



**Press Release for Gazette 11 December 08**

**[PHOTOS attached]**

**Thornbury shoppers and traders have got the bag habit!**

Members of Sustainable Thornbury have done a survey of 200 shoppers in Thornbury and were delighted to find that 83% of shoppers were carrying and using at least one reuseable shopping bag. Even better, most of these bags would not cause damage to the environment as they were made from cotton or jute. Sustainable Thornbury has been running a campaign to reduce plastic bag use for the last six months.

A survey of local shops showed that Thornbury's locally-owned shops have led the way by changing their plastic bag use – going for reusable or biodegradable bags, or even doing away with bags altogether! This has saved money for them as well as making a positive contribution to the environment. 93% of traders said that they had been able to buy fewer bags as shoppers have responded so well to the idea of bringing their own bags.

Margaret Pinder of Sustainable Thornbury said "Plastic bags are killing wildlife every day. We don't need the flimsy disposable plastic bags to do our shopping if we have proper shopping bags. Plastic bags have only been around for 30 years, and before that we all used our own shopping bags. Our campaign was designed to encourage people to go back to the habit of carrying a shopping bag – and we are really pleased that shoppers have got the message. Thornbury should be proud of the changes that traders and shoppers have made this year."

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Note to Editor:

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

**Facts:**

**The Gazette supported the campaign with a leader when the first survey of shoppers was undertaken in December 07.**

**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 banned flimsy plastic carriers from June 2008.

### Survey of local traders results

Traders	a) routinely place purchases in a bag	14%
	b) ask if the customer needs a bag	52%
	c) only offer a bag if asked for it	22%
	d) offer, but charge for a bag	8%
	e) don't offer bags at all	4%

Have you been able to buy fewer bags? Yes 93% / No 7%

If you use them, what type of carrier bags do you now use?

a) conventional plastic	48%
b) recycled plastic	15%
c) degradeable plastic	15%
d) biodegradable plastic	11%
e) paper	11%

If you do use conventional plastic bags, are you

a) controlled by head office policy?	50%
b) using up existing stocks?	33%
c) going to continue to use them?	17%

About your customers

Do you now find that your customers carry their own bags

a) usually	26%
b) mostly	49%

- c) occasionally 16%
- d) never 9% (take away food outlet)

Do you feel that your customers support the changes you've made? Yes 100%

