

# border telegraph

## Town is officially a plastic bag-free zone

### **FOR plastic bags in one Borders town, doomsday has arrived.**

On Friday, April 4th at midday, after months of campaigning, Selkirk had its Plastic Bag Free launch.

Organisers gave away free fair-trade, recycled, cotton shopping bags to traders and shoppers as a gesture of thanks for their positive support of the initiative and for helping to make Selkirk the first Plastic Bag Free town in Scotland.

And posters advising shoppers and visitors that Selkirk is Plastic Bag Free have now gone up in all of the participating shops and businesses around the Royal and Ancient Burgh.

Of the town's 108 shops and businesses, only four premises have chosen not to participate in the campaign, and another 12 have pledged their full support and will provide environmentally friendly alternatives once their current stocks of plastic bags have run out.

This means that around 96% of Selkirk's traders are committed to a Plastic Bag Free town.

Campaign organiser Jenna Agate said: "Selkirk and its traders and shoppers should be rightly proud of this moment. We have become the first Plastic Bag Free town in Scotland.

"Selkirk is leading the way in our effort to respect the environment and look after our countryside. In our small way we are making a difference. I am really proud of my town."

Anna Hinnigan, who has helped Mrs Agate in the campaign, said that some of the shops who haven't participated are big multinational companies and some are independent traders in town.

"Traders are perfectly entitled to their opinion," she said. "We're not here to force anything."

"It's hard to get an entire town to agree on the same thing."

Pat Neil, who has also been helping Mrs Agate with the campaign, said that as for new shops coming to Selkirk, the town would simply hope the shop would want to support the plastic-free policy.

"You can't make a rule," she said. "But anybody who came into town, we'd hope that they'd feel that's what they'd want to do.

"We're not police. We hope they will change their minds, but that's all we can do. The job's been done and if they don't want to do it, they won't have a poster in the window and everybody else will."

And while campaign organisers are aware that the town cannot yet claim to be totally plastic bag free, they've said that the groundswell of feeling and commitment to the campaign from the people of Selkirk is enough for the town to deserve this title.

"We're really pleased with it," Mrs Hinnigan said. "You're never quite sure when you start with something—a lot of people like the idea in principle, but you're never quite sure how it'll work out.

"It seems to have worked out quite well."

By Susie Penman

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