



Environment Minister, John Griffiths was in Newport to launch Tidy Wales Week and kick off Newport's Chewing Gum Action Group campaign.

The Minister took part in a litter pick to highlight the importance of keeping Welsh towns and the Welsh countryside tidy and also spoke about the negative contribution that carrier bags make to litter right across Wales.

The Minister said:

"I am delighted to be launching Tidy Wales Week with Keep Wales Tidy.

"The Welsh Government is committed to improving the quality of the local environment in communities across Wales, and to tackling antisocial behaviour such as littering and dog fouling.

"Keep Wales Tidy does good work to help ensure a clean, safe and tidy Wales and I am pleased to be supporting their campaign.

"Today's event has certainly highlighted the litter problem caused by carrier bags. Indeed we know it is currently costing local authorities in Wales around £1 million per year to clear up carrier bag litter.

“That is one of the reasons why we are introducing a minimum 5p carrier bag charge in Wales from 1st October. The idea of the charge is that it will encourage us to reuse our bags, and by doing so help us to take much better care of our natural resources, and reduce litter.

“Whilst I know that reducing our use of single use carrier bags is not going to solve all our environmental problems, the charge delivers an important message about the need for us to live much more sustainable lives. “

Last year the Welsh public took home on average 273 carrier bags per household from the major supermarkets alone. The Welsh Government expects its carrier bag charge to reduce bag use in Wales by up to 90%.

During his visit, the Minister also launched Newport’s Chewing Gum Action Group Campaign.

The Minister said:

“Chewing gum litter is having a negative effect on the quality of local environments right across Wales and it is the most difficult type of litter to clear up, with recent estimates suggesting that it costs up to £2.50 to remove each piece of gum.

"It is not just a financial issue though. Chewing gum litter is contaminating our streets and is impacting on the perceptions that people have of our beautiful country and our own enjoyment of it.

"This campaign is all about educating people to change their behaviour in an effort to ensure a long term solution to the chewing gum problem, and I am delighted that Newport is involved."

The Minister also reminded people that dropping chewing gum is a littering offence, and that anyone caught littering can face fines up to £75 or even prosecution.

Both Carmarthen and Newport Council were selected to participate in the Chewing Gum Action Group campaign after a competitive bidding process.

The Chewing Gum Action Group brings together representatives from the UK Government, gum manufacturers and other interested parties.

Local authorities taking part in the campaign are expected to monitor the success of the campaign, undertake community engagement work, publicise the campaign in the media and provide targeted enforcement action.

Successful local authorities do not receive direct funding but benefit from the industry paying for campaign materials and outdoor advertising space.