

10p plastic bag charge to come into force on 21 May

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

As a result of the carrier bag charge, the average person in England now buys just four single-use carrier bags a year from the main supermarkets, compared with 140 in 2014. By extending the charge to all retailers, it is expected that the use of single-use carrier bags will decrease by 70-80% in small and medium-sized businesses.

Small businesses across the country are being urged to prepare themselves for the changes ahead of them coming into force on 21 May. It comes as new [research finds the charge is supported overwhelmingly by the public](#) – with 95% of people in England acknowledging the wide-ranging benefits to the environment so far.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

The introduction of the 5p charge has been a phenomenal success, driving down sales of harmful plastic bags in supermarkets by a remarkable 95%.

We know we must go further to protect our natural environment and oceans, which is why we are now extending this charge to all businesses.

Over the next couple of weeks I urge all retailers of all sizes to make sure they are ready for the changes, as we work together to build back greener and strengthen our world-leading action to combat the scourge of plastic waste.

Association of Convenience Stores Chief Executive James Lowman said:

We strongly welcome the inclusion of local shops and other small businesses into the successful plastic bag charging scheme, which not only helps the environment, but is also a great way for retailers to raise money for local and national charities.

Sunjiv Shah, Uber Eats UK General Manager said:

We want to make it as easy as possible for businesses to tackle

plastic waste and to support good causes. Everyone can help play a role in protecting the environment by reducing the use of single-use plastic bags.

A new [report published today from charity WRAP](#) finds a shift in attitude towards plastic bags since the charge was first brought in.

Through a survey of over 2,000 adults in England, it was revealed:

- 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%.
- Customers are changing habits to use long-life bags made from more sustainable and environmentally-friendly materials. Of those surveyed, two in three (67%) said they used a 'bag-for-life' – either fabric or more durable plastic – to take their shopping home for a large food shop in store, with only 14% using a single-use carrier bag.
- Only one in four (26%) purchase bags from the till when doing food shops – including 4% who say they do this 'always'. This represents a significant fall since 2014 before the charge was introduced, when over twice as many (57%) reported taking plastic carrier bags from the till. Meanwhile, over half (54%) say they take less bags from the till.
- Almost half (49%) of 18-34s says they purchase carrier bags at the till at least sometimes, compared to just over one in ten (11%) of those aged 55+.

Since the introduction of the charge, retailers have donated over £150 million to good causes in charity, volunteering, environment and health sectors.

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 and Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging.