

Plastic bag sales down 90% since introduction of 5p charge

Sales of plastic bags by the seven biggest retailers in England [have fallen by 90%](#) since the 5p charge was introduced in 2015, new figures out today [31 July] have shown.

Asda, Marks and Spencer, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, The Co-operative Group, Tesco and Waitrose sold 490 million fewer single-use plastic bags in 2018/19 (549 million) – a drop of almost half on the previous year.

The average person in England now buys just 10 bags a year from the main supermarket retailers, compared with 140 bags in 2014 before the charge was introduced.

Welcoming today's figures, Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

Our comprehensive action to slash plastic waste and leave our environment in a better state continues to deliver results, with our 5p charge reducing plastic bag sales by 90% in the big supermarkets.

No one wants to see the devastating impact plastic waste is having on our precious wildlife. Today's figures are a powerful demonstration that we are collectively calling time on being a throwaway society.

The total single-use carrier bag sales reported by all large retailers in 2018/2019 fell 37% to 1.11 billion compared with the previous year.

Government scientists believe [plastic in the sea is set to treble in a decade](#) unless marine litter is tackled. One million birds and over 100,000 sea mammals die every year from eating and getting tangled in plastic waste.

[Today's figures reveal 5p plastic bag sales](#) have also contributed around £169 million toward charities and other good causes since the charge was introduced on 5 October 2015, with more than £22 million raised in 2018/19 alone.

Wider government action to tackle plastic waste:

The UK continues to be a global leader in cracking down on plastic waste to protect seas, oceans and marine life. We have recently announced a range of measures to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste, underpinned by [our landmark Resources and Waste Strategy](#).

Key government actions include [our world-leading ban on microbeads](#), consulting on [introducing a deposit return scheme](#) to drive up the recycling

of drinks bottles and cans, and recently [confirming a ban on the supply of plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds in April 2020](#).

We will also introduce [a new world-leading tax on plastic packaging](#) which does not meet a minimum threshold of at least 30% recycled content from April 2022, subject to consultation, to encourage greater use of recycled plastic to tackle the problem of plastic waste and protect our environment.