

Booksellers reduce plastic bag usage and offer more *Bags for Life*

31 March 2008

Booksellers have reduced their use of plastic bags and are introducing more *Bags for Life* as well as helping charities.

Results from a survey carried out by the Booksellers Association of the UK & Ireland in March 2008 found the following:

- 86% of booksellers are asking customers if they required a bag
- 82% of booksellers had reduced their plastic bag usage over the period 1st January 2007 to 31st December 2007 compared to the same period in 2006
- 21% of these booksellers reported a reduction of over 25%
- 18% of these booksellers reported a reduction between 21% and 25%
- 20% of these booksellers reported a reduction between 16% and 20%
- 57% of booksellers are purchasing plastic bags with a higher level of recycled content
- 26% were now offering *Bags for Life* – in hessian, jute and recycled cotton
- 46% of those charging for bags are giving monies received to a charity
- 55% would consider charging for bags in the future

Here are some quotes from booksellers regarding bag usage:

“We ask most customers if they want a bag and we have our own signage encouraging them not to. The simple process of 'asking the question' and using supplier boxes for larger amounts of books has greatly reduced our bag consumption.”

“Since Christmas 2007 our usage has gone down 40% because we ask if customers need a bag instead of want a bag.”

“We have ordered no plastic bags in the past 4+ years - we have given away 2000 cloth bags bearing our name and details - we offer paper bags or used plastic bags - we find now most customers say there is no need for a bag or bring their own containers.”

“Books are now issued through the children's class teachers so are packaged in recyclable boxes. Previously, books and stationery were issued to each child using up to 1000 plastic bags at the start of the new school year.”

“We do not use any plastic bags in our shop. We use organic cotton promotional bags and

unique newspaper bags made by a charity for street children in India. And these we only give out if necessary.”

“We probably only give a plastic bag to around 10% of our customers. We offer a paper bag for small purchases, but most people use a bag they already have. We offer a 'biothene' rather than polythene bag for those who still need a large bag. This is 70% degradable as the 100% degradable are not of sufficient strength for books, although technology is improving and by the time we reorder, this could be an option. “

“We stock overprinted jute bags and the cotton bags from the BA and these have proved very popular. We are currently expanding this range. We are also about to re-order bag stock and are looking at compostable bags, but they have to be strong enough for academic books.”

“We use a lot of paper bags and have a notice saying we will only give out plastic bags to those who request them, unless they have many items. We are involved with a campaign to become a plastic bag free town.”

“Since January 1st 2008 we have been asking customers to make a donation in aid of The John Muir Trust (an environmental body) if they need a plastic bag. We are also selling attractive Fairtrade bags made from recycled cotton.”

“We have run a newspaper piece on not using bags and we have been charging 10p for plastic bags for a long time. We have also done a piece in the parish magazine about plastic bags and the links to the charity we support.”

“We have been charging 10p for plastic bags for several months and donating all the money to a charity called Deaf Education in Africa.”

Source: www.booksellers.org.uk