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## **PUBLIC ATTEMPTS TO BOOST RECYCLING WILL FAIL UNLESS SUPERMARKETS DO MORE – Local Government Association**

Supermarkets must take urgent action to reduce excessive packaging or Britain will fail to meet its recycling targets, council leaders warned today.

The call came as new research published by the Local Government Association revealed up to 40 per cent of a regular household shopping basket cannot be recycled.

The LGA commissioned British Market Research Bureau (BMRB) Social Research to buy a range of common food items from eight retailers. Analysis of the purchases found that local retailers and market traders produced less packaging and that more of it could be recycled – with the larger supermarkets lagging behind.

BMRB Social Research found five per cent of the total weight of shopping baskets was made up of packaging. The most environmentally friendly retailers have low levels of packaging – a high proportion of which is recyclable. The supermarket with the heaviest packaging was Lidl's (799.5g), while the contents of the Marks & Spencer basket had the lowest level of packaging that could be recycled (60 per cent). Asda was the best performing supermarket, with packaging weighing 714g – 70 per cent of which was recyclable. But the market was the best overall, with packaging weighing 710.5g, 79 per cent recyclable.

Recycling rates in Britain are increasing as more people do their bit to protect the environment. Councils are also extending and improving their recycling services in a bid to reduce the amount of waste thrown into landfill sites. The LGA has warned these efforts to meet EU recycling targets will not succeed unless supermarkets do more to reduce excessive packaging.

Cllr Paul Bettison, chairman of the LGA's Environment Board, said:

"People are working hard to increase their recycling rates, but their efforts are being hamstrung by needlessly over-packaged products on sale in supermarkets. We all have a responsibility to reduce the amount of waste being thrown into landfill, which is damaging the environment and contributing to climate change.

"Many supermarkets are taking action to cut back on excessive packaging, but this research proves there is an urgent need to do more. Councils and council tax payers are facing fines of up to £3 billion if we do not dramatically reduce the amount of waste thrown into landfill."

Cllr Bettison added:

"Councils want to work constructively with supermarkets to look at solutions to the problem of excessive packaging. There are many examples from our research of how retailers are making it easier for their customers to recycle, including the use of paper bags and removing layers of packaging. However, we have to question the necessity and desirability of shrink wrapping vegetables like peppers and broccoli."

Cllr Bettison added councils should work with retailers to target consumers in shops as they were making their choices.

“Evidence from other countries has shown that when local authorities work with supermarkets to educate consumers, there is a significant increase in the sale of products with less packaging. It is important shoppers are actively encouraged to consider the environmental impact of their purchases.”

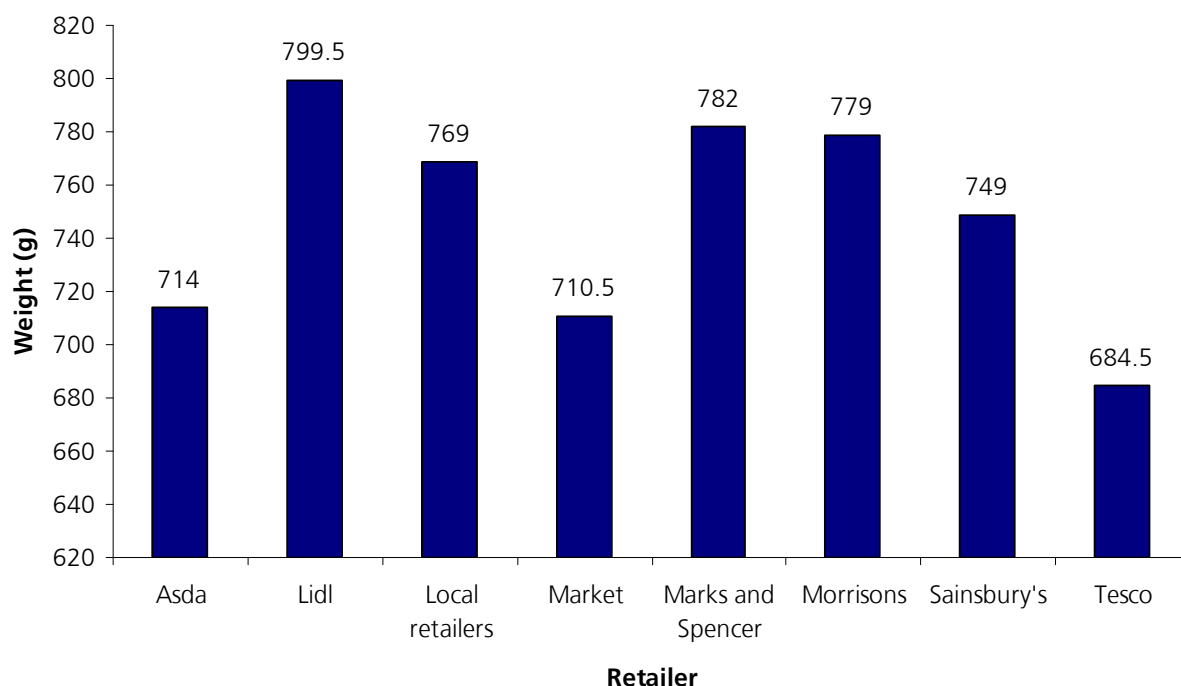
### Details of the research:

*(Detailed analysis is available on request from the LGA media office)*

A range of common food items (29 items), representing a regular shopping basket were purchased from eight retailers (six supermarkets - ASDA, Lidl, Marks and Spencer, Morrisons, Sainsbury's and Tesco - a local high street and a large market). Analysis involved recording the total weight of the product and recording the total weight of the packaging. The component parts of the packaging were weighed separately to measure the proportion of packaging that was recyclable or rubbish. An estimate of the volume of the food in relation to the packaging was also provided, to consider cases of excessive packaging. Photographs of the shopping baskets were taken before analysis and of the piles of waste created.

This exercise will be repeated every six months for two years, in order to record the trends in food packaging over time.

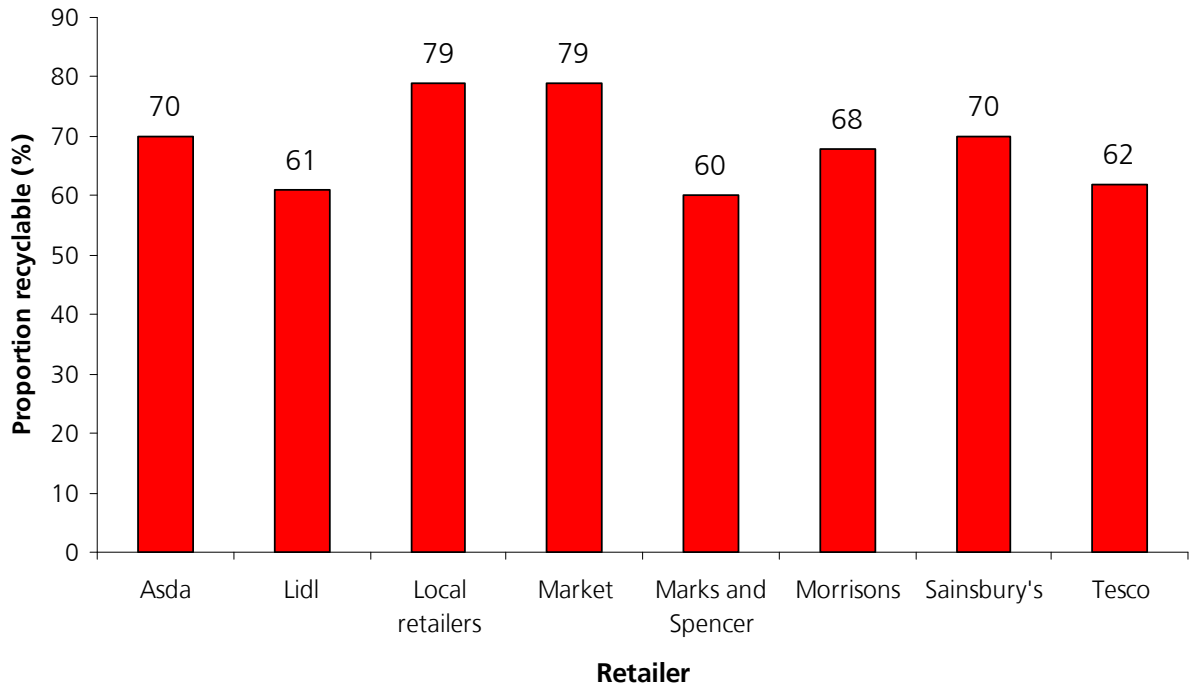
**Figure 1: Weight of packaging for the basket of 29 food items, by retailer**



The proportion of waste packaging that was recyclable ranged from 60% in Marks and Spencer's basket to 79% in the baskets from the market and the local retailers. Figure 2 shows the relative proportions of recyclable packaging for each retailer.

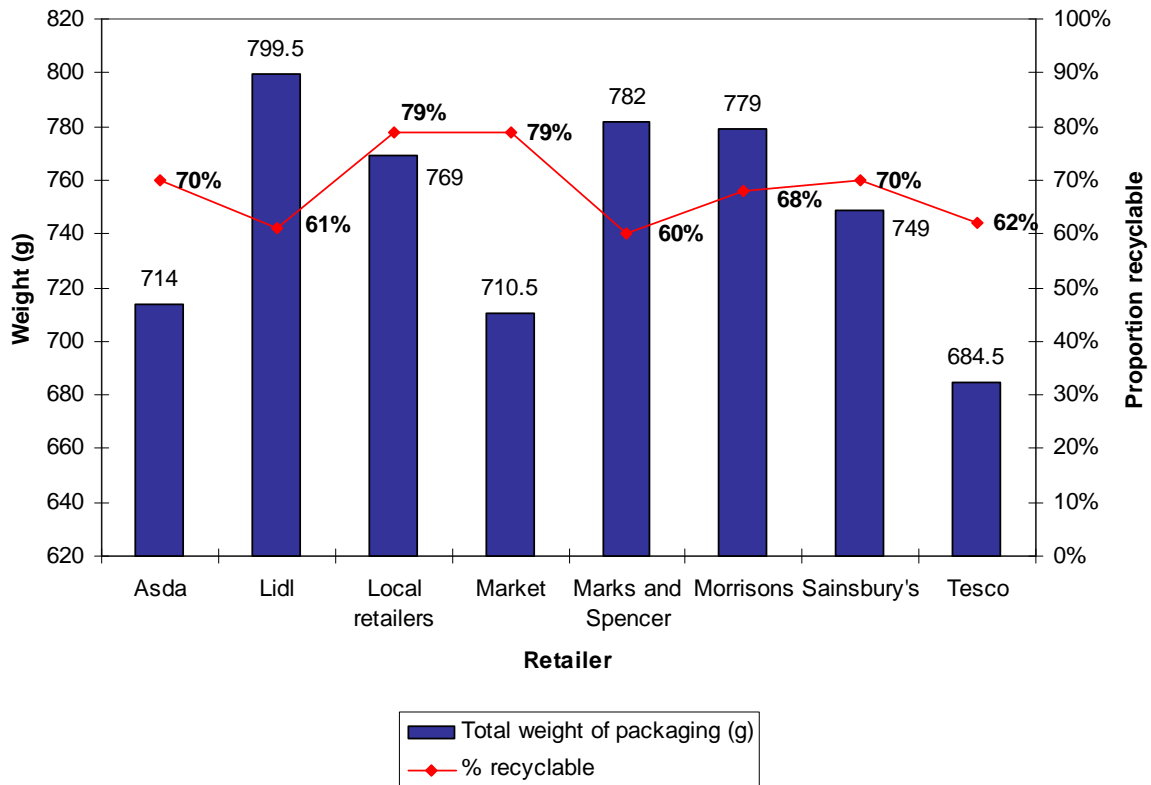
The retailers with the highest proportion of recyclable packaging were Asda (70%), local high street retailers (79%), the market (79%) and Sainsbury's (70%).

**Figure 2: Proportion of packaging that was recyclable, by retailer**



Overall, the best performing retailers have low levels of packaging, but also a high proportion of recyclable waste. They were Asda and the market (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Weight of packaging and proportion of packaging that was recyclable, by retailer**



## EUROPEAN CASE STUDY

The local authority in Charleroi, Belgium, determined that the best way to reduce waste was to target consumers in the shops as they were making their choices. While they recognized the importance of providing general information to households, they discovered that much of this information is forgotten when the purchasing choices were actually being made.

The ensuing partnership with supermarkets enabled the waste programme to operate in more than 170 supermarkets in both the city and the province. Shoppers were actively invited to think about the environmental impact of their purchases, particularly the impact of packaging. In addition shoppers were encouraged to buy goods with less packaging.

When the local authority collated its data, it found there was a significant increase in the sales of products with less packaging and subsequently less environmental impact.