

AVA slams government for £32m industry hit from blanket energy drink ban

4 months ago



The [AVA: The Vending & Automated Retail Association](#) has sharply criticised the UK government's proposal to implement a blanket ban on the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks from vending machines as part of the recently released consultation on 'Banning the sale of high-energy caffeine drinks to children'.

This move would prohibit the sale of all energy drinks through machines across England, with the AVA warning of a projected £32 million annual loss for the UK vending industry's soft drinks market.

While the government's action aims to protect young people from the perceived dangers of high-caffeine drinks, which the AVA supports, the 13% of the £248 million UK vending soft drinks sector impacted by the vending machine ban is huge for the UK economy. The AVA argues that the new restrictions would impact not only machines in public spaces but also those in spaces accessible only to adults, which make up over 80% of vending machines, dramatically affecting automated retail businesses and their customers.

The UK vending sector, comprising 180 AVA members managing 460,000 machines countrywide, was already upholding a voluntary code of practice that restricted the sale of energy drinks from vending machines located in public sites, such as local authority leisure centres.

The AVA has been engaged in multiple consultations with the Department of Health and Social Care and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities to explain how its voluntary scheme operates successfully. A broad ban, however, would strip adults of their choice to buy these drinks in entirely adult-only environments, raising questions about the policy's fairness and the necessity of banning sales in vending machines altogether.

David Llewellyn, chief executive of the AVA, comments: "The AVA and its members have always taken the

health and welfare of young people seriously, which is why the voluntary restrictions on energy drink sales in public-facing machines have been successful. It is incredibly disappointing that, despite our discussions and clear evidence of industry responsibility, the government has chosen a route that penalises businesses and adult consumers alike.

“Banning all energy drinks in all vending machines, including those in workplaces, will cost our industry tens of millions of pounds, threaten jobs, and reduce consumer choice without addressing the real issue. We urge the government to reconsider this blanket approach and work with industry on sensible, targeted measures.”

The AVA remains committed to promoting responsible vending and is calling for a review of today’s announcement, arguing that its proven, targeted system for protecting under-16s should not be overlooked in favour of a more damaging one-size-fits-all regulation.