

BISHOPSTON TRADING COMPANY

Organic cotton bags give shoppers the chance to ditch wasteful plastic

Shoppers have the chance to buy re-usable organic cotton bags which are non-polluting and help cut down on the wasteful use of plastic bags.

Ethical retailer Bishopston Trading sell the Fairtrade certified organic cotton canvas bags – which are very strong – in pink, sea blue, navy and red for £5.75.

Bishopston director Carolyn Whitwell says: “ I would like people to appreciate the significance of organic cotton – non organic cotton is a very polluting fabric because of the huge quantity of pesticides and insecticides needed to grow it.”

Bishopston Trading recently celebrated 21 years of trading links with the village of K V Kuppam in Tamil Nadu, southern India, where it provides employment for more than 500 people.

Carolyn adds: “Getting a job with our producer partners in K V Kuppam can lift a whole family out of poverty.”

As well as the canvas bags, shoppers visiting any of Bishopston’s five retail outlets in the west of the country or ordering online and spending more than £25 automatically receive a re-usable organic cotton bag

Carolyn Whitwell says: “We got the idea for the bags 20 years ago in India when we were given cotton bags in shops in the towns near K V Kuppam.”

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Background Notes: Bishopston Trading Company has five retail shops in the West of England (Bristol, Bradford on Avon, Glastonbury, Stroud and Totnes) plus stockists throughout the UK and Europe and a mail order catalogue.

All profits from the company are used to benefit the people of KV Kuppam through the company's registered charity, the South India Rural Development Trust. This Trust has funded an architect-designed factory in the village offering excellent working conditions for the staff.

There is a long tradition of hand-weaving in the village of KV Kuppam, in Tamil Nadu, southern India. The Bishopston Trading Company currently provides employment for more than 200 tailors, cutters and craft workers and 300 weavers. Many of the tailors and hand-finishers are women who can take advantage of the on-site creche at the factory. Employees are offered secure employment and can remain close to their families rather than seek work elsewhere.

The Bishopston Trading Company is a member of IFAT (The International Fair Trade Association) and BAFTS (British Association for Fair Trade Shops) and licensees of the Fairtrade Foundation.