

10p bag charge turns the tide on plastic waste

Billions of harmful plastic bags have been stopped from blighting our towns and countryside thanks to the single-use carrier bag charge, [new figures reveal today](#) (29 July).

The 5p charge was introduced in supermarkets in 2015 and since then usage at the main retailers has dropped by a staggering 97%. Meanwhile, over £200 million has been voluntarily donated by retailers to good causes in that time.

As a result of the charge, the average person in England now buys around three single-use carrier bags a year from the main supermarkets, compared with around 140 in 2014.

The charge was last year [increased to 10p and extended to all businesses](#). This has helped further bring the number of bags used down by over 20% from 627 million in 2019/20 to 496 million in 2021/22.

Environment Minister Steve Double said:

Our plastic bag charge has ended the sale of billions of single-use bags, protecting our landscapes and ensuring millions of pounds is redistributed to worthy causes.

There is much more to do to tackle the problem of plastic waste. That is why we are building on our single-use plastic bans and introducing the deposit return scheme for bottles to fight back against littering and drive up recycling rates.

The number of single-use carrier bags reported by the main retailers was 197 million in 2021/22, down from 271 million in 2019/2020, the previous comparable year* – a reduction of 27%. This is a huge drop from the 7.6 billion used in 2014 before the charge was introduced.

In 2021/22, retailers donated £10 million to good causes in education, arts, heritage, sports, environment, health, charity or volunteering sectors, or causes chosen by customers and staff.

Adam Herriot, Sector Specialist, Resource Management, WRAP said:

Flexibles remain one of the most common plastics in our bins, but just like pots tubs and trays we're now at a point where the tide is turning on flexible plastics. Today, nearly 5,000 stores nationwide have front of store collections where people can drop off their unusable bags once they reach their end of life.

So not only do we have less single-use shopping bags to worry about, we have somewhere convenient to put them when we go shopping to make sure they are recycled.

This builds on the government's action to turn the tide on plastic waste.

This year we introduced a world-leading plastic packaging tax, while our deposit return scheme will ensure billions more drinks bottles and cans are returned to shops and recycled.

We have already banned microbeads in rinse-off personal care products and restricted the sale of plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds.

We have [consulted on banning single use plastic cutlery, plates and certain types of polystyrene cups](#), and are also looking at evidence on other problematic single use plastics – including wet wipes.

*It is important to note that the data for 2020/21 cannot be directly compared with other years, due to unique circumstances relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.

[Kathryn Cearn's \(OBE\) joins NDA Board as a Non-Executive Board Member](#)

News story

The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) has today announced the appointment of Kathryn Cearn's to its Board as a non-executive board member for a 3-year term from 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2025.



This appointment has been made by Kwasi Kwarteng, the Secretary of State for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, in consultation with Scottish Ministers.

Dr Ros Rivaz, the Chair of the NDA, said:

I am delighted that Kathryn is joining us to support the important and complex work we do to decommission the UK's 17 earliest nuclear sites. Kathryn has extensive experience in financial reporting and corporate governance, including the reporting and auditing aspects of company law and risk management. She will bring a valuable perspective not just to ensure the effectiveness of the risk assurance control framework established by the Board, but also to help us shape our strategy and deliver transformational change.

Kathryn Cearns said:

This is a hugely exciting, challenging and rewarding opportunity. The work the NDA does is world-leading and its mission is of vital importance to the UK. I feel privileged to be able to contribute to decisions over the coming years which will carry weight for the next generation and beyond.

Kathryn is a chartered accountant with extensive senior level experience in both the public and private sectors. She was Chair of the Financial Reporting Advisory Board to HM Treasury from 2010 to 2016 and Chair of the ICAEW Financial Reporting Committee for 10 years. Her past roles include project director at the UK Accounting Standards Board (now the Financial Reporting Council) and consultant accountant for an international law firm. Kathryn has held a number of non-executive, trustee and advisory appointments, including at the Office of Tax Simplification, the Property Ombudsman, Crossrail, and National Highways.

At the NDA, her role on the NDA Board will see her chair the important Audit, Risk and Assurance Board Committee which oversees effective risk management, control and governance of the NDA's annual budget of over £3 billion.

Published 29 July 2022

[First marine geophysical surveys set to start this summer](#)

News story

Investigations off the coast to provide data about potential of deep rocks to

host a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF).



The survey vessel will be carrying specialist acoustic equipment

The marine geophysical surveys off the coast of Copeland, Cumbria, which are set to begin in the summer of 2022, are non-intrusive and will provide a better understanding of the rock structure to help inform the search for a suitable site for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF).

The data-gathering programme will use a vessel carrying specialist acoustic equipment deployed between 5 and 20km from the coastline. The work will take place over a period of three to four weeks and will be undertaken by specialists Shearwater GeoServices, who were awarded a £6 million contract by Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) following a procurement process.

The survey is an important early step in beginning to understand the deep geology beyond the coast. This first survey is focused off the coast of South and Mid Copeland.

The technology deployed from the 92-metre vessel is based on sound waves – similar to ultrasound scans used for medical purposes – which are reflected as an echo from different geological layers. This enables a 3D picture of the underlying rocks to be gradually built up. The seabed itself remains undisturbed. Surveys of this type are commonplace in the offshore wind, oil and gas sectors.

The GDF team will work with marine representative bodies and other stakeholders to keep marine users and local communities informed of developments.

Chris Eldred, Head of GDF Geosphere Characterisation, said:

We are looking forward to the commencement of the first surveys this summer off the south west coast of Copeland, working with the specialists at Shearwater GeoServices.

The information we gather will help us to further consider the suitability of areas to host a GDF and support informed dialogue with the communities that are at the heart of the siting process.

Data from the surveys will need to be processed and analysed in detail which will take about nine months during which time we will consider how or if further survey work is needed. The information will give our geologists and engineers some of the tools they need to begin designing and planning the next steps in the search for a suitable site for a GDF.

[Learn more about geological disposal.](#)

Published 29 July 2022

E-seminar: Screening for GMOs in consignments of rice and rice products

News story

This e-seminar describes best practice in screening for GMOs in consignments of rice and rice products originating from China



This e-seminar provides an introduction to current official methods employed when screening for GMOs in consignments of rice and rice products originating from China. Background to the issue, legislation relevant to the regulation of GMOs, as well as guidance and best practice on the implementation of the official methods is described. An explanation of the interpretation of results, information on recognised sources of appropriate reference materials, and advice on experimental design are also provided.

The e-seminar is intended for individuals working in official control laboratories, the food industry and those involved with the UK official control system.

The production of this e-seminar was co-funded by the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Food Standards Agency, Food Standards Scotland and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial

Strategy (BEIS) via the Government Chemist Programme, under the Joint Knowledge Transfer Framework for Food Standards and Food Safety Analysis.

[Screening for GMOs in consignments of rice and rice products originating from China](#)

Published 29 July 2022

[Supply of accessible homes to receive vital boost](#)

- Government responds to consultation on raising accessibility standards in new homes
- Confirms next steps on plans to raise minimum accessibility requirements
- Leading stakeholders welcome “positive step”

New homes will be more accessible for older and disabled people as the government today (29 July) confirms plans to raise the accessibility standard following full consultation of proposals.

The raising accessibility standards for new homes [consultation](#) proposed staying with the existing framework for accessible housing, reconsidering the way existing standards are used or raising the minimum standard. We are now committing to raising the minimum standard, giving people the dignity and security they deserve in their homes.

Raising the minimum accessibility standard will require all new homes to have step-free access to all entrance level rooms and facilities as well as further features to make homes more easily adaptable over time, supporting people to live independent lives.

Since 2010 we have given councils over £4.5 billion to deliver almost half a million home adaptations. Current planning rules already mean councils must consider the needs of older and disabled people when planning for new homes.

This change means older and disabled people can live more independently in their own homes, with greater choice and control over their lives, and be able to work, socialise and contribute to society as fully as possible. It will ‘future proof’ new homes for successive generations, saving costs associated with moving or adapting homes.

Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing Eddie Hughes said:

Older and disabled people must have homes which are suitable for

their needs, and allow them to live comfortably and independently.

This consultation has made clear raising the accessibility standard of new homes is supported not just by people who use accessible homes, but by industry and wider stakeholders as well.

With that mandate, we are forging ahead with the next steps to make this a reality.

Holly Holder, Co-Chair of the Housing Made for Everyone (HoME) coalition, said:

We warmly welcome the government's decision to raise the minimum accessibility standard as a positive step towards resolving the significant shortage of accessible and adaptable new homes in this country.

Raising the standard of accessibility has the potential to change millions of lives but only if executed well and with very limited exceptions to the way the revised regulation is applied. Homes with higher accessibility standards benefit everyone, particularly disabled people and older people, and disadvantage no one.

Christina McGill, Co-Chair of the Housing Made for Everyone (HoME) coalition, said:

The need for accessible homes is going to grow significantly over the next 20 years as our population ages. Improving mandatory access standards will remove many of the barriers currently limiting the number of accessible homes being built and help deliver the right quality of homes for everyone.

We look forward to further discussions with the government on the next phase of consultation. This must be carried out with urgency and address the finer details needed to deliver on the promise of housing that is suitable and accessible for people throughout their lives.

Kerry Thompson, disability blogger/influencer, said:

Today's announcement will bring in welcome changes to accessibility standards in new homes.

Living in an accessible Habinteg Housing Association home myself, I know first-hand just how beneficial they can be for a disabled person. For me it makes the difference between just existing and having a life to live. An accessible home can enable greater independence.

The accessible adaptable standard will make adaptations more achievable and economically beneficial and in the long term will alleviate pressures on health and social care services and budgets.

I am looking forward to seeing the progress that comes from these changes because living in an accessible home shouldn't be seen as a luxury.

Responses were significantly in favour of raising the minimum accessibility standard. From over 400 responses to the consultation, an overwhelming 98% supported government's intention to raise accessibility standards of new homes. The most favoured options were the two that included mandating a higher accessibility standard.

A second consultation will be carried out in due course. It will cover the detail of the regulatory changes, including updates to statutory guidance as well as the circumstances where exceptions to applying the higher standard will apply.