

## Veolia transforms Harrods shopping bags

2 years ago



A new project from [Veolia](#) aims to give a new life to plastic bags within the retail sector, contributing to Harrods target of becoming carbon net zero by 2030.

Global resource management company, Veolia, has worked with the world's leading luxury department store, Harrods, to demonstrate the potential of recycling Low-Density Polyethylene (LDPE) plastic bags, by transforming them into picnic benches for their team members. This supports Harrods' sustainability strategy which aims to remove all virgin and single use plastic from their business, as well as the ambition of becoming a net zero business, and will save the company up to 77.42 tonnes of carbon emissions compared to using virgin materials.

Government statistics show that between 2020-2021 there were 450 million plastic bags sold, and that figure rises to 774 million bags if you include those within the single use category. Effectively recycling all these bags could lead to a carbon saving in excess of 500,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> per year across the retail sector, lower use of resources and increase sustainability as part of a circular economy.

In addition to the carbon impact of single use plastic, it is well known how harmful plastic can be to the environment, causing pollution to precious ecosystems and endangering animals. The LDPE plastic bags are relatively simple to recycle, first the bags transformed into plastic pellets which can then be reprocessed into 'plastic lumber' suitable for making garden furniture. The Harrods bags have been recycled into 10 picnic benches which will provide additional seating for Harrods employees at their state-of-the-art distribution centre in Thatcham.

Commenting on this project, Simon Fitcher, Business Development Director at Veolia UK and Ireland said: "As part of our work with Harrods, we are looking for innovative ways to reuse materials which otherwise would have been wasted. Working with Harrods on this project shows the future potential of effective plastic recycling and how it can really make a difference in reducing carbon emissions, as well as providing

them with the best platform to help support them with their sustainability goals. It is part of a bigger issue in the retail industry with the amount of carbon that could be saved by recycling plastic bags, which is just one way that we are leading the United Kingdom a step closer to ecological transformation.”

Martha Brown, Sustainability Manager at Harrods said:

“In 2022, we removed our single use plastic carrier bags and launched our 100% recyclable and sustainably sourced paper carrier bag. We have since worked closely with Veolia to ensure the effective recycling our old plastic bags. We have had the opportunity to repurpose our old plastic bags, and in turn build outdoor benches, to create a space which the staff at our distribution centre can use to spend time outside. Harrods is dedicated to embedding circularity across the business, and this has been a great step in the right direction. We are excited to roll out this project in line with our sustainability commitments in the areas of waste, circularity and the reduction of single use materials. As a leading voice in the luxury retail industry, we are proud to partner with Veolia to roll out projects such as this so that we can continue help to raise awareness to our community about the importance of sustainability and waste reduction, and to drive this sustainability initiative to increase recycling and circularity across the retail industry.”