



Press Release for Gazette 1 May 2008

01454-416778

**[pdfs. Attached of banner which will be used at launch & window sticker (Green Version) which will be appearing round the town to remind people to carry their own bags]**

### **Bring Out Your Bags!**

Sustainable Thornbury is launching its campaign to reduce plastic bags by declaring a plastic bag 'amnesty' on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May from 9.30am at St Mary's Centre. Everyone is encouraged to root in their drawers and cupboards for all those old plastic bags and bring them along for recycling. Everyone who brings along some bags will get the chance to win a free reusable bag as a substitute for the plastic ones.

Members of the group have been busy encouraging the town's shops to move away from plastic bags since a survey in Thornbury showed 97% of people wanted plastic bags reduced. People were worried about the damage they cause to wildlife and the mess they make of our environment.

Some shops have already moved to alternatives such as using paper bags or biodegradable plastic and selling their own re-usable bags. Other shops are using up old stocks before changing over or recycling old bags.

Sustainable Thornbury spokesperson, Margaret Pinder, said 'The traders have shown that they are willing to make changes. Now it is time for us shoppers to do our bit by bringing our own bags when we go shopping. We always used to do this – it's just a question of getting into the habit again.'

The campaign will be supported by an exciting series of posters designed by A level graphic design students from Castle School. Some students and members of Sustainable Thornbury will also be on hand to demonstrate the Japanese bagmaking art of Furoshuki and shoppers will also have the chance to win Japanese-style bags.

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Note to Editor:

This press release is in support of the Sustainable Thornbury plastic bag reduction campaign. For further information telephone 01454 416778 or email [Margaret.pinder@crumbly.plus.com](mailto:Margaret.pinder@crumbly.plus.com)

**The Gazette supported the campaign with a leader when the survey of shoppers was first announced in December 07. It would be very helpful to give the 'amnesty' a prominent story to encourage shoppers to take part.**

### **See below for some facts about plastic bags**

Plastic shopping bags have only been around for about 30 years

The world uses over 1.2 trillion plastic bags a year. That averages about 300 bags for each adult on the planet. That comes out to over one million bags being used per minute.

The number of plastic bags given out by the nine main supermarket chains in the UK is estimated at 17.5 billion each year - enough to cover the whole of England within 21 years.

On average we use each plastic bag for approximately 12 minutes before disposing. It then lasts in the environment for decades.

Not all litter is deliberate. 47% of wind borne litter escaping from landfills is plastic. Much of this is plastic bags.

In the marine environment plastic bag litter is lethal, killing at least 100,000 birds, whales, seals and turtles every year. After an animal is killed by plastic bags, its body decomposes and the plastic is released back into the environment where it can kill again.

Plastic bags, as with all forms of plastic, do not biodegrade. They photodegrade, breaking down into smaller and smaller toxic bits contaminating soil, waterways, oceans and entering the food web when ingested by animals.

(<http://www.messageinthewaves.com/facts.php>)

Countries and States that have banned or taken action to discourage the use of plastic bags include:

Australia, Bangladesh, Ireland, Italy, Taiwan, Mumbai, Scotland, France, West Bengal, Zanzibar, Tanzania, Switzerland, Rwanda, Denmark, Germany, South Africa, California, Somalia, Botswana, and the Philippines.

China is banning flimsy plastic carriers from June 2008.