

Frequently Asked Questions



Boots UK version 2

- **What is changing?**

Boots UK is changing from plastic retail carrier bags to brown paper carrier bags. This signifies a huge step away from our reliance on plastic and will reduce our plastic usage by over 900 tonnes per year.

- **When is this happening?**

From Monday 24th June 2019, 53 Boots UK stores will start to sell our new brown paper carrier bags. After the initial launch, the remaining stores will receive brown paper carrier bags on a roll-in/roll-out basis as their plastic bag stock reduces, with the ambition that paper carrier bags will be available in all stores by early 2020.

- **Is this a permanent change?**

Yes. This is part of our commitment to reducing the impact our business has on the environment. As we continue to review our sustainability credentials and the environmental impacts, we'll evaluate the impact of different materials and improve our offering accordingly.

- **Is my store one of the first 53 stores?**

The store list for the first 53 stores can be found here:

<https://nsp.bootslive.co.uk/sites/bootslive/AllUKNonOpticiansUsers/Pages/Carrier-Bags.aspx>

- **First 53 stores – how will the stock of new brown paper bags be managed?**

You will continue to receive stock of the current plastic bags until your new allocation of brown paper bags arrives w/c 17th June 2019. It's important that you continue to maintain accurate stock files so we can understand the number of plastic bags you have in store. Any remaining plastic bags from the 53 launch stores will be re-allocated across our remaining stores, and this process will be managed for you by the Operations team. Stores will be sent specific instructions on what to do with any remaining plastic bag stock.

- **Remaining stores (non-initial 53 stores) – how will the stock of new brown paper bags be managed?**

If you are not one of the first 53 stores you will continue to receive deliveries of plastic bags until all warehouse stocks are exhausted. Over the coming months, it's important you continue to maintain accurate stock files to ensure your store has as little stock of plastic bags as possible, without completely running out. Depending on your stock levels, you may receive re-allocated plastic bags from the first 53 stores.

At the point where warehouse stocks are exhausted you will start to receive deliveries of Brown Paper Bags and you will have a mixture of brown paper bags and plastic bags until you have sold through the plastic bags. It will be acceptable to have a mix of both bag types in store at the same time.

- **Why is Boots only starting with 53 stores?**

Given that our sustainability agenda is a major driver for the change, we want to minimise the size of any write-off of plastic bags. Launching across all stores would potentially incur a very large write-off. For the initial launch of our brown paper bags, we have decided to prioritise our larger stores across the UK because these are the locations that sell the highest volumes of retail plastic bags to our customers.

- **Are the paper bags being rolled out across ROI (Republic of Ireland)?**

Boots Ireland has been using white paper bags since 2002. To align to the new Boots UK brown paper bags, Boots Ireland will be switching from white to brown paper from 1 July 2019.

- **What bags will be available from 24 June 2019?**

There are three sizes of brown paper carrier bags:

Small	5p	8528802
Medium	7p	8528810
Large	10p	8528829

- **Do we charge for the new brown paper carrier bags?**

In line with our current practice of charging for plastic carrier bags, there will be a cost associated with each of our three brown paper carrier bags.

The best environmental option for carrier bags is to reduce our usage and to encourage customers and colleagues to use their own bags. Placing a cost value on our brown paper bags will hopefully motivate our customers and colleagues to use their own bag where possible and to reuse and recycle our bags responsibly.

Our competitive pricing structure is also consistent across all our UK stores and is in-line with current benchmarks. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, paper carrier bags are subject to the carrier bag levy, so we are legally obliged to charge for our paper carrier bags in these areas.

- **Do we charge for food / Meal Deal bags?**

We will no longer be offering a designated meal deal bag. However, the new small brown paper carrier bag is a suitable alternative with a cost of only 5p. Every time a customer purchases a paper carrier bag, all profits will be donated to one of our strategic, long-term charity partners: BBC Children in Need.

- **Why are customers paying for a paper carrier bag in England, when other retailers like Primark and Zara give them for free?**

We are introducing brown paper carrier bags with the ambition of reducing plastic use and minimising our carbon footprint. By adopting a competitive price structure that is in line with current benchmarks, we're encouraging our customers and colleagues to reuse their brown paper carrier bags as many times as possible, or bring in their own reusable bags, rather than continue purchasing new carrier bags each time they shop. What's more, 80% of customers agreed that charging for paper bags is important in encouraging people to use reusable bags.

As well as becoming more sustainable, every time a customer purchases one of our 100% recyclable brown paper carrier bags, all the profits will be donated to BBC Children in Need.

- **Do I have to scan the barcode on the bag when I sell one?**

Yes, it is very important that you continue to scan the barcode on the bag every time that you sell one. By scanning the bags you will be both charging the customer correctly and ensuring that your stockfile is kept accurate. If you do not scan the bags when you sell them it will affect your stockfile, resulting in your bags not being re-ordered.

- **How do I change my plastic bag stock figures, if I need to?**

The in-store handhelds are only capable of counting from zero to a maximum of 1998 (999 counted in the backshop plus 999 on the sales floor). If you have more than 1998 plastic bags, adjust the figure to 1998 and then manually adjust on your store controller. Please note this can only be done in instalments of 99.

- **Where shall I store my bags on the shop floor?**

Your new brown paper bags should be stored behind the till as per the current process you use for plastic bags.

- **What is happening around Self Check Out areas?**

Colleagues will continue to hand out brown paper bags in Self Check Out areas, as customers request them.

- **Does our staff discount apply to the new bags?**

As per the current staff discount policy, staff discount will not apply to the new brown paper bags.

- **Is Boots introducing other bags made from different materials? (E.g. canvas) If yes, when?**

We're always looking for ways to become more sustainable and the introduction of our brown paper bags is one of the first ways we're encouraging customers, colleagues and local communities to rethink their use of carrier bags. We're currently investigating additional styles of reusable bags, with the ambition of reducing our overall bag usage even further. These are likely to be in store for the start of the new financial year (September 2019).

- **Will there be different paper bags during the Christmas period? (E.g. sizes, design)**

We're currently investigating different options with suppliers. If appropriate, these will be available in larger stores only.

- **Are these paper bags 'bags for life'? What happens if a customer brings one back?**

We're encouraging our customers, colleagues and local communities to reuse our brown paper bags as many times as possible, and then repurpose or recycle them appropriately to reduce the impact on the environment. Our new brown paper bags are not 'bags for life' so they cannot automatically be replaced when returned to store, as per the policy previously used for our plastic bags. However, if a customer would like to exchange or refund their brown paper bag, we recommend they follow our standard returns policy as they would with any other item in store.

Environmental credentials

- **What are the environmental credentials of the new brown paper bags?**

We are committed to protecting the environment. This is why our brown paper bags are easily recyclable; made from UK-sourced, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified, recycled brown paper with water-based ink, and are manufactured in the UK. We (Boost UK) sold more than 40 million bags in the 12 months ending 6th April 2019 and this change from plastic to paper carrier-bags will reduce our plastic usage by over 900 tonnes per year.

- **How and where can customers recycle Boots paper bags?**

As part of our commitment to making a sustainable difference every day, we're encouraging our customers, colleagues and local communities to reuse, repurpose and recycle our paper bags.

Brown retail paper bags – As well as being made from recycled brown paper, our brown paper carrier bags are recyclable and compatible with kerbside paper and card recycling collections undertaken by your local authorities.

Brown dispensing bags – These bags are also being made from recycled brown paper. They are recyclable and compatible with kerbside paper and card recycling collections undertaken by your local authorities.

Boots beauty bags – The paper used for the new beauty bags can be recycled at kerbside paper and card recycling collections undertaken by your local authorities, as long as the rope handles are removed before recycling. We're currently investigating alternative handle options to make these bags recyclable.

Boots Opticians bags – The white paper bags currently used by Boots Opticians can be recycled (once the rope handle is removed) at kerbside paper and card recycling collections undertaken by your local authorities, and Boots Opticians is reviewing the existing bag design to further improve its environmental credentials.

Dispensing Support Pharmacy (DSP) bags – Our centralised pharmacy uses plastic bags which are 100% recyclable, and they enable us to deliver medicines to patients in a way that is safe, clean, dry and durable. These bags can be recycled through carrier bag collection points and in some local authority areas where kerbside collection schemes accept plastic film.

In line with our work to introduce more sustainable bags across the business, we're investigating alternative packing options that still offer the same quality but with improved environmental credentials. We will be introducing bags that have been made from a minimum of 60% recycled plastic, with a view to continue finding ways to dramatically reduce our plastic usage.

Boots.com/.ie packaging:

- **Will the boots.com packaging change in line with the paper bags now available in store?**
We are developing packaging options to replace plastic bags and packaging materials (parcel tape and bubble wrap). These options are being tested at the moment to ensure that they are suitable for our supply chain, store colleagues and customers.
These new packaging options are still being tested and won't be introduced until the trials are completed.
- **What is happening to the old packaging?**
If the trials are successful the new packaging types will gradually replace the plastic bag on a run in run out basis. Please note: the current bags are recyclable.
- **Is the new packaging recyclable? What are the environmental credentials?**
All the new packaging types are cardboard and can be recycled.
- **Will the new packaging be rolled out across all orders?**
When the new packaging options are introduced they will be used for all boots.com orders
- **What type of packaging will be available?**
The range includes a selection of box sizes with an innovative internal wrap that negates the need for in fill material and a potato starch glues flap which negates the need for parcel tape.
For smaller and single items a new envelop design is being tested that also uses a potato starch glue.
Please note: this design is still being tested.
- **Are the brown paper carrier bags made from responsibly sourced forests?**
Our brown paper carrier bags have been certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) as made from recycled paper thus helping to reduce the demand for forestry products. Each bag proudly displays the FSC's 'tick tree' logo, which proves their FSC certification. Our customers can use our bags with confidence, knowing that they are helping to ensure our forests are alive for generations to come.
- **Have you tested the durability of the brown paper bags? / How many times can a customer reuse them?**
We're encouraging our customers, colleagues and local communities to reuse our brown paper carrier bags as many times as possible. So we have a responsibility as the UK's leading pharmacy-led, health and beauty retailer, to make sure they are fit for purpose.

Prior to their launch, we rigorously tested our brown paper bags to ensure that their environmental sustainability was complemented by their durability, and found that they are comparable to paper bags that have been successfully used in our Republic of Ireland stores since 2002. While every care has gone into creating a high-quality bag that's ethically sustainable, the number of times a customer can reuse a bag ultimately depends on how the bag is treated and the conditions to which it is exposed.

We have tested our new paper bags based on a 15 minute jog test (simulation equivalent to walking 1 mile at average pace) and the bags remain intact. They can carry these weights and equivalent product weights:

Bag size	Passed weight	300ml Shampoo equivalent (Based on Aussie Shampoo weight of 340g)	Soltan suncream 200ml	Colgate toothpaste	Boots Baby Soft Cloth Wipes 64s
Small	3.0 kg	9	13	86	11
Medium	4.5 kg	14	19	129	17
Large	4.5 kg	14	19	129	17

- **Why are the brown paper bags more expensive than the current plastic bags?**

As part of our ongoing commitment to operate as a socially responsible business, it was our ambition to develop an alternative carrier bag that is plastic-free.

The cost of producing a high-quality bag from 100% recycled paper was always going to be higher than creating a lightweight plastic bag. We've adopted a pricing structure that is competitively priced and in line with current benchmarks, and every time a customer purchases one of our brown paper bags, all profits from the bag are donated to our strategic, long-term CSR charity partner, BBC Children in Need, helping to improve the lives of disadvantaged children and young people across the UK.

- **What will be the cost of Boots changing from plastic to brown paper bags? And how much is Boots investing in brown paper bags?**

This is commercially sensitive information that we do not disclose. Reducing the impact we have on the environment has been an important part of the way we've run our business for many years, and we're pleased to be taking actions that are helping to reduce our plastic use. The introduction of our brown paper bags has been a significant project over the past few months and we're excited to be offering a plastic-free offering across our stores.

- **Are paper bags better than plastic bags?**

Plastic bags are often more challenging to recycle than paper. The current recycling rate for plastic film, typically used for carrier bags, is only 4%, in comparison to the recycling rate for paper which stands at 79%. What's more, an estimated [1.2 million tonnes](#)* of plastic film from packaging enters the UK waste stream every year.

Plastic is also very persistent if released into the terrestrial, aquatic or marine environment. This a growing concern across the UK, with 87% of our customers believing that paper bags are more 'environmentally friendly' than a plastic alternative.

Prior to launching our brown paper carrier bags in stores, Boots commissioned an independent lifecycle assessment, which included raw material, transport, production, distribution, use and final disposal. It concluded that no negative climate change impact is anticipated from the change to paper bags.

*http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Plastics_Market_Situation_Report.pdf

- **Why are the paper bags made from brown paper?**

100% recycled, unbleached brown paper is proven to have less of an impact on the environment than virgin white paper. This is because it uses fewer raw materials and a less intensive production process. Using brown paper makes it easier to include a high recycled content. Also brown paper requires less processing than white paper and therefore has a smaller environmental footprint. The results of our

independent lifecycle analysis showed that bags made using recycled brown paper had a lower footprint than bags made using virgin white paper for all impact categories assessed

- **What is Boots going to do to reduce its overall plastic use?**

For 170 years, we have demonstrated an ongoing commitment to operating as a socially responsible business, and we're dedicated to reducing the impact our business has on the environment for a further 170 years. As part of our commitment to the UK's Plastic Pact, we'll continue to find ways to: eliminate single use plastic; make 100% of our plastic packaging reusable, recyclable or compostable; ensure 70% of our plastic packaging is effectively recycled or composted; and use an average of 30% recycled content across all our plastic packaging. Our aim is to support the delivery of these targets by 2025 as part of WRAP's long-term ambition.

- **Is Boots rolling out paper bag options across Pharmacy, Boots Opticians, boots.com/.ie, beauty**

Yes. As part of our ongoing commitment to operating as a socially responsible business, we're taking steps across Boots UK, Boots Opticians, to improve the sustainability of our bags.

Dispensing bag from in store pharmacies – our new brown recycled paper dispensing bags will be introduced in Boots UK pharmacies towards the end of August 2019. These will be introduced on run-in/run-out basis and have the similar environmental credentials as the brown paper retail carrier-bags.

Boots beauty bags – as part of our plans to transform the face of beauty at Boots, we have recently introduced new paper beauty bags. While the paper is recyclable, we're currently investigating alternative materials to improve the recyclability of the rope handles, which currently must be removed before recycling the paper bag.

Boots Opticians bags – Boots Opticians already provides recyclable white paper bags, but it is currently reviewing the existing bag design to further improve its environmental credentials, including reviewing the rope handle.

Boots.com/.ie packaging:

- **Will the boots.com packaging change in line with the paper bags now available in store?**

We are developing packaging options to reduce or eliminate our reliance on plastic packaging materials. These options are being tested at the moment to ensure that they are suitable for our supply chain, store colleagues and customers.

- **What is happening to the old packaging?**

If the trials are successful the new packaging types will gradually replace the plastic bag on a run in run out basis. Please note: the current bags are recyclable.

- **Is the new packaging recyclable? What are the environmental credentials?**

All the new packaging types are cardboard and can be easily recycled.

- **Will the new packaging be rolled out across all orders?**

When the new packaging options are introduced they will be used for all boots.com orders

- **What type of packaging will be available?**

The range includes a selection of box sizes with an innovative internal wrap that negates the need for in fill material and a potato starch glues flap which negates the need for parcel tape. For smaller and single items a new envelop design is being tested that also uses a potato starch glue. Please note: this design is still being tested.

Pharmacy & DSP

- **Is Boots pharmacy changing from white to brown paper for store dispensed prescriptions?**

Yes, because brown paper is more environmentally-friendly. Our new brown dispensing bags will be 100%

recyclable, made from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified recycled brown paper and water-based ink, are unbleached and sustainably sourced and manufactured in the UK. This aligns with new brown paper retail carrier-bags.

- **Are we starting to charge for pharmacy bags?**

No. They will remain free-of-charge if the bag only contains prescription medicines. This is in line with government legislation.

- **What is happening to the old pharmacy bags?**

New brown paper bags will be available from August/September on a run-in/run-out basis. Until stores run out of white dispensing stock, they will not receive an allocation of the new brown paper dispensing bags.

- **Will the bags be rolled out across all pharmacies?**

Yes. All Boots UK pharmacies will receive brown paper dispensing bags.

- **Will there be new messages printed on our pharmacy bags?**

Our new bags will include updated messaging regarding our Free Repeat Prescription Services, including references to the update to online service. Also, new World Health Organisation message which is in support of the medication without harm programme. Information about Macmillan Cancer Support will continue to be printed on the bags.

- **What sizes will they be?**

There is no change in size to the white dispensing bags. They will remain as Standard, DDS, and King (name of bags).

- **What other bags will be available at Pharmacy?**

If a customer has multiple prescriptions or large/bulky items, stores will continue to give patients plastic carrier bags, as per our current policy. Going forward, a pharmacy paper carrier bag is in production. This will be non-barcoded so that it can be handed out for free in our pharmacies (where all products placed in the bags have been obtained via a prescription).

- **Will Boots centralised pharmacy (DSP) be changing from plastic to paper packaging too?**

We're currently investigating alternative options for our Dispensing Support Pharmacy. In the meantime, the DSP will move to a minimum of 60% recyclable content plastic, which will enable us to continue to deliver medicines to patients in a way that is safe, clean and dry, whilst aligning with our UK Plastics pact ambitions.

- **Will customers opting for home delivery prescriptions receive a plastic or paper bag?**

Customers using the online repeat prescription service, who select home delivery, may have their prescription fulfilled by our centralised pharmacy. Therefore some orders may be using a plastic bag placed then in a secure brown package in line with our current policy.

Boots Opticians

- **Will Boots Opticians be offering paper bags?**

Boots Opticians has been using premium paper bags for a number of years. We are currently reviewing the existing bag design to further improve the recyclability of the bags e.g. replacing the rope handle for a 100% recyclable alternative.

- **When will they be available for customers?**

The new Boots Opticians bag will be on a run-in/run-out basis to ensure stock of the old Boots Opticians bag is effectively managed.

- **What is happening to the old Boots Opticians bags?**

It is anticipated that any change to the Boots Opticians bags will be managed on a run-in run-out basis.

- **Are they being rolled out across all stores?**

The new Boots Opticians bag will be available in all practices, depending on current stock file, the in practice dates will vary.