



The Story of the Plastic Bag

The first plastic (polythene) bags were introduced in the United States in 1957 and the “vest” style carrier so popular today was invented by a Swede, Sten Gustaf Thulin and patented by his company Celloplast in 1965, although the patent was overturned by Mobil in the US market in 1977. So it wasn't until the 1980's that their popularity really took off.

Estimates vary, but consumption probably peaked around 2002 at trillions of bags per annum. Only 20 years from being the greatest new thing in retailing to potential environmental disaster.

How many years will it take to reverse this trend? It is all about a cultural shift. I remember well as a child taking a “string bag” to the shops and cardboard boxes being readily available for purchases. I have no difficulty making that shift, but those in their 20's and 30's have been brought up with the convenience of plastic bags and have to get used to new ways of thinking.

Help is at hand, as the next generation, those still at school are embracing eco projects and have a much greater awareness of environmental issues and are bringing them home from school to their families.

So it may take a further 20 years in total to reverse the trend.

But, Governments across the world are taking action to speed up the process.

In 2002, the Irish Government introduced a tax on thin plastic bags and usage fell by over 90%. A number of other countries have followed suit.

In Australia, after a phased reduction, a total ban was introduced in 2008. It was the widespread adoption of “green bags” in Australia that encouraged John to start up Go Green Bags in Scotland.

Following a phased campaign, France will outlaw plastic bags completely this year and even China has introduced a ban.

The Welsh Assembly Government are planning to introduce a levy next year, and a number of towns throughout the UK are working towards becoming plastic bag free www.plasticbagfree.com

In January this year, Boris Johnson, The Mayor of London announced that London would move to be plastic bag free by the Olympics in 2012.

Well over 100 towns in the UK are on the route to plastic bag freedom. Why don't you join them. Download our “Start you own campaign” leaflet.

www.gogreenbags.com