Plastic Bag Charge Expected to Raise Millions for Good Causes

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From October 5th, customers at all large UK shops will be charged 5p for each single-use carrier bag they use during their shopping trip as part of a new Government scheme.

Based on statistics from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland - where a bag charge already exists - Tesco anticipates plastic carrier bag use in England to drop by nearly 70% as a result.

To help customers reduce their bag use and become accustomed to using Bags for Life, in England Tesco will offer a limited number of free Bags for Life at the till during the week before the charge comes into force. Tesco will also share a variety of top tips on how customers can cut down the number of bags used during each shopping trip.

Tips include the importance of making sure you have a bag stashed in your car boot, as well as techniques for folding bags extra small so they can fit in a purse or handbag.

Tesco has also revamped the design of its single-use carrier bags, to coincide with the introduction of the bag charge. The new bags are made of recycled plastic and are much stronger and sturdier. This means fewer will be needed for each shopping trip, which will help customers save money as well as the environment. The new bags will be manufactured using a 'Closed Loop' system, which means they will be made from plastic recycled from Tesco stores. Tesco customers will be able to recycle their used bags in store.

The bag charge in Scotland and Wales has so far helped raise over £5 million for the RSPB, Keep Scotland Beautiful and Keep Wales Tidy. The bag charge in England is also expected to raise millions, and it is expected to be the biggest ever single source of funding for community projects generated by Tesco customers.

Rebecca Shelley, Group Communications Director for Tesco said:

"It's incredibly important we do our bit for the environment and we're really proud of the work we've done in this area, particularly in reducing waste.

"We want to do everything we can to help our customers minimise the impact of the charge as well as their impact on the environment, by helping them recycle and re-use their bags.

"We're also going to work together with our customers to make sure the millions that will be raised from the bag charge goes towards making a real difference for our local communities."

Tesco sees protecting the environment as an essential as part of being a responsible business. The retailer has set an ambitious target to be a zero carbon business by 2050, and has led the industry in its work to reduce food waste.

Environment Minister Rory Stewart said:

"Using fewer plastic bags will have a huge impact on our natural and marine environment and will help clean up our high streets, but if people do need to take a new plastic bag from a shop, they should feel confident that their money is going to a good cause – done properly this new initiative will be of huge benefit to our environment, and to society.

"Tesco's programme will give shoppers a say in where their money goes and means all proceeds will be reinvested in local communities. We'd love to encourage other retailers to come forward with innovative schemes that support communities or the environment."

The money raised from the 5p bag charge in England will be used to pay for a large number of local environmental improvement projects in communities right across the UK. The kinds of projects that will get the green light as a result of the funding will include building new pocket parks, sports facilities, woodland walks and community gardens.

Tesco customers will get the chance to vote in store and online for the projects they most want to go

ahead in their own local areas. Six projects will receive funding in each of 432 regions annually, which means that around 2,500 different projects are expected to receive funding from the bag charge after just one year. The amount of funding available for individual local projects will range from £8,000 to £12,000.

Tesco is calling on customers to nominate local good causes they would like to see benefit from the money. Nominations will be whittled down to three good causes that customers can choose from to vote for in each area. Administration of the local funding will be handled by environmental improvement charity Groundwork, which specialises in supporting communities to transform local green spaces for the better.

Graham Duxbury, Groundwork UK chief executive, said:

"The bag charge is all about making sure we do what we can to create a better environment. Using the proceeds of the charge to help people improve parks and green spaces on their doorstep doubles the benefit. There are so many benefits to be gained from making sure people have well designed, well managed green space near to where they live.

"People are healthier because they can exercise in the fresh air, grow their own food or just get away from the hustle and bustle of the city. Communities are stronger because people get to know their neighbours and families have more places to have fun together. Local green spaces can also help tackle bigger issues – increasing biodiversity and reducing the impacts of climate change. We're delighted to be working alongside Tesco stores and customers to bring these benefits to thousands of communities across the UK."

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For more information please contact the Tesco Press Office on 01992 644645
We are a team of over 500,000 people in 12 markets dedicated to providing the most compelling offer to our customers.

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