



Plastic Bag Sales Down in England by 90%



What is plastic pollution?

- Plastic pollution is a big problem because it is not biodegradable.
- Since people have been charged for single-use plastic carrier bags, they are buying fewer of them.

It seems that people are doing their bit to tackle plastic pollution. The government says that 490 million fewer **single-use** plastic bags were sold at supermarkets in England last year.

Since 2015, the biggest supermarkets have charged people 5p for a plastic carrier bag. This was to **dissuade** people from buying a bag.

Instead, they want people to reuse carrier bags. Government **statistics** say that the average person in England now just buys ten bags a year from one of the main supermarkets.

By contrast, in 2014, English people took 140 bags on average when they were often free. This is why the government thinks asking people to pay is a good idea.

Environmental secretary Theresa Villiers said that it shows the 5p charge “continues to deliver results”.

The rules on whether you have to pay 5p for a bag are different depending on where you live in the UK. In England, only shops with more than 250 workers have to charge 5p. By contrast, in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, every shop has to charge 5p.

Plastic pollution is a big problem. Plastic isn't **biodegradable**. It can take hundreds of years to break down and can start to build up on huge landfills.

A lot of plastic ends up in the oceans, where animals can mistake it for food and eat it. Government scientists believe that 100,000

Photo: People are buying fewer plastic bags.

marine mammals and a million birds die annually this way from plastic waste.

The government is planning to take more action on plastic waste. It has also said that it wants to mostly ban plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds from April 2020.

The government hopes that this will tackle the problem of plastic pollution. According to the government, the UK uses nearly 5 billion plastic straws and nearly 2 billion plastic cotton buds each year!

Glossary

single-use Items that can only be used once.

dissuade Persuade someone not to do something.

statistics Data gathered from a large section of people.

biodegradable Something that can be decomposed by bacteria.

Questions

1. Why do you think the government decided to introduce a 5p charge for carrier bags in 2015? Explain your answer.

2. Compare and contrast the rules about the 5p plastic bag charge in the UK.

3. Find a phrase the author uses to show that people are taking action.

4. The 5p charge has had a big effect on people's shopping habits. Find a piece of evidence that shows this.

5. Do you think even fewer bags will be sold next year? Explain your answer.

6. Summarise the story in 20 words or fewer.

7. '100,000 marine mammals and a million birds die annually'
In this sentence what does the adverb annually mean? Tick one.

- every day
- every month
- every year
- every decade

Answers

1. Why do you think the government decided to introduce a 5p charge for carrier bags in 2015?

Accept any reasonable piece of evidence that refers to the story, e.g. I think the government decided to introduce a 5p charge because they wanted to dissuade people from buying single-use bags.

2. Compare and contrast the rules about the 5p plastic bag charge in the UK.

In England, only shops with more than 250 workers have to charge 5p. By contrast, in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, every shop has to charge 5p.

3. Find a phrase the author uses to show that people are taking action.
are doing their bit

4. The 5p charge has had a big effect on people's shopping habits. Find a piece of evidence that shows this.

Accept any reasonable piece of evidence that refers to the story, e.g. The government says on average people buy 10 bags a year. When there wasn't a charge, people took 140 bags on average.

5. Do you think even fewer bags will be sold next year? Explain your answer.

Accept any reasonable answer that refers to the story, e.g. I think fewer bags will be sold because people are becoming more aware about plastic pollution.

6. Summarise the story in 20 words or fewer.

Accept any reasonable summary that is 20 words or fewer, e.g. British people are buying fewer single-use plastic bags. It has reduced by 90% since last year.

7. '100,000 marine mammals and a million birds die annually'

In this sentence what does the adverb annually mean? Tick one.

- every day
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 every decade