

GET A GREEN GRIP

PETERBOROUGH

INTRODUCTION:

Britain lags behind the rest of the world in dealing with the environmental damage caused by the distribution of billions of single-use carrier bags. Peterborough is aiming to become the UK's Environment Capital and is leading the way as the first UK city to launch such a campaign.

The average plastic bag is used for just 20 minutes before being thrown away but takes up to 1,000 years to decompose.

About 98% of plastic bags end up in landfill, the rest end up as litter harming wildlife and spoiling local areas.

In Peterborough around 37 million plastic bags are thrown away every year– which would create a pile over 2.5 miles high.

Now the City has decided it has had enough and local people are getting behind the Get a green Grip Peterborough campaign.

PLASTIC BAG FACTS:

- In the UK we use over 13 Billion plastic bags every year. This is about 800 bags per year per family or 216 per person.
- Plastic bags take 400-1000 years to decompose.
- 200 million bags are littering the UK.
- 45% of British people have bought a bag for life – but only 12% use them!
- Plastic bags release toxic gases when they burn; they create stagnant pools which can become a breeding ground for malarial mosquitoes; and they suffocate or disrupt the indigestion of animals that accidentally consume them.
- Plastic bags are easily mistaken for food and eaten by a wide range of marine species.
- Plastic bags have been found in the stomachs of many marine animals including endangered species such as leatherback turtles, harbour porpoises and black footed albatross. Ingestion (swallowing) of plastic bags can result in blockages, internal infections, starvation and death.
- In April 2002 a dead Minke whale washed up on Normandy coast had 800g of plastic bags and packaging, including at least 2 British supermarket plastic bags in its stomach.
- More than 7,000 plastic bags were found on UK beaches during Beachwatch 2006 - that's 40 bags for every kilometre of beach surveyed. Plastic bags ranked number 15 in the top

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20 most common litter items recorded during Beachwatch 2006.

- The government has pledged to look at an end to free single use plastic carrier bags and is already working with a consortium of businesses to achieve a 25% reduction in the environmental impact of free carrier bags by end of 2008.

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE REST OF THE WORLD?

- 34 countries have banned or taxed plastic bags, including places like China, south Africa and Ireland
- Taiwan is prohibiting not only plastic bags, but also disposable plastic plates, cups and cutlery used by fast food vendors. The threat of fines of up to £152 has resulted in a 70% reduction in the use of plastic bags, and a 25% cut in landfill waste.
- Ireland's 15p "plastax" on carrier bags, introduced in 2002, has led to a 90% reduction in use.
- In France, reusable plastic bags - heavier, easier to recycle and less likely to blow away - now account for more than half of the market.
- In 2002 Bangladesh became the first country to ban plastic bags. A movement against them began in the 1980s in Dhaka, where bags were found to clog drains in the monsoon rains, causing flooding.
- San Francisco has become the first US city to ban plastic bags.