

10p plastic bag charge introduced in England

The single-use carrier bag charge has today (21 May) increased from 5p to 10p and been extended to all businesses in England. The charge has seen a 95% cut in plastic bag sales in major supermarkets since 2015 and the move will help drive down sales further.

Before the 5p bag charge was introduced, the average household used around 140 single-use plastic carrier bags a year, and this has now been reduced to four.

By extending the charge to all retailers, it is anticipated that the use of single-use carrier bags will decrease by 70-80% in small and medium-sized businesses. The move is also expected to benefit the UK economy by over £297 million over the next 10 years.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

Everyone wants to play their part in reducing the scourge of plastic waste that blights our environment and oceans. The 5p bag charge has been hugely successful, but we can go further.

From today we will increase the charge to 10p and extend it to all businesses. This will support the ambitious action we have already taken in our fight against plastic as we build back greener.

We have banned the supply of plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds, banned microbeads in personal care products, and we are consulting on a new deposit return scheme for drinks containers.

Since the introduction of the charge, almost £180 million has been raised by retailers for good causes from the revenue collected. Last year, from the £9.2 million that was reported, around 30% went to charity, volunteering, environment and health sectors, 49% went to causes chosen by customers or staff and 21% went to a combination of good causes.

A recent [report](#) published from charity WRAP revealed that 95% of people in England recognised the wide-ranging benefits to the environment so far. The survey of over 2,000 adults in England found that close to seven in ten (69%) were either 'strongly' or 'slightly' in favour of the charge when it was first introduced, and that has increased now to 73%.

Helen Bird, Strategic Engagement Manager, WRAP said:

The introduction of a charge has had a significant influence in reducing the number of bags purchased at stores. I'm confident that

the increase to 10p and the extension across all shops will continue this decline.

However, there are reports of increased purchasing of so-called 'bags for life', likely being used just once. To truly benefit the planet, bags, regardless of what they are made from, need to be reused many times over. Once they are worn out they can be recycled, or in the case of 'bags for life', replaced for free by supermarkets.

Most supermarkets are members of The UK Plastics Pact, committing to all plastic packaging to be recyclable by 2025. And ahead of plastic bags and wrapping being collected directly from peoples' homes, many are working towards accepting all of these soft plastics at their stores including bread bags, frozen food bags and crisp packets which are sorted for onward recycling.

The move will help the UK build back better and greener from the pandemic, and boost our global leadership in tackling climate change and plastic pollution. As hosts of COP26 this year, President of the G7 and a key player in the CBD COP15, we are leading the international climate change agenda.

In its war against plastic pollution, the Government has already [banned microbeads in rinse-off personal care products](#) and [prohibited the supply of plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds in England](#). A [world-leading plastic packaging tax](#) will be introduced from April 2022 for products which do not have at least 30% recycled content, while [the Government is currently consulting on landmark reforms](#) which will introduce a deposit return scheme for drinks containers, Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging and [consistent recycling collections for homes and businesses](#).