

The Mail's campaign sees bag production fall by 63%

By James Burton
Chief City Correspondent

PLASTIC bag production has more than halved since a tax was introduced at the checkout following a Daily Mail campaign.

The volume of bags made in this country has plunged by 63 per cent since the 5p charge was brought in four years ago.

It comes after the Mail spent years calling for restrictions on plastic bag use, as evidence mounted over the damage they cause to the natural world in Britain and beyond.

Campaigners said the fall in production shows Britain is leading the way with a crackdown on the scourge of plastic.

In total, 203,841 tons of plastic bags were produced with a value of £350.1million in 2015 according to the Office for National Statistics. By last year, the amount produced had fallen to only 75,288 tons with a value of £184.9million.

Ministers are now considering an increase of the tax from 5p to 10p per bag.

The fall suggests families are already turning away from single-use bags to longer-lasting alternatives or more environmentally friendly paper versions.

And retailers are now ditching plastic bags. Boots last week said it will stop using plastic bags, in a move which will take 40million a year out of circulation.

Customers can buy a small, medium or large paper carrier bag for 5p, 7p, or 10p and all profits will be donated to the firm's charity partner BBC Children in Need.

The new bags are made in the UK from recycled brown paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council and printed with water-based inks so that they can be easily recycled along with other paper

'It's great news for our beaches'

waste at home. The change has already been introduced at 53 stores, and will be extended to all the company's 2,485 outlets by early next year.

And last month, Sainsbury's said it would ditch plastic bags for customers selecting loose fruit, vegetables and bakery items.

Shoppers will be offered paper bags instead.

Labour MP Mary Creagh, chairman of the Environmental Audit Committee, said: 'This fall is good news and shows that the 5p charge made a real difference.'

'But our consumption of plastic bags is still higher than ten years ago. An ambitious switch to fully sustainable, reusable materials is required.'

Laura Foster, of the Marine Conservation Society, said: 'We are delighted to see a reduction in plastic bag production which is indicative of consumers moving to more sustainable alternatives — great news for our beaches, oceans and wildlife.'

And Paula Chin, of the World Wildlife Fund, said: 'Fewer single-use plastic bags can only be good news in the fight against plastic pollution, but there is still more to do if we want to stop our throw-away culture choking the natural world.'

Comment: see Page 16

WHAT STINKING HYPOCRISY

They cheered David Attenborough like a god as he saluted Glastonbury's laudable bid to ban plastic. Yesterday, as the crowds headed home, they left a squalid mess that makes a mockery of their eco-posturing

From Louise Atkinson

AT GLASTONBURY

AS I CRAWLED out from my tent yesterday morning, the view that greeted me could easily have been the aftermath of a natural disaster.

Brightly coloured tents — twisted, snapped and tattered — lay strewn in piles with deflated air beds, soggy sleeping bags and spindly camp chairs collapsed in the dust and debris.

Then there was the sea of bottles, plastic bags, cans, tissues, wet wipes and paper cups, mile after mile of it.

This is my first experience of a music festival but I'm assured Glastonbury is the biggest and best and, crucially, this year it claimed to be the greenest ever with a ban on plastic bottles, straws, plates and cutlery.

When Sir David Attenborough made a surprise appearance extolling the virtues of this, the first true 'plastic-free festival', he was worshipped like a god. The event was partly powered by solar and wind energy, and boasted an on-site recycling facility to process cans, glass and other waste. Impressive stuff indeed.

But yesterday, as revellers shambled their way to the exits looking shattered and filthy, I stayed behind to see if the impressive, and ambitious, measures had come good.

The truth was shocking. Glastonbury might purport to be green... but clearly many of its attendees are not.

The secret shame many festival organisers have been at pains to hide is the fact that one in three tents and their assorted paraphernalia are abandoned. If ever



Wasteland: The once-green fields are carpeted with plastic, cans and cartons



there were a fitting illustration of our lazy, throwaway culture it's this shanty-town of equipment destined, no doubt, for landfill because so many couldn't be bothered to take it home.

The camping areas are shocking. Seagulls fight over discarded pizza and scavengers root through abandoned tents hunting for booze or forgotten valuables. There are also hundreds of deflated — unrecyclable — balloons, the result of youngsters taking laughing gas.

It is utterly disgusting, but sadly typical. The sight of field after field covered in rubbish has become the inevitable fallout of the summer festival culture as people (usually young people aged 17-24) let their hair down, party their socks off and then stagger back to their middle-class homes leaving environmental carnage behind.

On Sunday, the last day of the festival, I watched youngsters — who'd cheered Sir David like the saviour of 'their' planet — toss plastic cups and plates thoughtlessly on the ground. Every surface and ledge contained rubbish, and there was a pervasive stench of urine. Wherever you stood there was rubbish beneath your feet — squashed plastic bottles, food packaging, fluorescent plastic wigs, inflatables and even sanitary products.



Clean-up: 1,860 volunteers work in six-hour shifts

volunteers worked in six-hour shifts to bag up rubbish in all the public areas (they do four shifts in return for a free weekend ticket) and empty 15,000 bins twice a day, they hardly made a dent.

And though Glastonbury's decision to ban bottles is expected to save 40 tonnes of plastic, the tents and camping gear remain a big fat plastic problem.

Figures from last year's Reading and Leeds festivals report that 43 per cent of revellers dumped their camping gear when they left. In some areas of Glastonbury — notably the Penards Hill area favoured by the party set — it looked to me like less than half the tents had been taken away. On the

litter pick, stewards tell me sadly that this is no different to the last Glastonbury in 2017.

OTHER areas, such as the family camping area, look clearer with tidy patches of grass between the occasional abandoned tent. But the bin areas are piled with camping chairs and trashed tents.

It's not just ugly; it's an environmental travesty. There's more plastic in a two-man pop-up tent than 87 plastic bottles or 875 empty crisp packets — and this plastic cannot be recycled. The Daily Mail has campaigned tire-



Party's over: A festival-goer struggles past a mountain of rubbish and discarded camping gear

lessly reduce plastic waste, first with our campaign to ban free plastic bags, then by joining forces with Keep Britain Tidy for last year's Great Plastic Pick Up and this year's Great British Spring Clean, which have highlighted the cost of thoughtless plastic littering (and saw more than half a million people join litter picks).

Many of these items will have been bought cheaply for this festival, making them the ultimate single-use plastic.

The £250 ticket price for a festival like this puts attendance in the middle-class bracket. These festivals are a post-exam or pre-university rite of passage. There is an educated audience and they should know better.

Allison Ogden-Newton, chief executive of Keep Britain Tidy, is incensed. 'In this age of awareness, when we know what devastation plastic is doing, it is unforgivable to walk away from camping gear knowing that it will end up in landfill,' she says.

'It is so disappointing to see behaviour that indicates the message is still not getting through.'

Amanda Campbell is one of the environmentalists who have been trying to find solutions to this problem for years. She set up Comp-A-Tent to help festivalgoers understand their waste management and brainstorm solutions.

She says abandoned camping gear is becoming 'the festival norm'.

The festivals at Reading and Leeds have to deal with almost 20,000 tents dumped at each venue. Some festivals have a staggering 63 per cent leave-behind rate.

'The events that fall at the end of the summer tend to be worse,' she explains. 'Any tent that might have been to a few festivals is likely to be worse for wear.'

The problem is that you can buy cheap equipment (Argos sells a two-man pop-up tent for £19.99, for example) that's not made to last. Unbelievably, camping equipment store GoOutdoors promoted one of its 'festival tents' with the words 'ideal for use on one occasion and cheap enough to leave behind'. After a barrage of criticism it amended the page and offered tips for how to pack your tent up (and take it home).

Amanda's interviews last year showed that more than 50 per cent of people believe their abandoned tent will go to charity. But this is a huge misconception.

Matt Wedge works with the charity Festival Waste Reclamation & Distribution. He'll be picking through the debris tomorrow to find equipment worth donating. He says: 'We take as much as we can for the homeless and refugees but up to 90 per cent is unusable.'

The rest is taken to landfill or

incinerated. Amanda Campbell explains: 'Tents have to have a fireproof coating, but this gives off toxic fumes when burned, so they shouldn't be incinerated — though most of the salvaged tents are.'

Around 23,500 tonnes of waste are produced each year at UK music festivals. Two-thirds of that goes into landfill or is incinerated.

At Glastonbury there are signs at each camping area saying 'please take your tent home' and stewards meander through the camping fields as everyone is leaving, offering rubbish bags and encouraging people to pack up their stuff.

But Matt Wedge and his fellow volunteers feel festival organisers are not going far enough. 'They could go to greater lengths to encourage people to take their tents home with them,' he says.

One idea is a refundable deposit on arrival which is only reimbursed when it's clear you're taking your tent home. Tents could be bar-coded to identify their owner.

So will Glastonbury ever be green? It is certainly greener than many festivals and greener than it was in 2017. The festival organiser Emily Eavis declared it a triumph on Twitter, writing: 'I know it has been said before but that really was the best Festival yet!'

'And so good to see people looking after their campsites and the lack of plastic bottles. We did it! Did we? It's a tiny step in the right direction, but when the party this size comes to an end the environmental hangover is always going to hurt.'

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There's more plastic in two-man pop-up tents left behind than in 87 plastic bottles