



Fact Sheet



- Marine Conservation Society: 2008 annual beach survey revealed that 47% of litter found on Britain's beaches was plastic
- The world's largest "landfill" is actually in the ocean. The Pacific Gyre, or "The Great Garbage Patch" . It is roughly the size of Texas, containing approximately 3.5 million tons of trash. Shoes, toys, bags, wrappers, and plastic bottles too numerous to count are only part of what can be found in this accidental dump floating midway between Hawaii and San Francisco.
- Dangers to wildlife have been well documented. Visit Marine Conservation Society website for more details www.mcsuk.org.

What's being done

Despite being regarded as a pioneer with the move to "green bags", Australia has yet to introduce a nationwide ban on thin plastic bags. Early in 2009, South Australia introduced a full ban and now more than 9 out of 10 shoppers are taking reusable bags to the supermarket and 82% of respondents believe the ban has had a positive impact on the environment.

It may surprise you to see some of the countries that have (or haven't) introduced charges or bans on thin plastic bags.

Key adopters of plastic bag free initiatives

Ireland	2002
Bangladesh	2002
South Africa	2003
India	2005
IKEA introduces charge for bags	2006
San Francisco	2007
Modbury, Devon	2007
China	2008
Italy, France levy	2008
M&S charge for bags	2008
33 London Boroughs sign agreement	2009
France, Italy ban	2010
California	2010
Over 100 UK towns committed to plastic bag free	2010
Wales	2011
London completely free	2012

Quick Facts

10bn: the number of plastic bags used in the UK every year.

20mins.-the average length of time a plastic bag is used before it is dumped

98% of plastic bags end up in landfill

1,000 years : the time it will take polythene to decompose

34 countries have already banned or taxed plastic bags

Ireland introduced a tax on 2002 and saw plastic bag usage fall by over 90%.
 Initiatives taken by UK supermarkets have cut plastic bag usage by 50%
 Wales will introduce a levy next Spring
 London vows to be plastic bag free for the Olympics in 2012
 More towns are starting initiatives every day: list at www.adoptabeach.org.uk