

Bags of Trouble And Nowhere to Go For a 1000 Years!

**And we are all to blame. Just what is this trouble maker?
It's our all too convenient throw away item - the humble
plastic bag.**

Before you collect another one on your next shopping trip read up on these damning facts and figures. Then decide if the convenient plastic bag is really an all too **inconvenient** part of our lives.

The Long and Short of it

- Plastic bags take from 400 to 1000 years to break down in landfill.
- An estimated 17 billion plastics bags are used every year in the UK. Most (80%) are only used once, for 12 to 20 minutes.
- Plastic bags are made from oil. 8% of the world's oil production is used to make these and other plastic items.

Literally Litter by the Million load

- In the UK at least 200 million plastic bags end up as litter on our beaches, streets and parks every year.
- On average only 1 in 200 plastic bags, on average, is recycled – often as bin-liners, which also go straight to landfill.
- About 90% of floating marine litter is plastic, and more than half of that is plastic bags.

A deadly convenience

- Plastic bags photo-degrade rather than biodegrade – breaking into smaller and smaller pieces which contaminate the soil, block and pollute waterways, and often end up in the ocean. When eaten by animals, they can introduce toxins into the food chain because chemicals are added to plastic to improve its flexibility etc., including known carcinogens.
- Birds and animals eat the plastic, which can poison them, cause internal damage, or fill their stomachs so they starve to death. Some become entangled in the plastic and die.
- Plastic bags in the oceans kill more than 100,000 sea-birds, dolphins, whales, seals, turtles and other animals every year. Some estimates are much higher.

So What is the Solution?

Cut down on the habit of using throw away bags and use re-usable bags. For local residents, we have made it easy for you to switch with this free organic cotton bag. From March 17th, the following shops will be piloting a Say No to Plastic campaign:

*Park Street Stores & Post Office, Stoke by Nayland
Assington Farm Shop, Assington
Polstead Community Shop, Polstead
Lower Dairy Farm, Little Horkesley
Scotland Place Farm, Stoke by Nayland.*

Alternatives to plastic bags and their pros and cons:

- **Degradable bags** are made from oil-based plastic with additives which begin to break the bags down after about 18 months. If sent for recycling with 'normal' plastic bags, they contaminate the whole batch. They break down slowly, into fragments, which can clog waterways and be eaten by animals.
- **Biodegradable bags** made from cornstarch can be composted and break down leaving nothing but CO2, water and biomass. However, some bags described as biodegradable are still plastic with additives and may have the same problems as degradable bags.
- **No bag** is entirely environmentally friendly because as well as the material used, energy and water used in production and transport are a factor. The participating shops will be trying compostable cornstarch bags, but they cost much more than plastic and shops can only make the switch long-term if we all try hard to re-use bags and give up disposable bags.

For even more information go to: Modbury website: www.plasticbagfree.com Modbury was the first town in the UK to ban plastic bags.



If you would like to learn more and help our campaigns, come to the **Village Green Teams AGM at Polstead village hall** on Saturday, **March 15th at 7pm**, or contact: **Helen Chen on 01206 262459.**

Free Organic Cotton bag campaign has been sponsored by Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project

The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Project (DVSVP) seek to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. The DVSVP administer the Sustainable Development Fund that is a highly innovative scheme to encourage individuals, community groups, schools, businesses and parish councils to develop projects that are of benefit to the environment, economy and society within the Dedham Vale AONB.

For more information on the work of the Project or the Sustainable Development Fund see www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org or contact us at dedhamvale.project@et.suffolkcc.gov.uk or call us on 01473 264263.