

ABOUT PLASTIC BAGS

A QUICK-REFERENCE RESOURCE BASED ON SCIENCE NOT SPIN

The lightweight supermarket "vest-style" carrier bag is one of the most resource-efficient solution with the lowest carbon footprint, especially when re-used or recycled.

Myth	Fact
Conventional plastic bags have the greatest environmental impacts.	Conventional plastic bags have the lowest global warming potential of any alternative material.
Plastic used for bag production seriously depletes oil reserves.	Plastic used for bag production largely comes from bi-products of the oil refining process such as naphtha and ethylene. Demand for Oil is driven by heat. Energy and transport.
Heavy-duty, hand-finished, shopping bags are better for the environment.	Heavy duty bags may be designed to last longer but require far greater resource in production which together with transportation and storage impacts negates any perceived environmental advantage.
Bags made from natural and sustainable materials (such as cotton and jute) are better for the environment.	Using these materials for bags requires an unrealistically high incidence of re-use before they even come close to the low impacts of plastic (which can always be reused and recycled).
Biodegradable plastics are better for the environment.	Biodegradable plastics can wreck conventional plastic recycling systems, can give off methane when decomposing and have limited re-use options due to their shorter life. Often they are made using conventional LDPE film with a chemical additive that accelerates degradation and only contributes to the incidence of microplastics in the wider environment.



THE REAL & HONEST CO2 IMPACT OF PLASTIC BAGS

UK AVERAGE DAILY CAR JOURNEY

= 10kg of CO2 (1 x 30 mile trip) equals to the average household consumption of plastic bags for 3 years.

JUST ONE LONG HAUL RETURN FLIGHT

= 1750kg of CO2 that's the equivalent to more than 500 years of plastic bag impacts for a typical household.

THE TOTAL ANNUAL UK CONSUMPTION OF 6.5 BILLION CARRIER BAGS

that's the equivalent to Just one 8 mile trip for every car registered in the UK or around 2 hours of flight activity at Heathrow Airport.



Facts and calculations based on UK Environment Agency Report SC030148/2011

