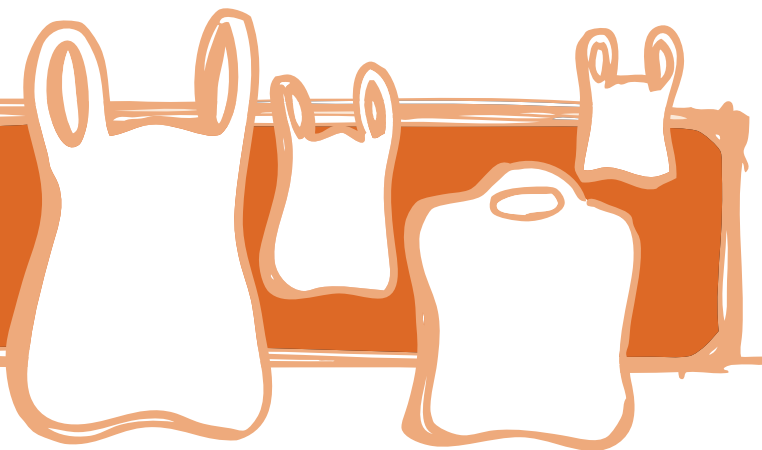


Banish the bags in your town



On average, an adult will use 300 plastic bags a year.
Typically, each bag is used for only 12 minutes before it is thrown away.

Plastic bags are only one element of the litter problem, but they are a significant and highly visible one, and action is needed to reduce their number. In practice, this means that supermarkets and other retailers should stop giving out so many bags free of charge. An incredible 13 billion single-use plastic bags are given out freely by Britain's high streets every year – more than 800 a year to every family in the land.

We therefore welcomed the Government's announcement, in the 2008 Budget, that if retailers do not voluntarily take action to reduce use of single-use plastic bags, the Government will legislate by 2009 to impose a charge for their use. We hope that this will mark the beginning of a journey towards a cleaner countryside.

However, neither voluntary measures by retailers nor legislation is likely to lead to a total ban on plastic bags, so if you want to do something more radical, then read on!

2007 was a remarkable year for a small town in Devon. It was the year Modbury went plastic bag free.

In May of 2007, Modbury's 43 shop-keepers and traders made European history when they banished the plastic bag from their shops. The news reached far beyond the West Country and was followed by a surge of support and interest from cities, towns and villages across the country wanting to follow Modbury's example.

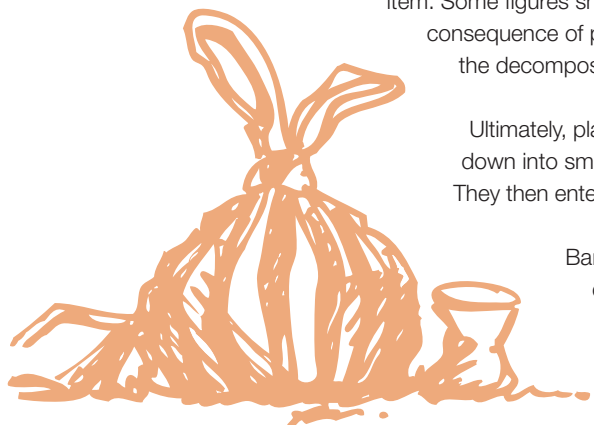
Images from an entangled Lovelace in Happy Feet, to the plastic soup of waste floating in the Pacific Ocean, have helped to visualise the impact plastic litter has on people, the environment and wildlife. We know litter is bad for us all.

Plastic accounts for 90% of waste in the oceans and plastic bags are the most commonly spotted item. Some figures show that as many as 100,000 birds, whales, seals and turtles die as a consequence of plastic waste every year (often as a result of ingesting it). Plastic bags survive the decomposition of the animal, and the plastic is then released back into the environment.

Ultimately, plastic bags do not biodegrade, they photodegrade. This means they break down into smaller and smaller bits which contaminate the soil, waterways and oceans. They then enter the food chain when ingested by animals.

Banishing the plastic bag is not a fad, but one important way to cut back on disposable plastic in our everyday lives.

So, how can you banish the bag in your town? Follow the steps overleaf!





How to go plastic bag free

1. First of all, learn about the effect plastics have on the environment. Find out about more environmentally-friendly materials that alternative bags could be made from. This is essential and will strengthen your position for the next steps. Take a look at www.plasticbagfree.com for information and inspiration.
2. Try to determine the level of support from traders and the community at large for a ban on plastic bags in your community.
3. Arrange a meeting with the Chamber of Commerce to put your idea to them and ask for their support. Visit each trader to chat to them about your idea. Good research will help you answer all their questions.
4. Organise a mass meeting for local traders and residents to discuss the possibility of changing over from plastic to another type of bag. Bring along any visual guides and information so that the traders understand what plastic bags are doing to our environment. Also have alternative bag samples with you so people can have a look at them and decide which one they prefer.
5. When all traders have agreed to come on board, it's time to set a date for the changeover! Ask your Chamber of Commerce to send out a letter, stating that from the set date no further plastic bags will be issued.
6. Organise regular group meetings up until the changeover date for traders, or representatives of the traders, to work out how to run the campaign.

Good luck!

