

REPLENISH

A Doorstep Refill Service for a Plastic-Free Birmingham

Individual Written Business Plan

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Student Name: Afsor Hussain

Student ID Number: 2508648

Executive Summary

Replenish is a Birmingham based doorstep refill service of plant based cleaning and personal-care products delivered in reusable and returnable containers. Subscription is made online and the orders are collected by an electric collection van, which is emptied and disinfected at an area in the city and refilled with the packaging, constituting a closed loop. The business is tackling an important environmental issue – 90 billion units of plastic packaging waste is being tossed in the trash in the UK annually – and it is developing social value through hygiene-bank donations and local hiring.

This plan will spell out the business idea, market context, marketing approach and finances. The PESTEL analysis reveals that there are positive political, legal and social tailwinds at play, and the biggest risk is the cost-of-living price sensitivity. Marketing is a combination of social media and community activities that are used to create reach and trust. Replenish is looking to raise a total of £75,000 comprising angel equity, a Government Start Up Loan and founder capital, the running costs of the first month are around £30,000 and beyond that it will be spent as operating runway.

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1. Overview of the Business Idea

Replenish is a Birmingham local doorstep refill service offering washing up liquid, laundry detergent, multi-surface cleaner, hand wash and shampoo made from plants, all in a reusable, durable container. The "refill from home" method is based on a circular model where products are delivered via electric cargo van and empty containers are collected, sanitised and refilled at a local centre, thereby ensuring packaging is continuously used (Tassell and Aurisicchio 2023). It is a major environmental problem that the business is tackling, with estimates that UK households throw away 90 billion pieces of plastic packaging every year, with only about 17% being recycled in the UK (Greenpeace UK and Everyday Plastic, 2024).

Convenience, sustainability, and community impact are the key differentiators for replenish. Customers don't have to travel or bring their own refills with them as with traditional zero-waste shops, and the model does not just reduce the use of single-use plastic, it removes it. Operations are sustainable, using re-usable packaging, plant-based formulations and low-emission deliveries; helps to avoid greenwashing concerns (Rahman and Nguyen-Viet, 2023). The firm also maintains a hygiene bank in Birmingham and works with a local social enterprise to clean containers, thus generating social and environmental value (Doacă, 2026).

The business will be limited liability and will take the form of a private limited company (LTD) which will offer the opportunity for investors, increased credibility with stakeholders, and limited liability (Burns, 2022). Management will be led by a founder and managing director, operations lead and part-time marketing coordinator with an external mentor. The lean design ensures lower costs and flexibility and growth potential and allows for rolling-out to the business across Birmingham, zone by zone (Avelar et al., 2024).

2. Market Research

2.1 Environmental Analysis (PESTEL)

A PESTEL analysis is used to uncover the external factors that have the highest relevance for Replenish, as summarised in Table 1. It's a huge headwind in political and legal terms. The UK has been gradually phasing out single-use plastic products and the EPR scheme takes effect from October 2025, placing the responsibility for managing household packaging waste on the producers rather than the consumers, as the Plastic Packaging Tax already does (House of Commons Library, 2026). These measures structurally push reusable business models as they increase the relative price of single-use packaging.

Social and environmental aspects are also positive. Environmental awareness has become a mainstream topic, and the evidence is always consistent that environmental awareness is a leading predictor of pro-environmental buying and willingness to pay a premium for environmentally friendly products (Mahmoud et al., 2022; Alam et al., 2023). This awareness is manifested in a high level of public interest in plastic waste problems, which can be seen in the mass participation in citizen-science initiatives like the Big Plastic Count (Greenpeace UK and Everyday Plastic, 2024), a script Replenish will be able to deliver as a tangible and low-waste solution.

Economic factors are less clear-cut and are the key risk. The price sensitivity of consumers has been dampened by cost-of-living pressure and so price sensitivity needs to be proactively managed (Yan et al., 2025). Replenish does this by offering focused refills, which reduce the cost of use and make it a more “affordable” luxury. Technological factors are enabling - affordable ecommerce platforms and subscription models, route optimisation software and social media mean it becomes more cost-effective to run a micro-business and is more efficient for a business to grow (Bruce et al., 2022). The external environment is overall quite good, with four out of six PESTEL dimensions being seen as an opportunity for a reuse enterprise that launches in 2026, while the one material threat is the economic dimension.

Table 1: PESTEL summary for Replenish (Birmingham, UK)

Factor	Key influence on Replenish	Implication
Political	Single-use plastic bans; net-zero policy direction.	Opportunity

Factor	Key influence on Replenish	Implication
Economic	Cost-of-living pressure narrows the green premium.	Risk
Social	High awareness and concern over plastic waste.	Opportunity
Technological	Low-cost e-commerce, subscription and route-optimisation tools.	Opportunity
Environmental	Plastic-waste and decarbonisation agenda.	Opportunity
Legal	Extended Producer Responsibility (2025) and Plastic Packaging Tax.	Opportunity

2.2 Competition

There are three sources for competition. Independent zero-waste refill shops fight it out on ethics, not convenience and depend on physical footfall, mail-order eco brands that use concentrates or tablets cut packaging without eliminating it and supermarket own-label “eco” lines fight it out on price and availability and are still single-use. Most importantly, refill models have an inconsistent track record in the UK with hygiene perceptions and cultural habit and convenience being well-established barriers to adoption (Miao et al., 2023). Replenish's logistical systems for collecting and sanitising bottles are optimised to overcome these barriers, and it is this convenience which makes it the focus of competition for other bottle refill formats. Its first customer base will be Birmingham's inner suburbs, where residents are becoming more environmentally conscious and young professionals are more numerous, making this area a great base to route to and where word-of-mouth can help. Replenish's competitive advantage over some of the subscription eco-brands like Smol or Bower Collective is the fully returnable, no plastic container used and the subscription model introduces switching costs that ensure recurring revenue.

3. Marketing Communications

Replenish will be working on two main strategies that will support one another to target environmentally conscious households and young professionals throughout Birmingham.

3.1 Social Media and Influencer Marketing

Instagram and TikTok will feature short 'refill day' and behind-the-scenes videos, which will be promoted via paid "Meta advertising" specifically designed for local Birmingham postcodes, along with collaborations with local micro-influencers who their followers trust to recommend products. Social media is a low-cost, high-reach medium particularly suitable for SMEs for building brand awareness, engagement and loyalty at a lower cost of traditional advertising (Bruce et al., 2022); authentic green advertising is proven to increase purchase intention based on perceived value and trust (Li and Shan, 2025).

3.2 Community-Led and Referral Marketing

Replenish will deliver refill demonstrations at markets in Birmingham, community events, highlight the donation of hygiene products as cause-related marketing and will have a member reward for advocacy program. All communication will highlight measurable impact data (plastic bottles avoided and products donated) as credible and evidence-based claims will establish green brand trust and prevent the loss of brand value due to accusations of greenwashing (Rahman and Nguyen-Viet, 2023; Qayyum et al., 2023). A supporting layer of email and in-app messaging will help to retain subscribers, with prompts for their refills and reporting on their overall environmental footprint; this will strengthen the repeat behaviour that all re-use models rely on (Tassell and Aurisicchio, 2023). Combined, these strategies create a strong, local-credible, broad digital presence that reduces customer-acquisition cost and clearly establishes the brand.

4. Financials

Replenish needs £75,000 in start-up funding, from three complementary sources (Table 2). The angel investor is willing to inject £45,000 equity, and offers the business strategic guidance and risk capital.

Table 2: Funding requirement and sources

Funding source	Amount (£)	Rationale
Angel investment (20% equity)	45,000	Growth capital and mentoring.
Government Start Up Loan	25,000	Non-dilutive debt for assets.
Founder's savings	5,000	Demonstrates founder commitment.
Total	75,000	Set-up plus six-month runway.

The vehicle and equipment will be financed without a loss of ownership through a UK Government Start Up Loan of £25,000, secured at a fixed annual rate of around 6%, by the government. The founder will invest £5,000 of their own money, indicating a commitment from the founder to the investors (Burns, 2022). Explicitly combining equity with low-cost debt when raising capital is a direct way to address the issue of access to financing that constantly hampers young businesses (Łasak, 2022). The combination is particularly well suited for investors who are willing to invest in a sustainable mission and community initiative, while simultaneously securing lower cost of capital, without compromising on the affordability of the pricing (Alam et al., 2023).

The initial start-up costs for the first month of trading are around £30,000 for the main elements (Table 3). Initial inventory and reusable containers, which enable the closed loop business model, are the largest components, followed by the electric van, refill hub and the digital platform.

Table 3: Main start-up expenses, first month of operations

Expense item	Cost (£)
Initial inventory (concentrates and ingredients)	7,000
Reusable containers and dispensing equipment	4,500
Electric van (lease deposit, month 1)	1,500
Refill hub (rent and fit-out)	4,000
E-commerce and subscription platform	3,000
Branding, labels and launch advertising	4,000
Insurance, licences, registration and legal	1,500
Staff wages, month 1	3,500
Contingency	1,000
Total first-month start-up expenses	30,000

The remaining £45,000 is held as working capital to support about 6 months of business operations whilst revenues from the recurring subscriptions are received to pay business expenses. This conservative method of a runway reduces risk of cash-flow problems and ensures that the investment is based on an achievable operating plan. Household monthly subscription is approximately £22 per household and top-up orders will also provide revenue, whilst the breakeven point is approximately 450 active subscribers which is easily met in Birmingham with the funded run way, based on the house hold density of Birmingham.

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