

# Press release: Plastic carrier bags: Gove sets out new measures to extend charge

The 5p plastic bag charge will be extended to all retailers and increased to 10p to cut their use further, under plans put forward in a [consultation](#) launched by the Environment Secretary today.

Plastic bags have a significant impact on the environment. Government scientists believe plastic in the sea is set to treble in a decade unless marine litter is curbed – with one million birds and over 100,000 sea mammals dying every year from eating and getting tangled in plastic waste.

Currently, the 5p charge applies only to big businesses, but it is estimated over 3.6 billion single-use plastic bags are supplied annually by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Trade bodies representing around 40,000 small retailers have already launched a voluntary approach to a 5p charge, but this accounts for less than one-fifth of England's estimated 253,000 SMEs.

The consultation launched today will also explore the possibility of increasing the 5p minimum charge to encourage further behaviour change, potentially doubling it to 10p.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

The 5p single use plastic carrier bag charge has been extremely successful in reducing the amount of plastic we use in our everyday lives. Between us, we have taken over 15 billion plastic bags out of circulation.

But we want to do even more to protect our precious planet and today's announcement will accelerate further behaviour change and build on the success of the existing charge.

Association of Convenience Stores chief executive James Lowman said:

We welcome the Government's plans to extend carrier bag charging to all shops.

This has been shown to be highly effective at reducing waste, whilst also raising money for local, national and environmental charities. Around half of small shops in England already charge for plastic bags voluntarily, with wider support for a mandatory charge.

The move follows the success of the 5p charge introduced in 2015, which has seen single use [plastic bag sales in major supermarkets drop by 86%](#). This is equivalent to just 19 bags in 2017/18 per person in England, compared with 140 bags each before the government introduced the charge.

Smaller stores are often at the heart of a local community providing a range of essential services to local people, and will be encouraged to donate proceeds to good causes. [Latest figures show](#) that for 2017/18 5p plastic bag sales contributed over £51m toward charities and other good causes.

Today's announcement is the latest move in a government crackdown on plastic, with the UK continuing to be a global leader in protecting seas, oceans and marine life. On the same day, Education Secretary Damian Hinds has urged all schools to eliminate their use of single use plastics by 2022.

The government has recently announced a range of measures to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste underpinned by the landmark [Resources and Waste Strategy](#) launched earlier this month. Other key government actions announced over the past 12 months include a [world-leading ban on microbeads](#), a consultation on restricting the sale of plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds, and plans for a [deposit return scheme](#) to increase recycling rates of drinks bottles and cans subject to consultation.

At the Autumn Budget, the Chancellor announced a world-leading tax on plastic packaging which does not contain a minimum of 30% recycled content, subject to consultation, from April 2022.