the fund helps ensure that returnable bottles and cans that might otherwise have ended up in the rubbish bin at many workplaces are collected. This makes it a smart combination of great ideas and good intentions."

Flaskefond – Key facts

- Launched in 2016 as an initiative to collect deposit returns at the Holmenkollen Ski Festival
- Now operates with customised collection containers made from recycled oil drums, reflecting a more professionalised approach
- Collects returnable bottles and cans from events such as the X Games and the Norway Cup
- Gathers returnable bottles and cans from more than 100 Norwegian companies
- Has donated funds to the Red Cross and other humanitarian organisations
- In September, awarded NOK 500,000 to the start-up Litech



The deposit return story

Norway's deposit return scheme for refillable bottles was set up in the early 1900s. When, in the 1980s, retailers wanted recyclable disposable packaging that could be crushed before being returned, it became the start of the present deposit return scheme. Jan Tore Sanner, former Minister of Finance, returned the very first bottle for recycling in 1999.

1995:

The DRS is approved by the Norwegian Pollution Control Authority, now the Norwegian Environment Agency.

1996:

Norsk Resirk is founded with retailers and industry as equal shareholders through their industry associations.

1999:

Norsk Resirk's deposit return scheme for drinks cans and bottles is set up. The system is open to all. The first can is returned through the system on 3 May 1999.



In 1999, former Minister of Finance Jan Tore Sanner returned the very first can to Norsk Resirk's new DRS for bottles and cans. The then chairman Øyvind Winther and Managing Director Jarle Grytli were also present.

2000:

The first recyclable bottles are registered in the DRS. Norsk Resirk opens its own facility at Alnabru in Oslo.

2003:

In just the fifth year of the company's operations, 92 per cent of all cans and 77 per cent of all drinks bottles are collected through the DRS.

2004:

Norsk Resirk has another successful year, with an increase in the number of both drinks cans and recyclable plastic bottles collected, leading to a reduction in the environmental tax by 93 per cent on cans and 80 per cent on PET.

2006:

A production facility opens in Bjerkevik to serve Northern Norway.

2007:

Kjell Olav Maldum takes over from Jarle Grytli as Managing Director.

2008:

TINE, Norway's largest producer, distributor and exporter of dairy products, starts using drinks bottles for the first time in 40 years. The decision to use bottles is down to the DRS.

2009:

The Norwegian Climate and Pollution Agency gives its approval for DRS-labelled bottles and cans used in waste-to-energy recovery to count towards Infinitem's collection rates. This equates to

around 4 per cent of the overall collection rate for cans and around 8 per cent for bottles.

2011:

The environmental tax on bottles is abolished because the collection rate has exceeded 95 per cent of packaging sold. Small importers are invited to join the DRS.

2012:

The environmental tax on cans is abolished because the verified return rate has exceeded 95 per cent of packaging sold.

Mack Bryggerier, Ringnes and Coca-Cola Enterprises switch from refillable bottles to recyclable PET. The other drinks manufacturers follow suit.

A new production facility opens in Heimdal, just outside Trondheim, to serve Central Norway.

2013:

A new production facility opens at Heia in Fetsund to serve Southern Norway. A new production facility opens in Bjerkevik to serve Northern Norway.

2014:

Norsk Resirk changes its name to Infinitem. The name and logo are inspired by the infinite number of times bottles and cans can be recycled in the DRS.

2017:

Producers worldwide change their mind and take a positive view of deposit return schemes and their responsibility as producers. Sky News broadcasts a piece on the Norwegian DRS, generating an influx of visitors from all over the world wanting to learn more about Infinitem's deposit return scheme.

The Ministry of Climate and Environment decides to increase deposit rates from NOK 1.00 and NOK 2.50 to NOK 2.00 and NOK 3.00.

2018:

Infinitem achieves its highest ever collection figures, with 88.6 (95.1) per cent of bottles and 87.3 (98.9) per cent of cans collected. Vinmonopolet, Norway's state-owned alcohol retailer, requires manufacturers to switch to PET and cans with a deposit.

The EU pushes towards a circular economy, adopting ambitious targets and strict requirements for both collection and materials recycling. PET bottles must be made from at least 25 per cent recycled plastic by 2025 and 30 per cent by 2030. The collection rate

for drinks bottles must be at least 77 per cent by 2025 and 90 per cent by 2029.

The deposit on bottles and cans is doubled from NOK 1.00 to NOK 2.00, the first increase since 1986. The deposit on bottles and cans larger than 500 ml also increases from NOK 2.00 to NOK 3.00.

2019:

Infinitem celebrates the 20th anniversary of the current deposit return scheme and achieves a collection rate for both bottles and cans of 90 per cent, ten years before the EU requires 90 per cent.

Construction of the recycling plant at Heia in Lillestrøm Municipality begins. Extended producer responsibility becomes an increasingly important element in the EU's efforts to create circular economies for packaging. Deposits on DraughtMaster beer kegs are introduced.

2020:

In the year of Covid-19, Infinitem achieves a record deposit return rate of 92 per cent and recycles more than 1.4 billion cans and bottles. Deposits on festival

cups and recycling at Infinitem. Deposits on KeyKeg beer kegs are introduced.

2021:

New partnership with Novelis for aluminium, plastic bottle recycling plant opens at Heia, and recyclable plastic beer glasses introduced.

2022:

A new sorting plant at Bjerkevik in Narvik Municipality, full-scale use of recyclable festival cups at various events, large and small, and several foreign delegations visit the Heia plant after the pandemic.

2023:

A new facility enters operation at Klæbu in Trondheim, and the construction of Infinitem's fourth facility in Rogaland commences. Towards the end of the year, NORSUS completes its report, concluding that recycling bottles has a lower carbon footprint than reusing them.

2024:

The 25th anniversary of the current deposit return scheme is celebrated in grand style aboard the *Christian Radich*, together with contributors, owners, partners and friends.



25 YEARS: To mark the anniversary, what better way than to recreate the iconic photo of the first can being deposited?

The Board of Directors



Svein Sollie
Chair
DMF (Asko Norge AS)



Svein Serck-Hanssen
Deputy Chair
BS (Ringnes AS)



Martine S. Bjørnstad Malterud
Board member
BS (Coca-Cola Enterprise European Partners Norge AS)



Helge Hasselgård
Board member
DLS (DLF Norway)



Ingvill Størksen
Board member
CN (Coop Norge AS)



Synnøve Gautesen Berg
Board member
MF (Rema 1000 Distribusjon AS)

Deputy board members 2024

Anne Cathrine Berger
DMF (DMF)

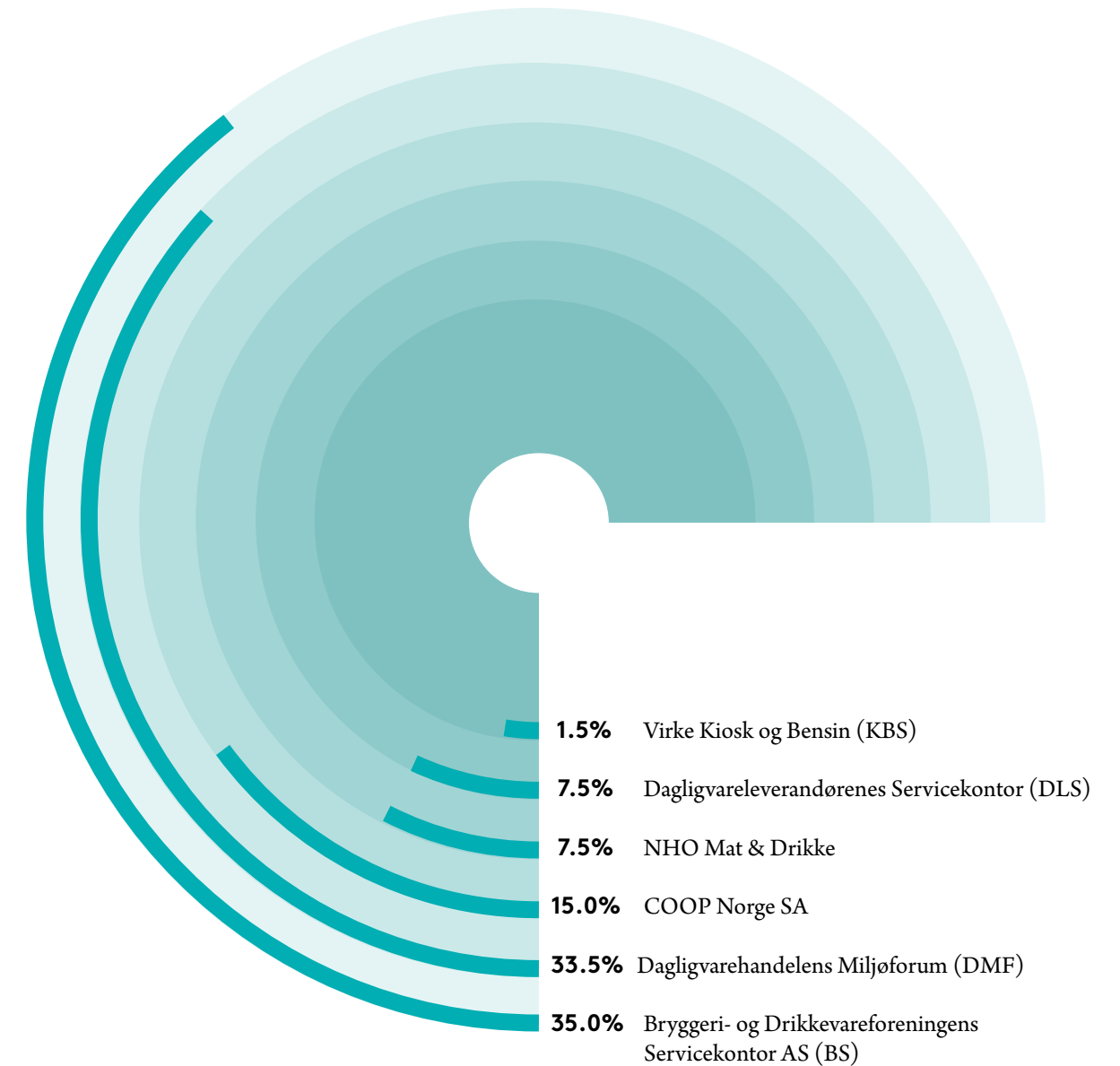
Torgeir Løftingsmo
CNH (CNH)

Siv Grønning
BS (Ringnes AS)

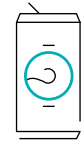
Erlend Fuglum
BS (BROD)

Petter Haas Brubakk
DLF Norway (NHO Mat og drikke)

Infinitem's owners



Statistics for 2024



1,001,196,228
cans returned*

92.9%
of all cans sold

13,245
tonnes of aluminium were
returned and recycled



588,576,364
plastic bottles returned

92.5%
of all bottles sold

21,832
tonnes of plastic were
returned and recycled



1,589,772,592

total returns

* Collection figures for reverse vending machines



Financial statements

Infinitum AS – Income statement (figures in NOK 1,000)

Operating revenues and expenses	2024	2023
PA cost	44,401	48,887
Deposit return revenues	3,790,076	3,694,433
Sale of collected materials	412,276	366,572
Other operating revenues	91,621	89,994
Net operating revenues	4,338,374	4,199,886
Deposit return expenditure	3,549,413	3,330,544
Handling fees	332,319	315,354
Transport costs	233,863	229,869
Other production costs	126,219	124,587
Total operating expenses	4,241,814	4,000,354
Profit from operating activities	96,560	199,532
Admin, marketing and depreciation/amortisation	83,975	78,705
Operating profit	12,585	120,827
Net financial items	16,367	18,006
PROFIT AFTER FINANCIAL ITEMS	28,952	138,833

Key figures

Supply chain	No. of cans	Tonnes of cans	% added to market	No. of PET	Tonnes of PET	% added to market
Total sales	1,079,695,708	14,258	-	634,283,958	23,275	0%
Change in value chain inventory	-797,011	-2	-	8,067,972	315	0%
Added (Sales + Change in value chain inventory)	1,078,898,697	14,256	100%	642,351,930	23,589	100%
Total returned through reverse vending machines	1,001,196,228	13,245	92.9%	588,576,364	21,832	92.5%
Recycled from central sorting plant	8,181,400	108	0.8%	873,734	28	0.1%
Recycled from slag sorting	33,113,426	445	3.1%	-	-	0.0%
Recycled from waste sorted at source	6,839,147	90	0.6%	1,324,846	44	0.2%
Waste-to-energy	8,180,092	110	0.8%	39,170,061	1,217	5.2%
Total recycled from waste	56,314,065	753	5.3%	41,368,640	1,290	5.5%
Total recycled	1,057,510,293	13,998	98.2%	629,945,004	23,121	98.0%
Incineration waste in bottom ash	12,129,985	163	1.1%	-	-	-
Inefficient use of energy	1,376,452	19	0.1%	6,384,438	199	0.8%
Unknown allocations and uncertainty in analysis	7,881,967	76	0.5%	6,022,488	269	1.1%
Total not returned	77,702,469	1,010	7.1%	53,775,566	1,758	7.5%
Total	1,078,898,697	14,256	100%	642,351,930	23,589	100%
Foreign items	38,453,317	468		4,051,691	146	

Balance sheet as at 31 December (figures in NOK 1,000)

Assets	2024	2023
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment		
Land, buildings and other real property	302,202	286,685
Plant and machinery, equipment, fixtures etc.	195,552	138,236
Property, plant and equipment	497,754	424,921
Non-current financial assets		
Net plan assets	0	0
Non-current financial assets	0	0
Total non-current assets	497,754	424,921
Current assets		
Receivables		
Trade receivables	372,908	343,624
Other receivables	51,081	41,644
Total receivables	423,989	385,268
Cash at bank and in hand etc.	220,825	301,304
Total current assets	644,814	686,572
TOTAL ASSETS	1,142,568	1,111,493

Equity and assets	2024	2023
Equity		
Contributed equity		
Share capital (200 shares in denominations of NOK 7,500)	1,500	1,500
Total paid-in capital	1,500	1,500
Retained earnings		
Other capital	293,825	264,872
Total retained earnings	293,825	264,872
Total equity	295,325	266,372
Liabilities		
Pension liability	-485	485
Total provisions	-485	485
Current liabilities		
Trade payables	193,779	208,766
Public charges payable	4,482	3,922
Other current liabilities	7,725	10,206
Provision for deposit liability	641,742	621,742
Total current liabilities	847,728	844,636
Total liabilities	847,243	845,121
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	1,142,568	1,111,493

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2 Production plant

Heia industrial park

Southern Norway
38 employees

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5 Production plant

Skurve industrial area

Western Norway
7 employees

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3 Production plant

Bjerkvik

Northern Norway
8 employees

Department Manager:
Ole-Rolf Dahlberg

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4 Production plant

Vassfjellet industrial park

Central Norway
8 employees

Department Manager:
Torgeir Schawland

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7540 Klæbu

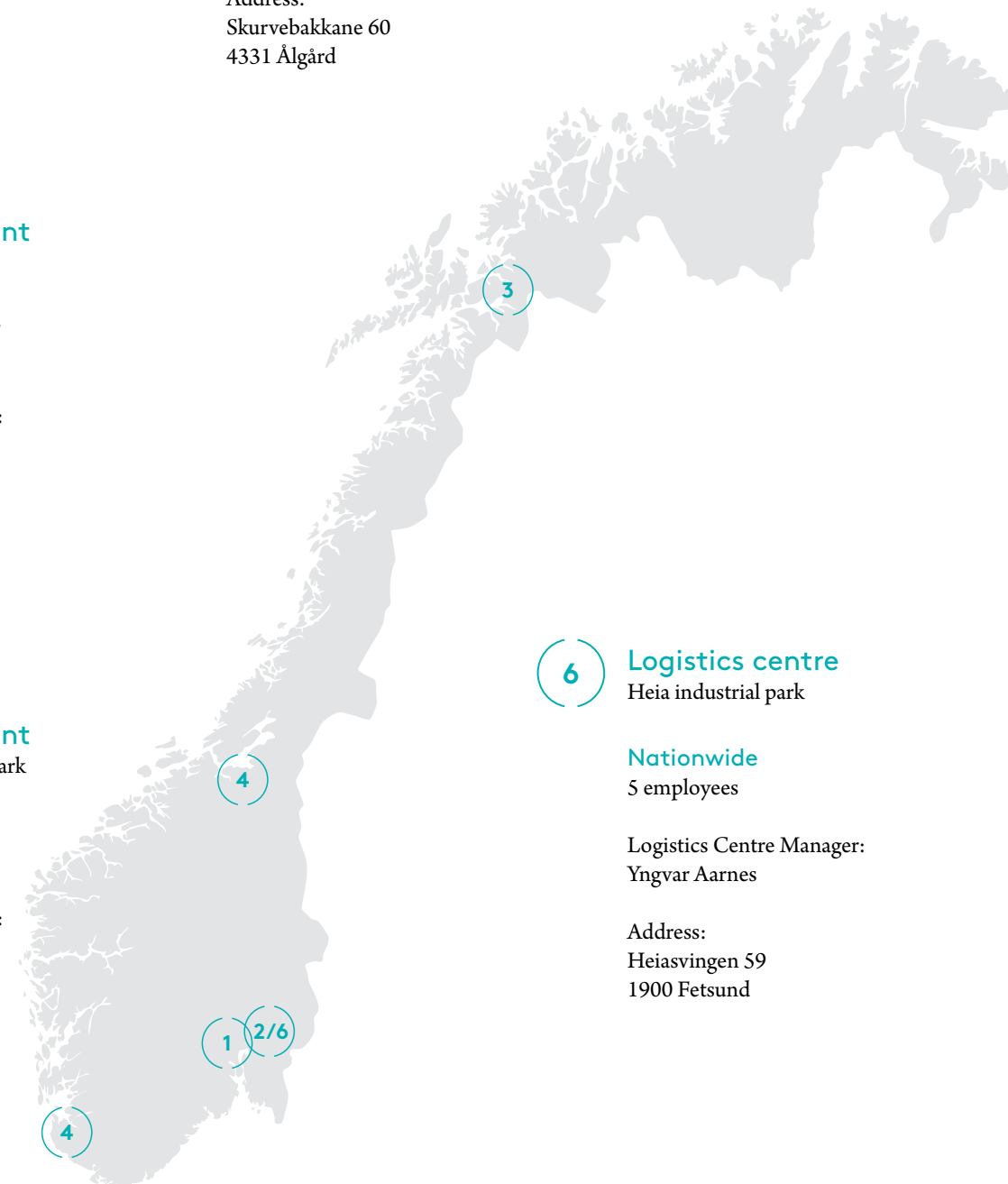
6 Logistics centre

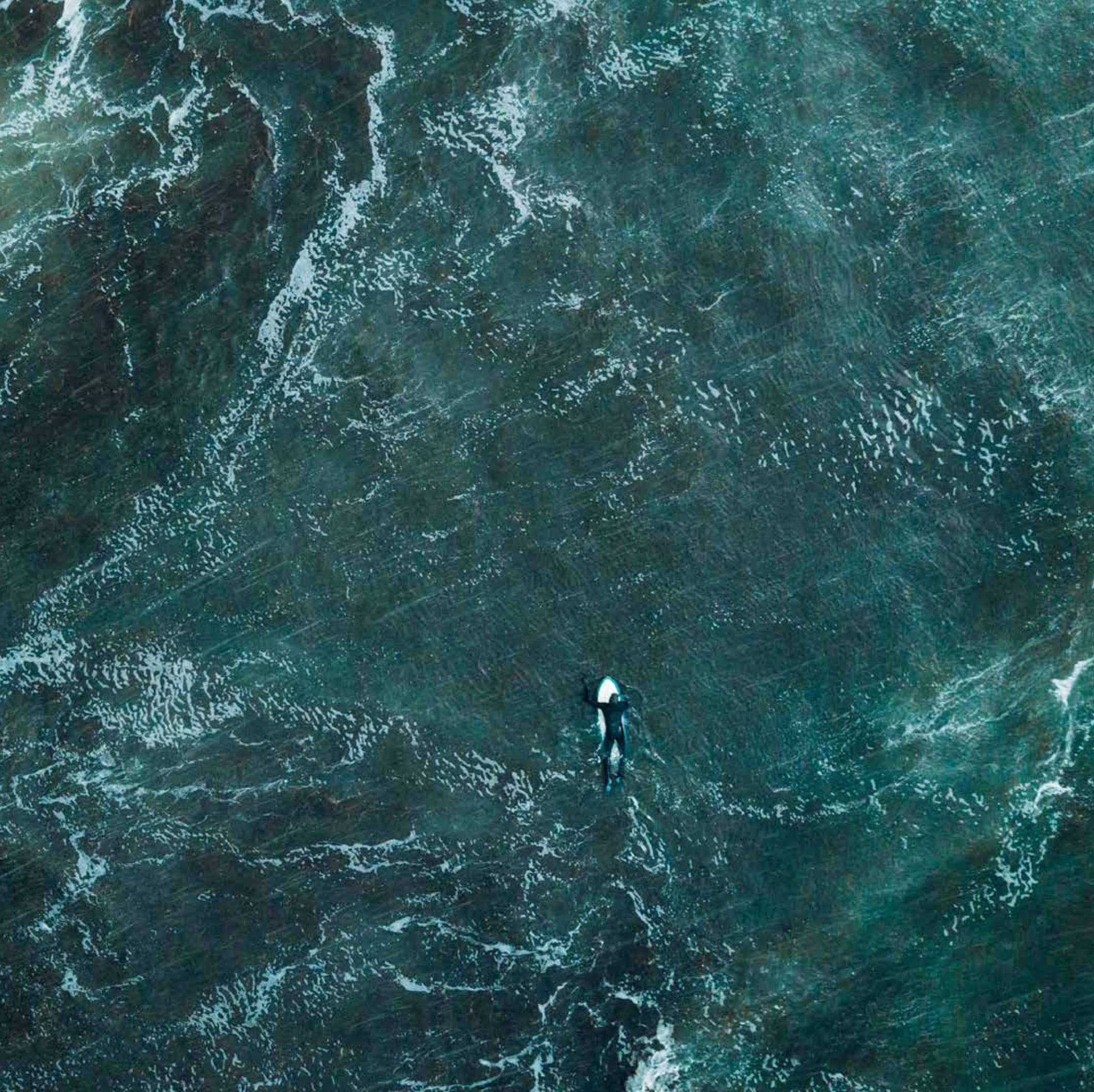
Heia industrial park

Nationwide
5 employees

Logistics Centre Manager:
Yngvar Aarnes

Address:
Heiasvingen 59
1900 Fetsund





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