

# The GREEN Issue in respect of Carrier Bags.

The “Greenies” would have us believe that “normal” carrier bags are resident evil to the environment when in **FACT** the opposite is true !!

“Normal” carrier bags are 100% recyclable - and they are **NOT** toxic. There are thousands of applications for recycled polymers but at present, very few councils have a facility for recycling and the average housewife, if we are truthful, can't be bothered. Current price for “scrap carriers” is in the region of £350 per Tonne - so the councils could actually make money from recycling & perhaps reduce our council tax !! The bags we manufacture are 100% recyclable and carry that logo.

**Degradable bags:** There are 3 different types of which only 1 is truly degradable. It is starch based, not readily available and horrendously expensive. However, this starch is acquired from high yield crops so the questions of cutting down swathes of rain forests to plant these crops, CO2 emissions in harvesting and the carbon footprint to get it here, more than cancels out the benefit. Furthermore is it ethical that we should be harvesting crops for other end needs when millions in the world are starving ??

The other 2 are Photodegradable & Biodegradable. These are still “oil” based films, the same as standard carriers but have a 1% additive which accelerates polymer breakdown, Photodegradable by UV (sun) rays and Biodegradable by enzymes in the soil. However, the soil must be “active” for Bios to work i.e. Bacteria BUT this is also true for conventional films and they too break down with UV. Neither of these 2 so called “Degradable” films are safe for composting !! So there must be some nasties there. Furthermore, these films **ARE NOT** recyclable and should they contaminate conventional films they will render that film non recyclable. Bio films are more expensive and not as strong, nor suitable for food use. Don't get me wrong, we do produce these films on request but why destroy a valuable, clean, strong, recyclable product by adding toxic chemicals to it ? We (I) also believe that Biodegradables give out the wrong message and encourages our rampant disposable society attitudes.

Fabric, Cotton, Nylon & Jute bags are predominately imported from the Far East and Asia. Jute in particular comes from India and places visited are disgusting considering most companies that now sell these, recommend them suitable for FOOD USE. Hygiene & quality controls are non existent and the exploit of child labour unethical.

**Paper:** If made from virgin paper then there is forest harvestation, carbon footprint, chemicals etc. to be considered. If made from recycled paper, the bleaches and chemicals for recycling are pollutants and exude huge amounts of ozone into the atmosphere. Both of these are bulky to transport so again - larger carbon footprint. Paper bags are not as practical or robust, especially with UK weather. It is very seldom that a paper bag is re-used and by its composition unsuitable for recycling so it ends up in landfill. What's the **WORST** thing to send to landfill ??? Correct, **PAPER** - it gives off copious amounts of **Methane** !!

Visit [www.carrierbagtax.com](http://www.carrierbagtax.com) and read for yourself the truth about carrier bags.

*Best regards,*

*Alistair M. Tough*

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[www.bagsonline.co.uk](http://www.bagsonline.co.uk)

Plastic Carrier Bags - The Best Environmental Choice

P.T.O.

MATERIAL	ENVIRONMENTAL ADVANTAGES	ENVIRONMENTAL DISADVANTAGES
<p><b>MINERAL OIL BASED POLYTHENE</b> (eg HDPE &amp; LDPE "Normal" Bags)</p> 	<p>Low CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in production. Compact - Low CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in distribution.</p> <p> Benign in landfill - Easily recycled. </p> <p>Does not emit methane in degradation. Non-toxic combustion. Long life for low material &amp; energy input. Very low bulk - insignificant in landfill.</p>	<p>Can be dangerous in sea to cetaceans (applicable mainly to small see through product bags). Littering (predominantly thin HD type bags, agricultural and industrial stretch films).</p>
<p><b>MINERAL OIL BASED POLYTHENE WITH DEGRADING ADDITIVE</b></p> 	<p>Reduced litter ?</p> <p>Questionable: <i>Takes approx. 18 months to degrade.</i></p>	<p>A recyclable material is lost for recycling. If mixed, degrades quality of other recyclables. Embrittles into particles, does not biodegrade. Long term effect of ingestion by organisms and animals unknown. Not IBAW approved for composting. Unsuitable for long term packaging protection.</p>
<p><b>ORGANIC BASED BIODEGRADABLE POLYTHENE</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>No Picture Available</p> </div>	<p>Biodegrades.</p>	<p>Natural habitat loss to crops. Use of Agro chemicals. Poor lifespan. Unsuitable for long term packaging protection. Cost.</p>
<p><b>PAPER</b></p> 	<p>Biodegrades ?</p> <p>Questionable: <i>Many paper bags have a polythene coating or are laminated.</i></p>	<p>High CO<sub>2</sub> emission to crop, harvest, pulp &amp; mill. High CO<sub>2</sub> emission in paper conversion to product. Bulky &amp; heavy - High CO<sub>2</sub> emission in distribution. High additive content. High emission of methane in landfill.</p>
<p><b>NON WOVEN FABRIC (PP)</b></p> 	<p>Recycled materials can be used. Does not degrade - Benign in landfill. Does not emit methane in degradation.</p>	<p>High CO<sub>2</sub> in fabric manufacture. High CO<sub>2</sub> in conversion to product. Bulky - High CO<sub>2</sub> in distribution.</p>
<p><b>NYLON</b></p> 	<p>Long lasting.</p>	<p>High CO<sub>2</sub> in fabric manufacture. High CO<sub>2</sub> in conversion to product. Bulky - High CO<sub>2</sub> in distribution.</p>
<p><b>JUTE</b></p> 	<p>Biodegradable (except LDPE liner). Long lasting.</p>	<p>Natural habitat loss to crops. High CO<sub>2</sub> in cropping. High CO<sub>2</sub> in fabric manufacture. High CO<sub>2</sub> in conversion to product. Bulky - High CO<sub>2</sub> in distribution.</p>
<p><b>COTTON</b></p> 	<p>Biodegradable. Long lasting.</p>	<p>Natural habitat loss to crops. Use of agrochemicals. Requires irrigation. High CO<sub>2</sub> in cropping. High CO<sub>2</sub> in fabric manufacture. High CO<sub>2</sub> in conversion to product. Bulky - High CO<sub>2</sub> in distribution.</p>