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CARRIER BAG LEVY

ANNUAL STATISTICS

Issue No: 1

Date of Publication: 27 August 2014

Theme: Environmental

Frequency: Yearly

Carrier Bag Levy Statistics – Year 1

The first set of official Carrier Bag Levy statistics covering the period 8 April 2013 – to 31 March 2014 have been published today Wednesday 27th August 2014 by the Department of the Environment.

These indicate that the people of Northern Ireland have embraced the carrier bag levy by reducing their consumption of single use bags dramatically.

Carrier bag usage figures for the first year of operation of the levy indicate that **84.5 million** single use carrier bags were dispensed by retailers across Northern Ireland as opposed to around 300 million bags in the year prior to the levy. The 5p levy has delivered a reduction in bag numbers of **71.8%** in its first year and generated net proceeds of **£4.17 million**.

In year one of operations quarterly bag usage figures ranged from 19.4 million in Quarter One (*April 2013 – June 2013*), 21.6 million in Quarter 2 (*July 2013 – September 2013*) to 24.0 million in Quarter 3 (*October 2013 – December 2013*). This upward trend in quarters 2 and 3 could be attributed to seasonal variation over both the summer and Christmas periods when tourists and shoppers were caught out without a bag. Bag usage numbers reduced to 19.5 million bags in Quarter 4 (*January 2014 – March 2014*)

This evidence suggests that the introduction of the levy has reinforced earlier voluntary efforts by both retailers and shoppers to reduce substantially the negative environmental impact of carrier bag consumption by avoiding the unnecessary use of single use carrier bags. These previous efforts had already reduced single use bag numbers from an estimated 425 million bags in 2006/7.

The figures are based on data supplied by 3,189 retailers. A small proportion of businesses are not yet registered with the Department however, work undertaken by Levy field staff has determined that these businesses typically do not dispense single use bags.

Under the Single Use Carrier Bags Charge Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 retailers are required to charge at least 5p for each single use carrier bag supplied new to customers and pay the net proceeds of the levy to the Department. The net proceeds of the levy for 2013/14 total **£4.17 million**.

In seeking to deliver community environmental projects to support wellbeing and prosperity, the Department has already allocated this revenue back into the local community through the Challenge Fund resulting in a final spend of £2.3 million. More than 250 environmental projects have been supported and delivered in the past year. A further £1.1 million has been allocated to the Natural Heritage Grant, Sustainability Innovation Fund and Local Clean-up Support.

Additional Information

1. Retailer returns to the Department of the Environment's Carrier Bag Levy Team are required / made on a quarterly basis as follows:
 - Quarter 1 April, May & June 1 July – 28 July
 - Quarter 2 July, August & September 1 October – 28 October
 - Quarter 3 October, November & December 1 January – 28 January
 - Quarter 4 January, February & March 1 April – 28 April
2. Carrier Bags Dispensed by Quarter from 8 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 are as follows:
 - Quarter 1 - 19,413,991
 - Quarter 2 - 21,627,272
 - Quarter 3 - 24,004,619
 - Quarter 4 - 19,486,003
3. Carrier Bag Levy Revenue generated by Quarter from 8 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 is as follows:
 - Quarter 1 - £967,087.73
 - Quarter 2 - £1,072,435.69
 - Quarter 3 - £1,177,718.58
 - Quarter 4 - £951,188.31
4. Where retailers charged more than the 5 pence levy (a small proportion of the 84.5 million single use carrier bags dispensed) these bags were subject to VAT resulting in slightly reduced net proceeds of £0.0417 per bag (5 pence less VAT).
5. Bags which are exempt from the levy such as those used solely to contain unpackaged raw food or hot foods / hot drinks are not included in the data. Retailers are not required to record this information.
6. The Department's estimate of the number of bags dispensed in 2012 (300 million) is derived from UK-wide Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP) data for 2008. The data was adjusted to take account of reductions in bag usage as a result of voluntary retailer measures since 2008.
7. Retailers who still have not registered with the Department - or have not made any of their returns for this past year - should visit the NIDirect website (www.nidirect.gov.uk/baglevy), click on the "retailer registration login" button and simply follow the onscreen instructions.
8. If retailers encounter any problems they should contact the Carrier Bag Levy Team on 0300 200 7879 between the hours of 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday or by email: carrierbaglevy@doeni.gov.uk
9. The enclosed figures are the final official statistics for 2013/14 and the Department intends to publish the 2014/15 figures in August 2015.