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A small town in southwest Britain is banning plastic bags in an attempt to help the environment and cut waste —— a step that environ-mentalists believe is a first for Europe. Shopkeepers in Mod bury population 1 500 agreed to stop handing out disposable plastic bags to customers on Saturday. They said paper sacks and cloth cartier bags would be offered instead. Last month San Francisco became the first U. S. city to ban plastic grocery bags. Internationally laws to discourage the use of plastic bags have been passed in parts of South Africa and Ireland where govern-ments either tax shoppers who use them or fine companies that hand them out. Bangladesh already bans them and so do at least 30 remote Alaskan villages. Modbury about 225 miles southwest of London has also declared a bag amnesty allowing local people to hand in plastic bags that have piled up at home. They will be sent for recycling. The Modbury ban was the idea of Rebecca Hosking who saw the effect of bags on marine life while working in the Pacific as a wildlife camerawoman. She said response in the town so far had been "re- ally positive". "Modbury is quite an old-fashioned town and a lot of people have wicker baskets to go out shopping anyway " Hosking told SkyNews Tele- vision. The Worldwatch Institute an environmental research agency state that 100 billion plastic bags are thrown away each year in the Unitec States alone. More than 500 billion are used yearly around the world.

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