

## How to Become Plastic Bag Free A Guide for Communities



**CADWCH | KEEP  
GYMRU'N | WALES  
DACLUS | TIDY**

Keep Wales Tidy looks forward to the day that plastic bags no longer litter the roads, beaches, river banks, trees and communities of Wales. Plastic bags comprise 2.7% of all litter in Wales by weight - which means that for every kilogramme of litter, you will find nearly 3½ plastic bags. 64% of people in Wales consider plastic bags to be a 'major problem'.

Our longer-term aim is to see a tax of 10p per bag placed on plastic bags at the checkout. Evidence from the Republic of Ireland suggests that this would lead to an overnight reduction

of more than 90% in the number of plastic carrier bags distributed. In Ireland, 91% of people think that their 10p plastic bag tax is a good idea!

This guide is to assist those dynamic communities that wish to take control of plastic bag litter in their area in one of the most effective ways possible - by becoming plastic bag free. This means that instead of giving out 'free' plastic bags, all traders in the community offer an environmentally friendly alternative, such as a calico (cotton) bag (costing, say, £1), or a cardboard box.

"Being able to achieve this has given our community the strength to tackle other issues"

Errol, Coles Bay

Several communities in Australia have already celebrated becoming 'Plastic Bag Free'. An up-to-date listing is available on <http://www.planetark.com/campaignspage.cfm/newsid/66/newsDate/7/story.htm#1>. The largest plastic bag free town to date includes all 91 retailers.

*Step 1: Find out how your community feels about the issue*

You may find that there is an unspoken groundswell of support for doing something about the problem of plastic bags. After all, 81% of people in Wales support paying a 10p levy for each plastic bag given out. It may be worth raising the subject at a community meeting, or even conducting a survey.



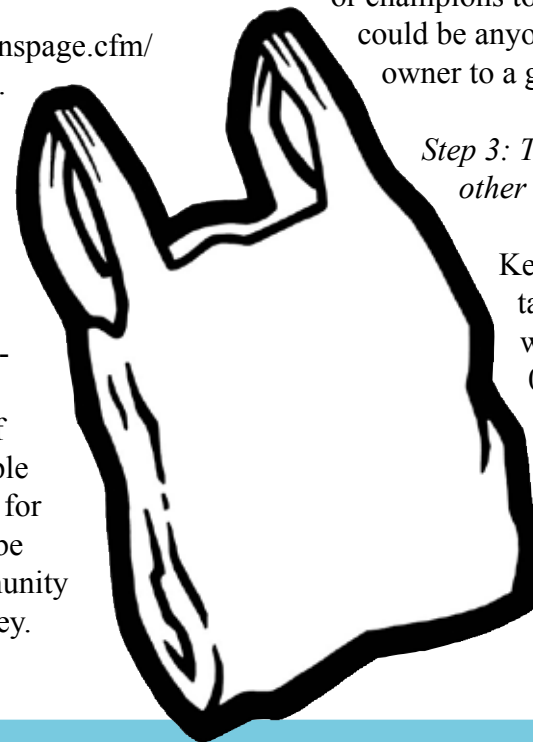
*Step 2: Form a group of people interested in making it happen*

It may also be useful to designate a local champion or champions to drive the campaign. This could be anyone from a local business owner to a group of schoolchildren.

*Step 3: Talk to Keep Wales Tidy, and other community organisations*

Keep Wales Tidy can be contacted on:  
[www.keepwalestidy.org](http://www.keepwalestidy.org)  
02920 256767  
[south@keepwalestidy.org](mailto:south@keepwalestidy.org)

Other voluntary organisations in your community may be able to help with advice, funding, or access to volunteers.



*Step 4: Get all the retailers in the proposed bag-free area on board*

A plastic bag free zone will generally work best if every retailer in that zone is happy to be involved. Armed with your evidence of local feelings about plastic bags, you will have a much stronger case when you approach store managers. In Coles Bay, Australia, local traders found that their business increased as people came to learn about their experience. Businesses also benefited from sales of calico bags: on average, tourists visiting the town purchase 8 calico bags each. At this point, it is a good idea to seek sponsorship to purchase enough branded cotton bags to provide two or three free of charge to every household in the area. If you have a special design for your community, it will make the bags cheaper overall, and more distinctive.



Tidy may be able to help you find local stockists of these items.

*Step 6: Ensure that everyone in the community is on board and aware of the change!*

People need to be involved in the process and made aware of the incoming 'plastic bag free' status in order to support it. You may want to post information through people's doors. It is a good

"Lots of people have said that it has made them think to the next step. They took the plastic supermarket bag for granted and they thought they were recycling and doing other things with other products but now it has made them think bigger than that. They are more into recycling now. Since then we have a lady who is recycling corks; we have somebody who is recycling the printer cartridges and stamps. People are coming out of the woodwork saying, 'I can do this,' because they have thought about something a bit more..."

Ms Foot, Coles Bay

"Going plastic bag free has been great for our business and great for our town. It has really bound the community together... our customers and our staff love us not using plastic bags any more"

Ben Kearney, coordinator of 'Plastic Bag Free Coles Bay' and local bakery owner

idea to hold several follow-up community meetings so that local people and traders can get involved. Shortly before the start date, hold a final information meeting. It is also advisable to ensure that notices are displayed in shops and tourist facilities to ensure that people aren't taken by surprise.

*Step 7: Set a date for the big event*

Invite the local press, and make sure that local traders aren't tempted to 'just use up' their last plastic bags after the start date! It might be an idea to encourage local shopkeepers to sign a declaration of support. Most of all, enjoy the day. You could be Wales' next 'Plastic Bag Free' town or community...



*Step 5: Ensure that a supply of alternatives, such as calico bags, is available for retailers*

You will need to make it simple for retailers to replace their plastic bags with the alternatives. Keep Wales

