



NEWSLETTER, OCTOBER 2009: PLASTIC BAGS – A GAIN!

International

Ireland is to double the levy on plastic store bags to 40p. Yippee, well done Ireland! Why aren't we doing this? When the levy was only 15p it reduced consumption by up to 90% and raised millions for the government. Who could object? An entirely voluntary tax. Well?

National

Just doing a little google search. More and more towns, and even countries, are becoming plastic-bag-free. Richmond and Kingston should be joining them.

Local

Greener-upon-Thames grows

Towards a Plastic-Bag-Free Kingston has joined with Greener-upon-Thames and will be evolving as quickly as possible into Greener Kingston. We have already collected a pledge from Kingston and Surbiton MP Ed Davey and will be seeking pledges from other Kingston politicians and candidates as well as approaching more Kingston shops.

Plastic-Bag-Free Day in Kingston

Plastic-Bag-Free Day in Kingston upon Thames Market Place went very well. Helped by some local press coverage, a lovely sunny day, a good central space thanks to Kingston Parish Church, and some excellent energetic volunteers, we gave away something like 270 "good bags". 44 of them were colourful cloth "Morsbags" made out of unwanted remnants at two Transition Town Kingston (TTK) workshops, 20+ were recycled and sample bags given by TTK members, and the rest were cotton bags donated by Kingston First. Every single bag, with a message inside about the effects of plastic bags on the environment, had gone by lunchtime! In return, shoppers gave us 27 plastic bags to recycle. We also gave out countless flyers, stickers and magnets, and we were visited by local MP Susan Kramer in the afternoon.

Meanwhile by the Thames, in a community litter-pick organised by Kingston's Canbury and Riverside Association, volunteers picked up over 50 discarded plastic bags on just a short stretch of riverside.

Plastic Bag Free Day Richmond

We had an excellent day, with around 75 more businesses pledging support and several hundred petition signatures gathered in Richmond, Sheen and Kew. Kew reported that the "response to the petition was overwhelmingly positive – we even had people queuing up to sign at one point." A short film was produced on the day with all the local politicians and local Greener teams, with photographs in the local press.

And actually, look around: we *are* carrying more reusable bags!

From the Marine Conservation Society's website. Scary stuff! Their report, Silent Seas, says:

... plastic can absorb toxic chemicals from their surroundings, resulting in concentrations much higher than in the normal environment. Concentrations of chemicals such as PCB's and heavy metals can be up to 1 million times higher than in ocean water (Moore et al 2001). Since the plastic particles are easily ingested by filter feeding animals the potential exists for the pollutants to be passed up the food chain.

Read that again. What it means is that we – and our children – are eating this toxic stuff.

We continue our press towards Downing Street to request a mandatory levy placed on plastic carrier bags.