

SAY NO TO PLASTIC BAGS

MELKSHAM CLIMATE FRIENDLY GROUP

We need your support

We need to reduce and then eliminate the *issue of new plastic bags* from retailers in Melksham

- Did you know?

A person uses a plastic carrier bag on average for only 12 minutes. A plastic bag can take between 500 to 1000 years to break down in the environment. In the UK at least 200 million plastic bags end up as litter on our beaches, streets and parks ever year

- What is the risk

Every year the RSPCA has to rescue and treat animals and birds that have been trapped and injured by carelessly disposed of rubbish. Bags can blow away, suffocate, choke or trap animals that climb inside

- What can you do?

Refuse a new bag, use an old one, and use a cloth or other kind of bag. Take it with you before you go shopping

- Who else has done it?

Tisbury - Wiltshire's first village to bin the bag

Modbury, a small town in Devon, UK gained much publicity when it banned plastic bags back in May 2007



Photo courtesy of Ron Prendergast, Melbourne Zoo

Further References:   
<http://www.adoptabeach.org.uk/>

<http://www.planetark.org/index.cfm>

<http://www.plasticbagfree.com/>

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More Information



Wiltshire Focus

Plastic bags are a very visible symbol of our throwaway society - but in one small corner of Wiltshire they are about to be consigned to the history books - Tisbury is going plastic-bag free.

From Tuesday January 1st 2008 the traders in this small village 13 miles west of Salisbury will be consigning plastic bags to the bin in a bid to be greener. It will be Wiltshire's first village to take the plunge.

Reusable cloth bags will be on sale everywhere in Tisbury for £1.25p, supplied by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, which is supporting the scheme

Disturbing Facts (more)

About 13 billion single-use plastic bags are distributed each year in Britain: 10 per household each week. On average, we use each plastic bag for just 12 minutes, yet they take 500 to 1,000 years to break down.

On a global scale, some areas of the sea surface are contaminated with more than 960,000 items of plastic per square kilometre. About one million seabirds choke or get tangled in plastic nets and other debris every year. And about 100,000 seals, sea lions, whales, dolphins, other marine mammals and sea turtles suffer the same fate. Then there is the climate-change aspect to think about: Plastic bags are manufactured using oil. Cutting their use in Britain by a quarter would reduce CO2 emissions by as much as 63 tons a year – equivalent to taking 18,000 cars off the road.

Bags for Life! (Or longer)

Plastics have only been around for about 150 years - The first man-made plastic arrived in 1862. As they haven't been around that long no one can be sure how long they take to break down. But environmentalists, scientists and manufacturers generally agree that the process can take anything up to 1000 years.

The average plastic shopping bag is made from polyethylene - a thermoplastic made from oil –and it rivals a cockroach for indestructibility.

They biodegrade very slowly. In fact, they can breakdown in sunlight which means they over time break down into smaller, more toxic chemicals which eventually contaminate soils and waterways. As a consequence their microscopic particles can enter the food chain.

When plastic bags don't get dumped in landfill sites or incinerated, they often find their way into the sea via drains, rivers and sewage pipes. According to the British Antarctic Survey, plastic bags have been found floating north of the Arctic Circle near Spitzbergen and as far south as the Falkland Islands.

Effects on Wildlife

The effect on wildlife can be catastrophic, with birds becoming terminally entangled and, according to a World Wildlife Fund report in 2005; they affect nearly 200 different species of sea life (including whales, dolphins, seals and turtles) which die after ingesting plastic bags which they mistake for food such as jellyfish. Plastic bags, once ingested, cannot be digested or passed by an animal so it stays in the gut. Plastic in an animal's gut can prevent food digestion and can lead to a very slow and painful death.

When you are enjoying the countryside and parks around and about, please remember not to discard any rubbish. Tying a knot in plastic bags before you throw away them out can stop them blowing about. Or better still - Re-use or Recycle them!