



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Single-use carrier bags: Consultation on the proposal to extend the single-use carrier bag charge to all retailers and to increase the minimum charge to 10p

**Summary of consultation responses and the UK
government's response**

August 2020



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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. The government wants to leave our environment in a better state than we found it. The 25 Year Environment Plan¹, published in January 2018, outlined the steps that will be taken to achieve that ambition, including new measures to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste. It included a commitment to extend the highly successful single-use carrier bag charge to all retailers on a mandatory basis if voluntary approaches proved ineffective, and to increase the minimum charge to at least 10p. In December 2018, the government consulted on these proposals.
- 1.2. Single-use plastics damage terrestrial and marine life and environments, and there are costs associated with their clean-up and externality costs imposed on the tourism and fishing industries. For these reasons, we must do more to protect the environment from the scourge of plastic waste.
- 1.3. The UK is a world leader in tackling plastic waste, and we have committed to work towards all plastic packaging placed on the market being recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025, and to eliminate avoidable plastic waste by 2042. We have made significant progress so far, introducing one of the world's toughest bans on microbeads in rinse-off personal care products and significantly reducing the sale of single-use carrier bags in the main supermarkets by more than 95% with our 5p charge. Our carrier bag charge applies to bags of up to 70 microns thick, which compares with requirements on countries in the EU to introduce measures on bags up to 50 microns thick. We will also introduce a ban, with exemptions, on the supply of single-use plastic straws, drink stirrers, and cotton buds in October 2020.
- 1.4. Our actions to date have proved effective and have met with strong public support and enthusiasm. The [Resources and Waste Strategy for England](#)², published in December 2018, analysed the challenges currently facing the recycling industry in this country, setting out how we would tackle them. This includes making producers more responsible for the products they put on the market, starting with reforming the packaging waste regulations, and making recycling simpler for households. Our proposals to extend and increase the carrier bag charge are just one part of our wider strategic approach to tackling plastic waste.

¹ A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

² Resources and Waste Strategy for England - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765914/resources-waste-strategy-dec-2018.pdf

- 1.5. [The Single Use Carrier Bags Charges \(England\) Order 2015](#) came into force in October 2015. The regulations require businesses who sell goods with over 250 employees to charge a minimum of 5p for the supply of single-use carrier bags. Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) were excluded from the mandatory obligation to charge. Whilst these regulations have been effective, reducing the use of single-use carrier bags by over 95% in the main supermarkets and raising over £180m for good causes, many single-use carrier bags are still supplied by MSMEs. For example, in 2018 an estimated 3.2 billion single-use carrier bags were circulated by MSMEs, airport retailers and civil and voluntary organisations. In line with our ambition to eliminate avoidable plastic waste, the government therefore consulted on proposals to further reduce consumption of single-use carrier bags.
- 1.6. The consultation on extending and increasing the carrier bag charge ran from 27 December 2018 to 22 February 2019.
- 1.7. A total of 583 responses were received from;
- Members of the general public (437),
 - Public bodies (43),
 - Non-governmental organisations (25),
 - Retail industry (30),
 - Manufacturing industry (1),
 - Trade Associations (5),
 - Importers of single-use carrier bags (1),
 - Others (41).
- 1.8. These were submitted through a variety of channels including the online consultation form, by email and on paper. Those who responded as “other” included waste processors, universities, charities, youth groups, and independent businesses.
- 1.9. Annex A has a list of all the organisations that responded to the consultation.

2.0 Question 1

The government proposes to extend the single-use carrier bag charge to all retailers in England. Do you agree with this proposal?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I neither agree nor disagree
- d) I don't know / I don't have enough information

Please give reasons for your answer. Where available, please provide supporting evidence

Summary of responses

- 2.1. 566 respondents provided answers to Question 1: 435 from members of the public and 131 from organisations. 11 responses from members of the public were duplicates and therefore excluded from the analysis.
- 2.2. Key responses were received from organisations including the British Retail Consortium, Federation of Independent Retailers, the Association of Convenience Stores (ACS), Keep Britain Tidy, UK Travel Retail Forum, Heathrow Airport, the Grantham Centre from the University of Sheffield, SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK, Global Trading UK, and the Co-operative Group.
- 2.3. Overall, the large majority of respondents agreed with the proposal to extend the single-use carrier bag charge to all retailers in England.
- 2.4. Figure 1 shows that overall, the majority of respondents agreed with the proposal to extend the single-use carrier bag charge to all retailers in England. Supporters of the proposal stated that the responsibility to reduce single-use carrier bags should fall to all retailers and not just large retailers. Another group of respondents went further to suggest that as the 5p charge in large retailers has been so effective, extending this to all retailers is a logical next step.
- 2.5. A small number of members of the public were against the proposal. The reasoning behind their views was mixed. Many believed that instead of the charge being extended to all retailers, single-use carrier bags should be banned altogether. Others stated that the charge would act as a tax to small businesses. Another group of respondents believed that rather than continuing to focus on consumer

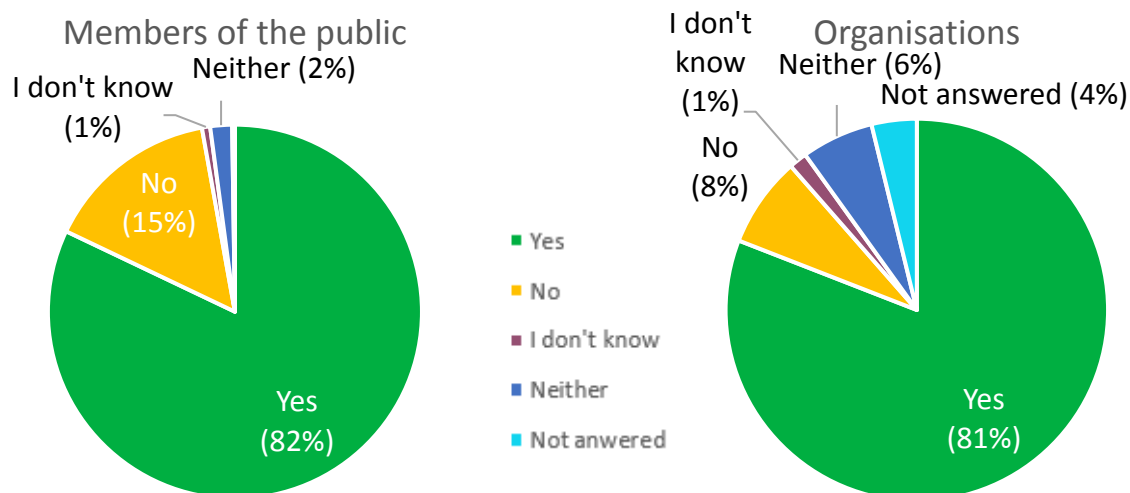


Figure 1: Responses to Question 1

behaviour, there should be a shift to focus on the supply of single-use carrier bags, targeting manufacturers. Finally, some reasoned that many small retailers provide on-demand shopping and forcing consumers to pay for a carrier bag will limit this spontaneity, potentially hurting businesses.

- 2.6. A small number of members of the public were against the proposal. The reasoning behind their views was mixed. Many believed that instead of the charge being extended to all retailers, single-use carrier bags should be banned altogether. Others stated that the charge would act as a tax to small businesses. Another group of respondents believed that rather than continuing to focus on consumer behaviour, there should be a shift to focus on the supply of single-use carrier bags, targeting manufacturers. Finally, some reasoned that many small retailers provide on-demand shopping and forcing consumers to pay for a carrier bag will limit this spontaneity, potentially hurting businesses.
- 2.7. The majority of organisations also supported the proposal to extend the charge to all retailers. Most shared a similar opinion with the majority of members of the public, stating that all retailers should be responsible for reducing plastic waste. Most responses alluded to the negative impacts of plastic pollution and litter on the environment. Another group of respondents believed that extending the charge to all retailers would allow for an equal playing field for businesses and have the added benefit of consistency for consumers throughout Scotland, Wales and England. Other views included that this consistency would enable lasting behaviour change.
- 2.8. The Federation of Independent Retailers provided some anecdotal evidence about its experience with voluntary charges among its members. According to this organisation, more than half of its members chose not to introduce a 5p charge,

claiming concerns that they may lose customers to shops that do not apply a 5p charge. They supported extending the single-use carrier bag charge because it would create a level playing field in which all retailers would be required to charge for these bags.

- 2.9. A small number of organisations did not support the proposal. Whilst there was no consensus within this group, many believed that this proposal would overly burden owners of small businesses who already have many administrative and regulatory responsibilities.
- 2.10. Another small retailer added that there has been an increase in online shopping and in click and collect sales, for which goods are often provided in sealed bags. Sealed bags are a form of packaging that falls outside the scope of the existing regulations. The government has separately consulted on plans to introduce a system in which producers of packaging will finance the costs of its collection and recycling.

Government response

- 2.11. The government notes that the vast majority of respondents, including members of the public (82%) and organisations (81%), agree that the single-use carrier bag charge should be extended to all retailers. We note that support for the proposed extension included many organisations that represent small retail businesses.
- 2.12. A minority of respondents argued for a total ban on the supply of single-use carrier bags. However, the government is not currently considering the option of a total ban. We recognise the role that single-use carrier bags can play in spontaneous, unplanned purchases, and in some cases alternative bag types can have a higher carbon impact than a single-use carrier bag.³
- 2.13. The government will therefore extend the single-use carrier bag charge to all businesses in England supplying goods. The obligation to report on the number of bags sold each year that currently applies to large retailers, however, will not be extended to MSMEs, in order to minimise regulatory burdens on these businesses. Large businesses with over 250 employees will continue to report on the number of single-use carrier bags they sell each reporting year when supplying goods.

³ Life cycle assessment of supermarket carrier bags - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/291023/sc_ho0711buan-e-e.pdf

- 2.14. We commend those small retailers that have already taken steps to reduce single-use carrier bag sales, and agree with the views expressed by key representative organisations that the mandatory approach will ensure a level playing field amongst MSMEs. The mandatory approach will ensure those MSMEs that voluntarily charge are no longer potentially at a commercial disadvantage compared to those that do not charge.
- 2.15. MSMEs will be obliged to charge for single-use carrier bags supplied with deliveries and online sales, including click-and-collect (and similar) collections. Bags considered as sealed packaging for mail order and click-and-collect will continue to be exempt from the charge.⁴

⁴ Between March and September 2020, the obligation to charge for single-use carrier bags supplied with online grocery deliveries was suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This was a temporary easement to speed up deliveries and reduce contact between delivery drivers and customers.

3.0 Question 2

Do you agree with the assumptions and the assessment of costs and benefits in the impact assessment (IA) on extending the charge to all retailers?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I neither agree nor disagree
- d) I don't know / I don't have enough information

Please give reasons for your answer. Where available, please provide supporting evidence

Summary of responses

3.1. 565 respondents provided answers to Question 2; 434 from members of the public and 131 from organisations. Key responses from organisations included those from The Co-operative Group, The Association of Convenience Stores, SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK, the Bio-Based and Biodegradable Industries Association, Keep Britain Tidy, the UK Travel Retail Forum, and Heathrow Airport. The responses mainly echoed the sentiment of Question 1, generally supporting the proposal and alluding to environmental concerns. Most members of the public did not mention any specific costs/benefits referenced in the impact assessment in their responses.

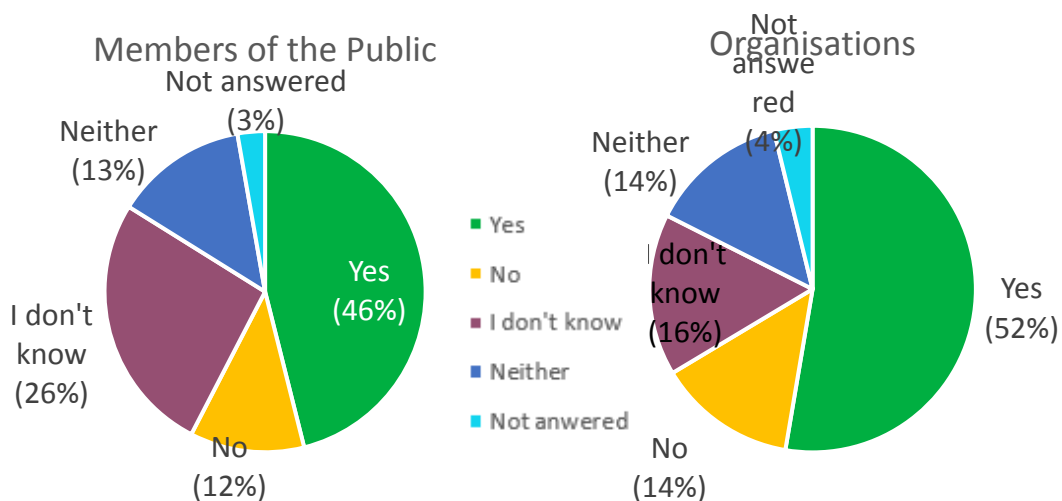


Figure 2: Responses to Question 2

- 3.2. A small number of members of the public responded that they did not agree with the government's assumptions. Views generally fell into two groups. One group believed that the proposal imposes over-management and cost on small businesses to little measurable benefit, and another group believed that the impact assessment did not consider all impacts.
- 3.3. Just over a quarter of responses from members of the public responded with "I don't know / I don't have enough information". This could be due to a number of reasons, for instance, respondents may not have read the impact assessment, may not have knowledge of the economic/environmental issues, or may not have relevant experience in the retail sector.
- 3.4. Unlike members of the public, a majority of organisations agreed with the assumptions and assessment of costs in the impact assessment. Most organisations provided qualified responses, generally agreeing with the impact assessment but providing some added considerations. For example, a large group of respondents, including SUEZ, UK Travel Retail Forum and the Environmental Ethics Group, were concerned with the greenhouse gas, waste management, and littering costs and benefits of extending the charge to all retailers. SUEZ stated that paper bags and bags for life weigh significantly more than single-use carrier bags. It was therefore likely that, if reuse rates of alternative bag types are not achieved, the weight of residual waste will increase (a cost), recycling will increase (a cost or slight benefit depending on the value of the commodity) and littering will remain similar or reduce slightly, reducing costs. As such SUEZ believed that the benefits to waste management are overstated.
- 3.5. Other organisations added that the proposed increase in charge and coverage should be accompanied by increased monitoring of the effectiveness of the policy. This referred to monitoring the number of times paper bags, bags for life and other alternatives are reused, and ensuring that the money collected is being used effectively, to safeguard that there is a genuine economic or environmental benefit to the scheme.
- 3.6. A small number of organisations did not agree with the claims made in the impact assessment regarding extending the charge to all retailers. Those that provided reasons generally echoed the 'qualified' answers mentioned above in paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5. For example, some organisations believed that the benefits from single-use carrier bag sales will not actually go to the consumer.
- 3.7. The views from organisations in disagreement with the impact assessment included the fact that it does not calculate the "true lifetime costs" of the proposal to extend the charge to all retailers, particularly the costs of disposal since few recycling centres process film or bags.

Government response

- 3.8. The views and additional evidence provided in response to this question have been taken into account in finalising the costs and benefits of the proposal, including costs concerning the disposal of all bag types referred to above. Our assessment of future consumption levels of bags for life draws upon the study undertaken by the Environment Agency's life-cycle assessment of supermarket carrier bags, as referred to in paragraph 2.11.

4.0 Question 3

Do you support the proposal to increase the minimum charge from 5p to 10p?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I neither agree nor disagree
- d) I don't know / I don't have enough information

Please give reasons for your answer. Where available, please provide supporting evidence

Summary of responses

- 4.1. A total of 566 responses were received for Question 3. Of these, 14 were duplicate answers, all from members of the public, and were therefore excluded from the analysis. Of the remaining 552 responses, 421 were from members of the public, and 131 were from organisations. Key responses were received from organisations including the Co-Operative Group, Ocado Plc, Boots, John Lewis and Partners, Marks and Spencer, Greggs Plc, Natural England, the Association of Convenience Stores, Keep Britain Tidy, The Association of Convenience Stores, the Bio-Based and Biodegradable Industries Association, the Grantham Centre, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, Keep Britain Tidy, and Echo Packaging Limited.
- 4.2. Overall, a **majority** of both individuals and organisations indicated that they support the proposal to increase the minimum charge for a single-use carrier bag from 5p to 10p.

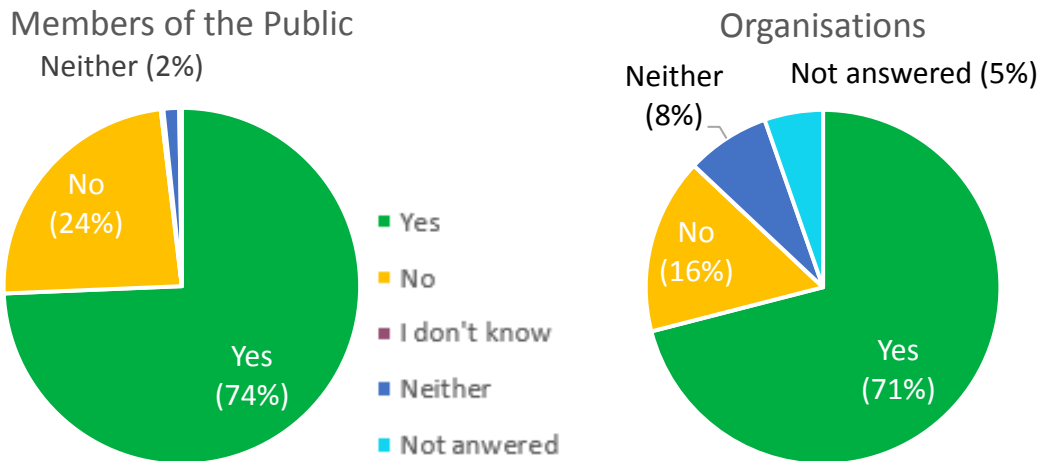


Figure 3: Responses to Question 3

4.3. The **majority** of members of the public supported increasing the minimum charge to 10p. However, of these, 124 did not provide further reasoning. Those that did provided the following reasons, listed in order of the number of responses sharing these views:

- a. The original 5p charge was very effective, and therefore an increase in this charge will provide further reductions in the use of single-use carrier bags.
- b. Whilst increasing the minimum charge to 10p is a step in the right direction, single-use carrier bags should carry an even higher charge. Those that use single-use carrier bags are often those that have a large family and therefore purchase a high-volume of shopping. Others also reasoned that the charge should be higher for the reusable bags as well. Many respondents indicated that reusable bags are considered by many as single-use and that a higher charge for these would make customers value them more.
- c. A small number of views that supported increasing the minimum charge to 10p also called for further action, preferring to see more ambitious action towards a full ban on the use and sale of single-use carrier bags.

4.4. Of the members of the public that did not agree, a majority reasoned that increasing the minimum charge to 10p charge is insufficient to truly change behaviour. These respondents pointed to the fact that alternative and eco-friendlier options cost more than 10p, so the consumer will always prefer the cheaper, less eco-friendly single-use option. Other views included that the focus should be on incentivising bags of degradable or longer-lasting material and that an increase in 5p for a single-use carrier bags will not achieve this. Finally, another minority view expressed the sentiment that the focus should be on manufacturers, not consumers and that an

increase to 10p will not encourage producers to reduce plastic packaging, which was deemed more important.

- 4.5. Organisations had more varied responses compared to individuals, however, the general trends were the same: a **majority** (93 respondents) supported increasing the minimum charge to 10p, and a minority (21 respondents) did not.
- 4.6. The opinions shared by organisations in support of increasing the minimum charge to 10p were largely the same as those laid out by members of the public in paragraph 4.3.
- 4.7. IFAW, for example, welcomed the increase to 10p but added that a higher charge should be seriously considered, given the fact that a poll of around 2,000 shoppers in England demonstrated that nearly 60% of people were willing to pay up to 20p. This means that increasing the charge to 10p risks not being a steep enough price increase to deter those who are currently paying the minimum 5p charge. However, the ACS conducted its own consumer polling and found that 56% of consumers in England supported an increase in the price of single-use carrier bags from 5p to 10p, 27% were opposed to an increase, and the remaining respondents either didn't know, did not oppose nor support the increase. Of those who currently purchase single-use carrier bags (46% of the sample), 41% responded that they would buy fewer single-use carrier bags and use the bags they already own, 26% would buy fewer single-use carrier bags and buy more bags for life, and 26% responded that it would not change their behaviour.
- 4.8. The Bio-based and Biodegradable Industries Association added that “there is little point in increasing the charge to 10p if the so-called bags for life are at the same price point”, suggesting that a minimum charge of 25p be introduced (and a minimum thickness of 100 microns) to better encourage reuse. Finally, Natural England and the Marine Conservation Society went further by suggesting that a periodic phase-out of all single-use carrier bags should be considered.
- 4.9. There were doubts regarding the assertion that charging customers for single-use carrier bags is the best method to achieve behavioural change, and therefore to achieve the ultimate goal of reducing plastic waste. The Grantham Centre stated that the increase “is unlikely to be sufficient to render the charge problematic for consumers (i.e. most are likely to be able to afford to pay 10p) and so is unlikely to change the psychological (and thus, arguably, behavioural) impact of the charge, which remains small and symbolic”.
- 4.10. There were also those that felt further proposals should target manufacturers rather than consumers. One large retailer reasoned that there has already been an 86% reduction in the sale of single-use carrier bags since the 5p charge was introduced, so the responsibility should now fall on industry to facilitate further change.

4.11. A minority view also added that increasing the charge will only likely to have an effect on increasing VAT receipts, rather than reducing the number of single-use carrier bags.

Government response

4.12. The government notes that a significant majority of respondents - members of the public (74%) and organisations (71%) - agree that the mandatory single-use carrier bag charge should be increased to 10p.

4.13. There was no consistent argument from those opposed to the increase to 10p, with some respondents arguing that an increase is not justified whilst others argued in support of a higher increase in the charge.

4.14. Therefore, the government will increase the minimum mandatory charge from 5p to 10p. This will apply to all businesses in England that supply goods in single-use carrier bags.

5.0 Question 4

Do you agree with the government's assessment of the impact on the consumption of single-use carrier bags as a consequence of increasing the charge from 5p to 10p?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I neither agree nor disagree
- d) I don't know / I don't have enough information

Please give reasons for your answer. Where available, please provide supporting evidence

Summary of responses

5.1. A total of 342 responses were recorded for Question 4, 225 were from members of the public, and 117 from organisations. Key responses were received from organisations including the Grantham Centre, Keep Britain Tidy, Ocado, SUEZ, the UK Travel Retail Forum, the British Retail Consortium, Echo Packaging Limited, Marks and Spencer, the Co-operative Group, and the Bio Based and Biodegradable Industries Association.

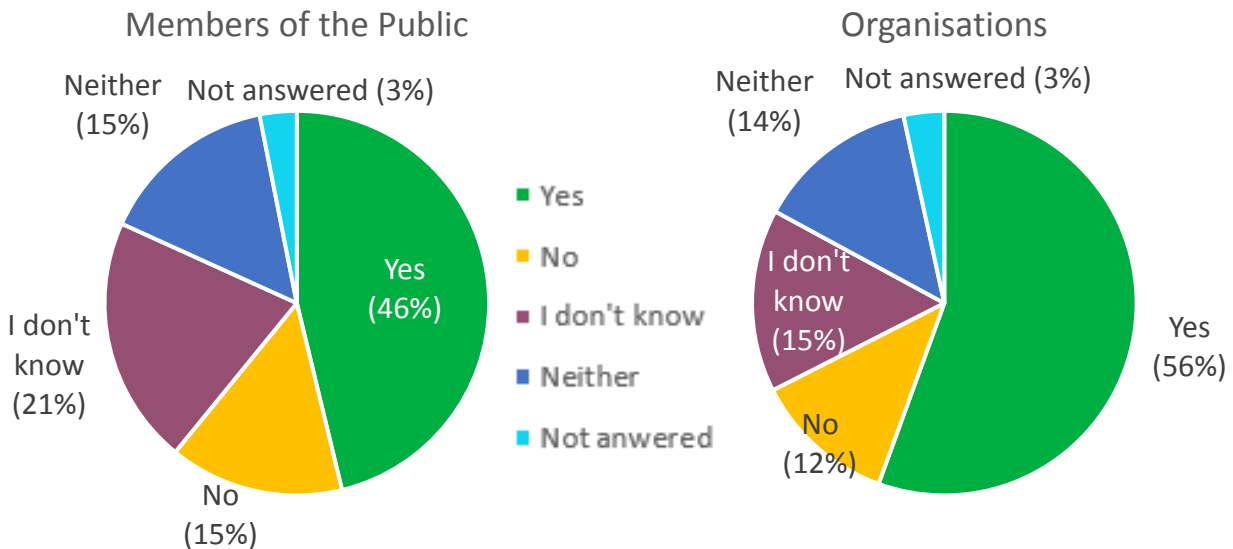


Figure 4: Responses to Question 4

- 5.2. Responses for this question were split, with a slim majority of organisations supporting the government’s impact assessment regarding the consumption of single-use carrier bags, and no majority opinion from members of the public.
- 5.3. Many members of the public supported the government’s assessment regarding the impact of increasing the single-use carrier bag charge on their consumption. Members of the public generally believed that the 5p charge worked, and therefore increasing the charge to 10p should be effective as well. Some members of the public added that a 5p increase will work, but that it won’t be sufficient to have a lasting effect.
- 5.4. Some members of the public did not agree with the government’s assessment; most of them expressed the opinion that a 5p increase is not enough of a deterrent to significantly change behaviour. Others responded that the government’s assessment is perhaps too ambitious and that any reduction in single-use carrier bag consumption will depend on many more factors not considered in the report (e.g. enforceability, clear definitions, etc.).
- 5.5. While many members of the public chose an answer other than “Yes”, only a small number provided further reasoning. This, coupled with a high number of “Not Answered” responses suggests that respondents did not have strong opinions for this question compared with others in this consultation. Some respondents stated that they had not read the impact assessment.
- 5.6. The majority of organisations did support the government’s impact assessment. Most of these provided general supporting remarks, stating that the report seems “thorough”, “sound” and “reasonable”. Some also added that while the charge increase will undoubtedly impact single-use carrier bag consumption, a strong public relations campaign is also important to have a lasting impact.
- 5.7. Many of those organisations who did not agree with the impact assessment pointed to the need for a full understanding of the costs and impacts to small businesses. As large supermarket retailers have already greatly reduced their consumption of single-use carrier bags, providing alternative bags available for purchase, some respondents, such as the British Retail Consortium, wished to understand how the increase in the single-use carrier bag charge would specifically impact those businesses still providing them (mainly online and micro-businesses, and MSMEs). On-Pack Recycling Label Ltd (OPRL) added that there should be evidence collated to monitor the impact of the price change on single-use carrier bags under unplanned shopping scenarios. As consumers are already accustomed to single-use carrier bag charges in large retailers, so their habits are unlikely to significantly change.

- 5.8. Finally, a smaller group of responses did not agree with the forecast that increasing the charge from 5p to 10p will result in a similar reduction to when the 5p charge was initially introduced. They added that as society becomes more accustomed to bringing their own bags (perhaps helped by extending the charge to all retailers), usage will continue to decrease without further intervention. The Grantham Centre added that “Data showing how usage has changed since the introduction of the charge in 2015 would provide evidence to this effect (e.g. if the trend in usage has continued to decrease rather than plateaued).”

Government response

- 5.9. The views and additional evidence provided in response to this question have been taken into account in finalising the cost-benefit analysis of the proposal. We estimate the increase of the charge to 10p combined with an extension to all businesses would bring a reduction of single-use carrier bags of up to 76% for all retailers five years after the changes come into force.

6.0 Question 5

Do you agree with the government's assessment of the impact on consumption of bags for life as a consequence of increasing the charge from 5p to 10p?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I neither agree nor disagree
- d) I don't know / I don't have enough information

Please give reasons for your answer. Where available, please provide supporting evidence

Summary of responses

6.1. A total of 566 responses were recorded for Question 5; 435 from members of the public and 131 from organisations. Key responses were received from organisations including the Co-operative Group, John Lewis & Partners, Marks and Spencer, Keep Britain Tidy, SUEZ Recycling and Recovery, the Grantham Centre, Ocado Plc and Natural England.

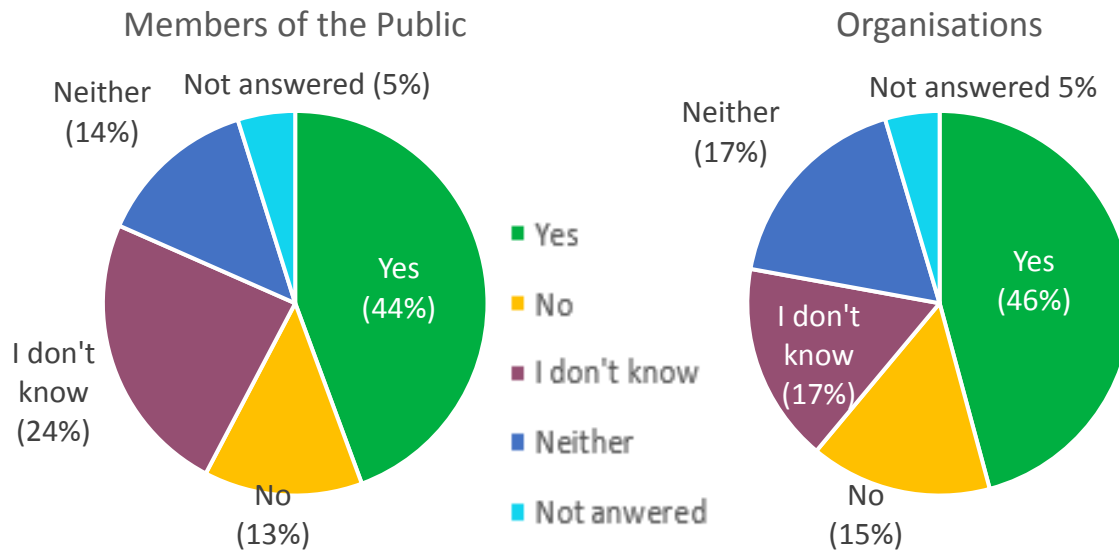


Figure 5: Responses to Question 5

- 6.2. Overall, there was no majority response from organisations or members of the public.
- 6.3. Many members of the public agreed with the government's impact assessment (IA), mainly offering generally supportive remarks, claiming the assessments in the IA to be "reasonable", and agreeing that a higher charge for single-use carrier bags will encourage more use of bags for life. Others provided further considerations, stating that the cost of bags for life should be higher to avoid people treating them as single-use, which many believed to be the case currently.
- 6.4. Members of the public who did not agree with the government's assessment thought that bags for life should be more expensive. Respondents in this group also added that they thought that bags for life are more problematic than single-use carrier bags at the point of disposal, as they thought they could be leaked into the environment and that the increase in charge will not change this.
- 6.5. Expanding on this sentiment, some members of the public alluded to the number of times a bag for life must be re-used for it to have a similar impact (regarding resource use) as one single-use carrier bag. Others added that a high charge for a bag for life would also encourage shoppers to remember to bring the bags when they do their shopping, as many people consistently purchase bags for life despite already owning them.
- 6.6. There was similarly no majority opinion from organisations' responses, although, like members of the public, many did agree with the government's assessment. Besides those offering generally supportive remarks, most respondents provided qualified responses, generally agreeing but flagging some specific concerns. For example, SUEZ was concerned with the number of times a bag for life is used. They added that if usage patterns are not above a minimum usage rate (they claimed four times for a paper bag and 100+ times for a bag for life), then the greenhouse gas emission (GHG) and waste management benefits and savings will not be fully realised. World Duty-Free agreed with the government's assumptions however added that bags for life usage patterns would likely not apply to airside retailers, because they believe it is extremely unlikely that passengers travelling through airports will bring bags for life with them alongside their luggage.
- 6.7. Responses from organisations that did not agree with the government's assessment were split. Some, such as Marks and Spencer and the British Retail Consortium, believed that the 5p increase in single-use carrier bags will not have an impact on the sales of bags for life, as supermarkets no longer sell single-use carrier bags. Others, such as the International Fund for Animal Welfare and the Co-operative Group, stated that without a parallel increase in the price charged for a bag for life, bags for life sales are likely to be much higher than what is projected in the impact assessment and that these bags will become the most popular choice

because of their low retail value. On this matter, the Foodservice Packaging Association insisted that greater insight is needed on the behaviour of those not re-using bags for life, as there appears to be an assumption that bags for life are not/will not be littered.

Government response

- 6.8. The views and additional evidence provided in response to this question have been taken into account in finalising the cost-benefit analysis of the proposal. We estimate an increase of 44% in the number of bags for life used over 10 years. However, the policy change will lead to an overall reduction of 24% in the number of bags supplied across all bag types (single-use carrier bags, bags for life, paper bags, cotton tote bags and bin liners) over that period, leading to an overall reduction in plastic usage.

7.0 Question 6

Would you support a requirement for producers of plastic packaging to separately report the number of single-use carrier bags they place on the UK market as part of their obligation under the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2007.

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I neither agree nor disagree
- d) I don't know / I don't have enough information

Please give reasons for your answer. Where available, please provide supporting evidence

Summary of responses

- 7.1. A total of 566 responses were recorded for Question 6; 435 from members of the public and 131 from organisations. Key responses were received from organisations including Echo Packaging Ltd., Cromwell Polythene Ltd., Keep Britain Tidy, Ocado Plc, Marks and Spencer, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, The Grantham Centre, and the Bio-Based and Biodegradable Industries Association.
- 7.2. Overall, a **majority** of both members of the public and organisations supported the requirement for producers of plastic packaging to separately report the number of single-use carrier bags they place on the UK market.

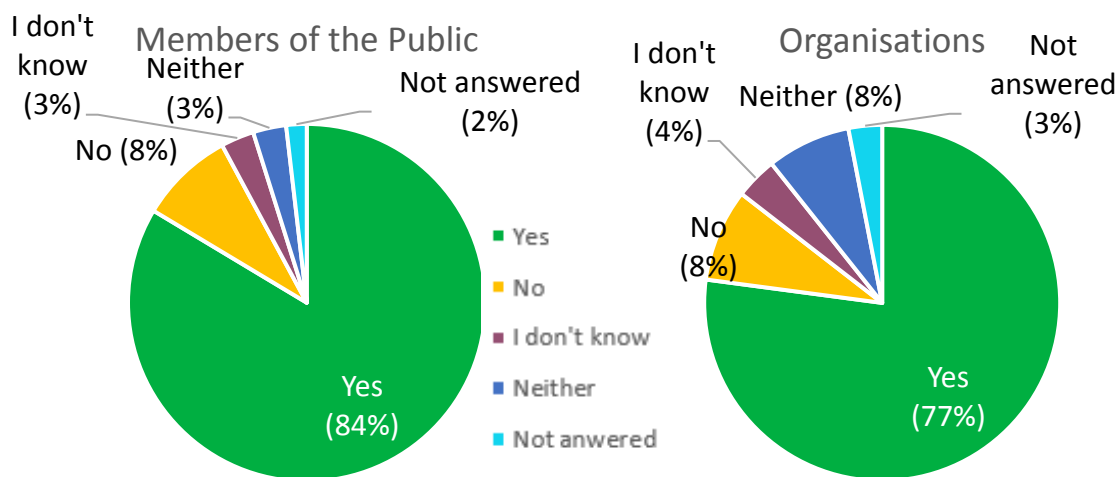


Figure 6: Responses to Question 6

- 7.3. The majority of members of the public were supportive of the proposed requirement. 138 people provided further reasoning and of these, the majority opinion was that reporting the number of single-use carrier bags placed on the market is the responsibility of companies as producers of plastic. Many believed that the measures will have the added benefit of exposing poor performing companies and put pressure on those to perform better. This same group of respondents were pleased that responsibility would be placed on companies, rather than on consumers. The next largest group of respondents pointed to the benefit of having statistics on the production of plastic bags; they furthered that this can only be beneficial as accurate statistics and reporting can be used for trend analyses and progress tracking in the future. Other members of the public believed that producers should report on the production of all other plastic production as well, for example, trays, wrapping, etc.
- 7.4. A small number of members of the public were against the proposal. Of these, the majority reasoned that it will add more 'red tape' and further costs to businesses that will inevitably be passed on to the consumer, which will hurt their business.
- 7.5. The proportion of answers by organisations was comparable to those from members of the public, with a **majority** agreeing with the proposal.
- 7.6. Majority views by organisations were split into two themes, comparable to the opinions expressed by members of the public in Paragraph 7.3. These opinions were as follows:
- a. Reporting will provide robust evidence needed to track the intended reduction in single-use carrier bags on the market year on year, in a way that is less burdensome than asking all retailers (including MSMEs) to have to report on it. The Campaign to Protect Rural England, Merseyside Recycling and Waste

Authority, The Grantham Centre, Bio-based and Biodegradable Industries Association, and Keep Britain Tidy shared this opinion, among others. An operator of a Packaging Compliance Scheme added that this would be “relatively straightforward to source and would increase traceability of data throughout the system”.

- b. Given the government’s push for Extended Producer Responsibility, producers of single-use carrier bags should be required to report the number of plastic bags they put on the market. The Grantham Centre supported the proposal’s focus on producers of plastic, as opposed to small business owners, reasoning that reporting would be too onerous for MSMEs.
- c. A small number of respondents highlighted the need to carefully word any amendments to current regulation, particularly surrounding the definition of a single-use carrier bag, the definition of a producer (to avoid double-counting) and reporting by count versus weight. The Association of Convenience Stores, for example, noted that they would welcome clarity as to whether the requirement would apply to the whole of the supply chain, which could include convenience retailers.

7.7. A small number of organisations were against the proposal. Very few provided further reasoning. Others sought additional detail on how this requirement would be implemented. Ecosurety for example, pointed to several perceived practical problems that would make reporting difficult e.g. lack of a common definition of a single-use carrier bag in the UK. Marks & Spencer Group added that the usage of single-use carrier bags is now largely limited to non-supermarket retailing, where volumes are much smaller, so the collection of data would cost more than it is worth.

7.8. Of the small number of plastic packaging manufacturers that did respond to this question, Echo Packaging Ltd confirmed they already provided this data as part of their annual returns under the packaging regulations. Cromwell Polythene Ltd. suggested that the number of bags for life should be reported too, so the comparison between single-use carrier bags and bags for life can be made.

7.9. Those organisations that responded “I neither agree nor disagree” also believed that without proper definitions it was difficult to answer the question.

Government response

7.10. The government notes that the majority of respondents (84% of members of the public and 77% of organisations) agree that producers of plastic packaging should separately report on the number of single use carrier bags they place on the market as part of their obligation under the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2007 (“The Packaging Regulations”).

- 7.11. The government will work with the Devolved Administrations in Scotland and Wales to introduce necessary changes under the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) (Amendment) regulations 2017. We believe that applying annual reporting requirements across GB will bring a more robust set of data than a collection of England only data. It will help us to measure the impacts of the extension of and increase to the carrier bag charge.
- 7.12. **The reporting requirement will apply to single-use carrier bags that are of a thickness of 50 microns or less and will commence with a requirement to report data for bags placed on the GB market from January 2022.** The obligation to report annually will fall on importers of bags imported to supply pack fillers and converters (i.e. GB manufacturers) of single-use carrier bags. Businesses that fall below the de minimis threshold for reporting, as set out in the Packaging Regulations, will be exempt from the requirement. The reporting requirement will be kept under review as part of the existing packaging regulations.

8.0 Question 7

Do you support the proposal to remove the existing exemption for single-use carrier bags supplied at security restricted areas at airports (apart for the supply of duty-free alcohol and tobacco sales in sealed bags)?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I neither agree nor disagree
- d) I don't know / I don't have enough information

Please give reasons for your answer. Where available, please provide supporting evidence

Summary of responses

8.1. A total of 566 respondents provided answers to Question 7; 435 from members of the public, and 131 from organisations. Key responses were received from organisations including Heathrow Airport, the UK Travel Retail Forum, SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK Ltd, Campaign to Protect Rural England, and the Grantham Centre.

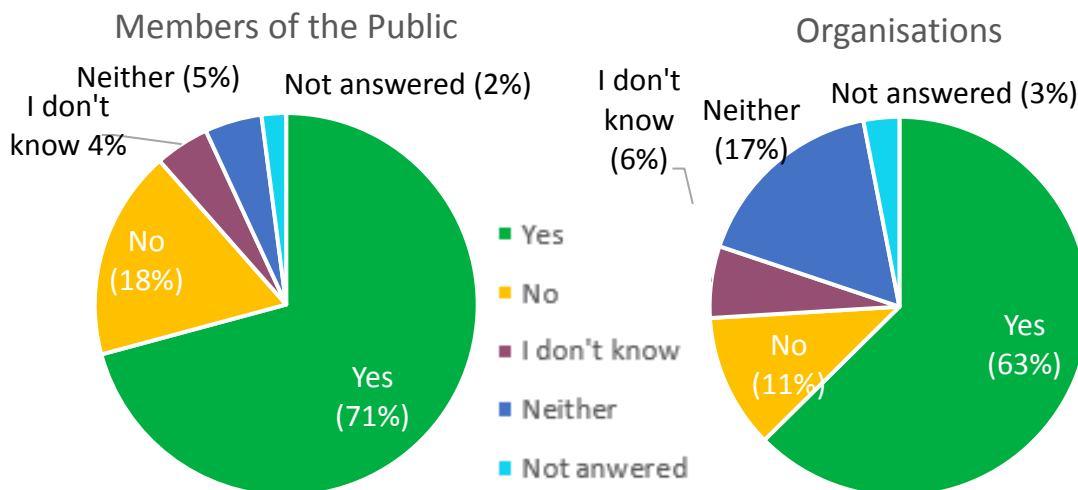


Figure 7: Responses to Question 7

- 8.2. Overall, a majority of both members of the public and organisations support the proposal to remove the airport exemption, with slightly higher support from members of the public than from organisations.
- 8.3. Of the members of the public supporting the proposal, approximately 60% did not provide further reasoning. Of those that did, the majority thought that there is no need for an exemption, as having one undermines efforts to reduce the use of single-use plastics. Many also added that airports should instead offer bags of alternative, more sustainable materials, such as reusable carrier bags. Finally, another group of respondents reasoned that airlines and airports generally have a high carbon footprint, so UK airlines and airports should take this opportunity to differentiate themselves by banning single-use carrier bags, demonstrating to visitors entering the country that the UK values the environment.
- 8.4. Of the organisations that supported the proposal, most shared the same opinion as members of the public; it is important to get airports on-board with reducing single-use carrier bags, and therefore they should not be exempt. Notably, Heathrow Airport mentioned that they are already working with partners to reduce the use of plastic, and that some “airside retailers”, operating as branches of national companies, mirror their approach on the high street and already charge for single-use carrier bags.
- 8.5. Other supporting views also echoed those of members of the public, regarding opportunities to lead by example. The UK Travel Retail Forum insisted that it is time for airports and airport retailers to embrace change and do their part to reduce consumer reliance on single-use carrier bags, particularly as individuals tend to exhibit more wasteful behaviour while travelling than they would in normal life.
- 8.6. Nearly a fifth of members of the public responding to Question 11 did not support the proposal to remove the airport exemption. It should be noted that many respondents answering “no” originally provided reasoning in support of removing the exemption, which could have been due to confusion over the phrasing of the question. Where possible, these responses were re-coded into “Yes” responses.
- 8.7. Those not supporting the proposal reasoned that many airports do not provide an alternative to single-use carrier bags and since customers are limited to bringing their own bag, under airports cabin bag allowance, there should be no charge for customers making purchases in airports. A smaller group of respondents said that removing the exemption would add more stress to travelling, which many stated was already a stressful experience.
- 8.8. Of the organisations not supporting the proposal to remove the airport exemption, the reasoning was mixed. Some pointed to consistency and clarity concerns with regards to other airports, and the difficulty of communicating single-use carrier bag

charges to travellers with limited English. Some furthered that being required to purchase a bag may discourage people from buying goods, while others said charging for single-use carrier bags will have little impact on their consumption, as passengers have limited scope to carry goods any other way. However, most of those not supporting the proposal did not provide further reasoning.

- 8.9. Heathrow Airport, along with the Airport Operators Association (AOA) and the World Duty-Free Group, insisted that the transparent sealed bags supplied for the carriage of liquids at security checkpoints, as well as the “Sealed Tamper Evident Bags” used for duty-free alcohol and tobacco purchases should remain exempt, largely for health and safety and regulatory reasons. The AOA reasoned that “the nature of Government Aviation Security regulation necessitates the use of these transparent sealed bags, and therefore the introduction of a charge, which seeks to alter consumer behaviour and reduce usage, would not have that intended effect.”

Government response

- 8.10. The majority of respondents (members of the public (71%) and organisations (63%)) agree with the proposal to remove the existing exemption for carrier bags supplied at security restricted areas at airports (apart for the supply of duty-free alcohol and tobacco sales in sealed bags).
- 8.11. We acknowledge the concerns raised by the Airport Operators Association (AOA) and the World Duty-Free group who reiterate the need for transparent sealed bags supplied for the carriage of liquids at security checkpoints at airports and “Sealed Tamper Evident Bags” used for duty-free alcohol and tobacco purchases to be exempt from the charge.
- 8.12. The government will remove the exemption that currently applies to security restricted areas at airports. However, the exemption will continue to apply for “Sealed Tamper Evident Bags” and other sealed plastic bags used for carrying alcohol and tobacco products. Transparent sealed bags used at security checkpoints at airports are outside the scope of the existing single-use carrier bag regulations and this will continue to be the case.

9.0 Question 8

Do you support the proposed date of January 2020 by which changes will enter force?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I neither agree nor disagree
- d) I don't know / I don't have enough information

Please give reasons for your answer. Where available, please provide supporting evidence

Summary of responses

- 9.1. A total of 566 responses were received for Question 8; 435 responses were from members of the public, and 131 were from organisations. Key responses were received from organisations including the British Independent Retail Association, British Retail Consortium, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Heathrow Airport Limited, Keep Britain Tidy, Marks and Spencer Group, My Local Convenience Stores Ltd and SUEZ Recycling and Recovery.
- 9.2. Overall, a **majority** of both individuals and organisations indicated that they supported the proposed date of January 2020 by which changes would enter into force.
- 9.3. Although the majority of members of the public supported the proposed date of implementation, many commented that the changes should enter force as soon as possible. The majority of members of the public that did not support the proposed date also commented that the change should be implemented more quickly or immediately.
- 9.4. Many organisations also expressed that the proposed changes should be implemented at the earliest practical date, including My Local Convenience Stores Ltd.
- 9.5. Some organisations supporting the proposed date commented that it seemed to give an appropriate and achievable time frame. The British Independent Retailers Association indicated that the proposed date gives “Sufficient time to educate the public and retailers”.

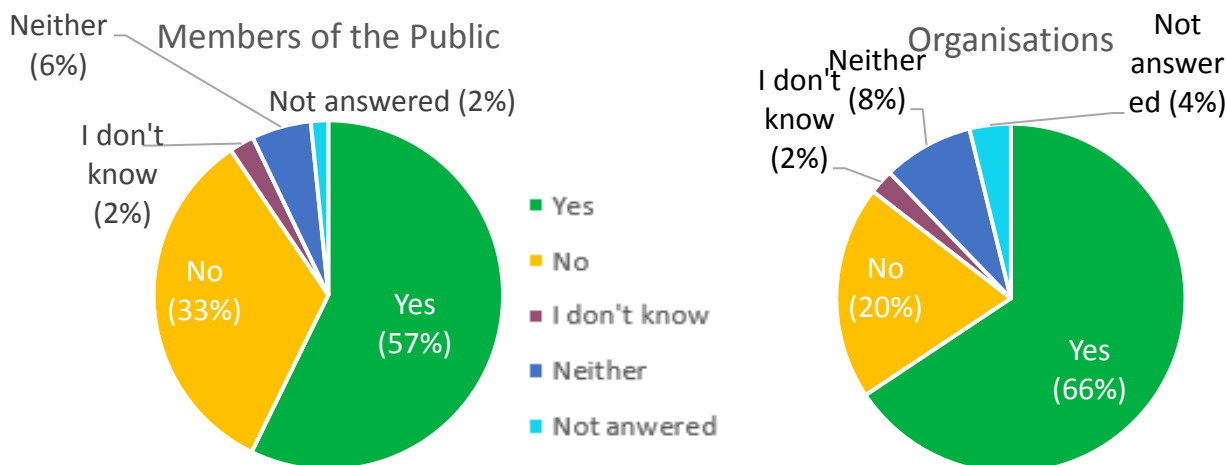


Figure 8: Responses to Question 8

9.6. Of the organisations that did not support the proposed date, a small number pointed to concerns that the change should enter force at the beginning of the financial year. Two organisations, the British Retail Consortium and Marks & Spencer Group, indicated that the changes should align with the single-use carrier bag charge reporting period.

Government response

9.7. The government notes the desire for the legislation to come into effect sooner rather than later. Due to delays caused by purdah restrictions and re-prioritisation in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the original date consulted on has, however, now passed.

9.8. The government remains committed to eliminating avoidable plastic waste, and has taken into account the concerns that the change should enter force at the beginning of the financial year. **The extension and increase of the charge will now enter into force in April 2021.**

9.9. The government will put in place an effective communications strategy ahead of the proposed changes to extending and increasing the charge, to ensure that consumers and businesses are aware of the changes. We will also update relevant guidance on the GOV.UK site.

10.0 Question 9

Please provide any evidence or information that moving to a mandatory approach would encourage small retailers to act more uniformly, indicating the level of enforcement that might be needed.

Summary of responses

- 10.1. A total of 147 responses were received for Question 9; 109 responses were from members of the public, and 38 were from organisations. Key responses were received from organisations including the British Independent Retail Association, Keep Britain Tidy, Newcastle City Council and SUEZ Recycling and Recovery.
- 10.2. No robust statistical evidence was identified by respondents to support their assumptions, and no evidence of modelling carried out was reported.
- 10.3. The majority of responses from organisations were anecdotal and provided information about possible enforcement measures. SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK Limited indicated that a mandatory approach would ensure maximum compliance and could be monitored through audits and regulatory enforcement. Other supporting views from organisations indicated that compliance can be encouraged through measures other than enforcement. For instance, trade bodies such as the Association of Convenience Stores and the National Federation of Retail Newsagents may be able to encourage adoption by their members. Alternatively, compliance could be monitored through local authorities via existing annual trading standards inspections.
- 10.4. Other respondents indicated that the charge would be self-regulating as the small retailers would be receiving an income from the sale of single-use carrier bags. Newcastle City Council pointed to evidence that enforcement systems rely too heavily on local authorities and therefore they support self-regulation through trade associations and consumer/peer pressure.
- 10.5. Newcastle City Council also pointed to research from the National Federation of Retail Newsagents which found that 42% of their member retailers have started charging for plastic bags on a voluntary basis. They indicated that a mandatory approach would be needed to increase this to 100%.
- 10.6. Most responses from members of the public were anecdotal and indicated that enforcement was needed when moving to a mandatory approach. Some members

of the public indicated the type of enforcements that may be used, such as spot checks, inclusion of checks within environmental health inspections and penalty fines. Additionally, several respondents commented on the need for education and rewards to ensure compliance.

- 10.7. Other supporting views from members of the public indicated that moving to a mandatory approach for small retailers would ensure the charge is seen as simple and consistent and would avoid confusion regarding which shops charge for single-use carrier bags and which do not.

Government response

- 10.8. The views and additional evidence provided in response to this question have been taken into account in finalising the costs and benefits of the proposal set out in the accompanying impact assessment.

11.0 Question 10

Please provide any evidence that demonstrates large retailers' levels of compliance with the existing obligation to charge a minimum of 5p for single-use carrier bags?

Summary of responses

- 11.1. A total of 117 responses were received for Question 10; 84 responses were from members of the public, and 33 were from organisations. Key responses were received from organisations including Ocado Plc, the British Independent Retail Association, Campaign to Protect Rural England, and Keep Britain Tidy.
- 11.2. No robust statistical evidence was identified by respondents to support their assumptions, and no evidence of modelling carried out was reported.
- 11.3. The majority of organisations provided anecdotal evidence of the compliance of large retailers with existing obligations. Keep Britain Tidy commented that “We are not aware of any instance where large retailers have failed to implement the charge, and many have donated proceeds to good causes.” The Campaign to Protect Rural England commented that further research is needed to understand how large retailers are implementing the single-use carrier bags charge.
- 11.4. Organisations' responses also echoed those of members of the public, regarding the possible lack of compliance with self-checkout tills. A small number of organisations highlighted concerns of a lack of monitoring on self-checkout tills which rely on the honesty of the customer to pay the charge. Additionally, a small number of organisations raised concerns regarding online grocery shopping which rely on single-use carrier bags for logistical reasons for picking and delivery.
- 11.5. One large retailer responded to this question, including details of a successful takeback scheme and recycling of collected bags. There was no additional evidence provided by large retailers to demonstrate the level of compliance with the existing obligation.
- 11.6. Many of the members of the public responded with anecdotal evidence of large retailers' level of compliance with the existing obligation to charge a minimum of 5p for single-use carrier bags. Other supporting views from members of the public were concerning compliance at self-check-out tills at large supermarkets.

Government response

- 11.7. The government notes the lack of hard statistical evidence with the level of compliance amongst large retailers. Anecdotal evidence suggests high levels of compliance. Some members of the public were concerned about the level of compliance at self-checkout tills. We envisage these concerns will be alleviated as many of the main large supermarkets have already removed single-use carrier bags from their stores.

12.0 Question 11

Is there anything else you would like to tell us relating to the proposals set out in the consultation? In particular, is there any additional evidence that we should consider.

Summary of responses

- 12.1. A total of 209 responses were collected for Question 11. However, 27 of these did not provide any information (i.e. “no comment”, “no further opinions”, etc.) and were therefore excluded from the analysis. Excluding these, 137 members of the public and 45 organisations that provided responses.
- 12.2. It should be noted that most respondents did not provide any robust statistical evidence to support their assumptions, and no evidence of modelling carried out was reported. Nonetheless, both members of the public and organisations provided anecdotal opinions that could be grouped into themes.
- 12.3. Views from members of the public generally aligned with the following themes, in descending order of the number of responses sharing these views:
 - a. The proposals in this consultation are necessary and important given the strong evidence of how plastic pollution negatively affects the environment and marine life.
 - b. Stronger action should be taken. Given the success of the 5p charge in 2015, a phased ban of all single-use carrier bags should seriously be considered, particularly as many large retailers no longer sell single-use carrier bags.
 - c. The government needs to better consider the use patterns and lifecycle impact of bags for life, perhaps recording the total amount of plastic used and not just the number of bags issued.
 - d. There should be more government action and focus on plastic packaging, as customer use of single-use carrier bag has already greatly decreased since the introduction of the 5p charge.
 - e. The proposals in this consultation need to be accompanied by a strong communications campaign to educate SMEs and customers on the impacts of single-use carrier bags and how they can do their part to reduce plastic pollution.

- 12.4. Views from organisations generally aligned with the following themes, in descending order of the number of responses sharing these views:
- a. It will be very important for the government to monitor the use patterns of alternatives to single-use carrier bags (paper bags, biodegradable bags, bags for life, etc.) if the 10p charge comes into effect, as the impact assessment forecasts a rise in their use.
 - b. The government should focus efforts on reducing other types of plastic if the 5p charge for single-use carrier bags was indeed so effective. The Grantham Centre believed that greater gains may be afforded by considering a similar charge on other single use products, rather than on single-use carrier bags. Marks & Spencer and the British Retail Consortium both shared this opinion and added that in addition to the current 5p charge, single-use carrier bags are already subject to producer responsibility levies and may in future be subject to the proposed plastic packaging tax. They concluded that “Additional legislation will not yield a significant environmental benefit and will cause complexity and customer confusion across other parts of the UK.”
 - c. Several organisations mentioned biodegradable bags. For example, one large retailer believed that they should be exempt from the charge, whilst other organisations including Keep Britain Tidy, the Marine Conservation Society, and the Campaign to Protect Rural England insist they should not be exempt.
 - d. Further research needs to be undertaken to understand the full lifecycle impact of alternatives to single-use carrier bag, and how consumer understanding can be enhanced. Regarding consumer understanding, the On-Pack Recycling Label (OPRL) scheme shared its consumer insight research, claiming that of 2,750 respondents, 55% said they “Know the basis of what can/can’t be recycled, but there are things I’m unsure about”, and 6% responded they are “Not very confident at all” about what can/can’t be recycled. They argued that their results suggest that the proposals should also address what should happen at end of life for both single-use carrier bags and bags for life to ensure environmental benefits are realised and the bags don’t end up in residual waste.
 - e. The charge for a carrier bag should be proportionate to its weight and include paper carrier bags.

Government response

- 12.5. The government will take further action to tackle plastic pollution in line with our Resources & Waste Strategy and the 25 Year Environment Plan.
- 12.6. Noting the specific points above that have not been covered elsewhere in our response the government is committed to:

- Making recycling consistent across all local authorities, which will make recycling easier. Clear labelling and a consistent approach to materials collected will help to reduce misunderstanding about what can be collected for recycling.
- Ensuring that producers take greater responsibility for the packaging they place on the market. Producers will be required to cover the full net costs of managing packaging when it becomes waste. We will also encourage businesses to design and use packaging that is easily recyclable.
- Reducing the use of single-use plastic. Restrictions on the supply of plastic straws, stirrers and plastic-stemmed cotton buds will be introduced in October 2020.
- The government issued a call for evidence on the demand, benefits and implications of a standard for bio-based and biodegradable plastics in July 2019. We are currently analysing the results and will publish a government response shortly.
- It is currently unclear whether plastics currently labelled as biodegradable are fully biodegrading in all environments, especially the marine environment in the absence of heat and UV light. Therefore, the charge will continue to apply to single-use carrier bags labelled as biodegradable or compostable.
- The government has put together a package of over £100m for research and innovation to tackle the issues that arise from plastic waste.

Annex A: Organisations that responded to the consultation.

Large retailer (over 250 employees):

Travis Perkins plc

The Co-operative Group

Greggs plc

John Lewis & Partners

PGL Travel Ltd

Boots

Squire's Garden Centres

Welcome Break

Marks and Spencer Group plc

HHGL Limited trading as Homebase

The Midcounties Co-operative

Ocado Plc

World Duty Free

Manufacturer of single-use carrier bags

Echo Packaging Limited

Non-governmental organisation

IFAW

The Grantham Centre, The University of Sheffield

Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

Keep Britain Tidy

Deal & Walmer Chamber of Trade

Incredible Edible Bristol

Sea the Change

Bio-Based and Biodegradable Industries Association

Southampton Heritage Federation

South West London Environment Network

British Independent Retailers Association

(Not on behalf of) The Consultation Institute

Upton in Bloom

LCC

Morecambe Bay Partnership

AbiBinit!

Freelancer

Whale and Dolphin Conservation

Marine Conservation Society

Wildlife and Countryside Link

Other

UK Travel Retail Forum
Heathrow Airport Limited
Freelance Commentator
OPRL Ltd
SUEZ Recycling and recovery UK limited
Ronnie Hek Ltd
AbingdonCutsPlastic!
British Retail Consortium
University of Cambridge
Freelance wildlife vet
Clean Up My Community
Hull People's Memorial
Dorset Wildlife Trust
Global Trading UK Limited
Wyllie Projects
Comply Direct Ltd
Astrid Davies Consulting
Cromwell Polythene Ltd
Environmental Ethics Group
Grazebrook Innovation
University of the Arts London - Retail Operations
Kickstart
Secondary school

British Plastics Federation (BPF)
Wendy welder
Biddles of Guildford (Office Team)
Autosmart International Ltd
FuturEcoLogic Ltd
Anglian Water Services
Palagan Ltd
Ecosurety
Synergy Compliance Ltd
Environmental Packaging Solutions
Manchester Airports Group
Comply Direct
Pupils 2 Parliament

Public body

Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority (MRWA) on behalf of Merseyside and Halton Waste Partnership. The Partnership consists of the local authorities of Halton, Liverpool, Knowsley, MRWA, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral.

Natural England
Cornwall Council
Waste Disposal Authority
Rushcliffe Borough Council
Oxford Direct Services (Oxford City Council)
Teignbridge District Council

Newcastle City Council

Rochford District Council

Cumbria County Council

Amble Town Council

Oxfordshire Environment Partnership; a partnership of Oxfordshire Local Authorities working together to reduce waste and increase recycling. Consisting of: Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, and West Oxfordshire District Council

University of Bath

Oldham Council - Local Authority

Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham Waste Partnership

Defence Equipment & Support

Norfolk County Council

Hart District Council and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

Medway Council

Social services

University of Oxford

ABC mobile

Eastleigh Borough Council

Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC)

LSE

North London Waste Authority

Islington Council

Richmond Upon Thames Borough Council

Wandsworth Borough Council

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

London Assembly Labour

Small retailer (under 250 employees)

Little Wanderers Shoe Shop

Alexandra's of Keswick

Cockfield Post Office and Stores

Pura Velo Ltd

Rattlesden & District Community Shop CIC

W&CA Griffiths Limited

Sweet Indulgence

My Local Convenience stores LTD

German Deli ltd

Trade Association

Association of Convenience Stores (ACS)

Airport Operators Association (AOA)

National Federation of Retail Newsagents (NFRN)

Bio-based and Biodegradable Industries Association

Foodservice Packaging Association