

*By David Eldridge*

*Public consultation underpins likely proposal to government.*

8 November 2007 – The London Councils organisation looks set to recommend the UK government imposes a ban or a levy on plastic shopping bags in the capital, following a public consultation.

Nearly 92% of respondents said that they supported the proposal for a levy or a ban on throwaway shopping bags. Of the proposed options, 58.2% of online respondents called for an outright ban on throwaway shopping bags, while 34.4% said they preferred a levy. Answering another question whether any action should only apply to plastic bags, 64.6% said it should.

Councillor Sean Brennan, vice-chair of London Councils, said: "Londoners have clearly signalled that they want action on plastic bags – feeling strongly enough to call for an outright ban. I am sure London's council leaders will listen to their calls before finalising the proposal in the tenth London Local Authorities Bill."

Leaders from all London councils will meet next Tuesday to consider the results. A ban or levy could then be included with proposals on other subjects in the London Local Authorities Bill that is forwarded to Parliament for consideration.

A spokesman for the London Councils organisation said the parliamentary process can take between 18 months and two years to be completed, as it passes through committee stages before it is enacted.

Asked by PRW.com why the organisation had not carried out an Environmental Impact Assessment on its proposal, the spokesman said it did not have the resources to do so. Instead, it made use of findings from similar initiatives in Ireland (which has a plastic bag levy) and Scotland (which decided not to impose a levy).

He said the organisation had also spoken to the government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), which has an agreement with retailers to reduce the number of free shopping bags they hand out. "We have spoken to Defra about their work on voluntary reductions. But this is a softly-softly approach and we think London can take a lead," he said.

Eldridge, David. "London Close to Proposing Plastic Bag Ban or Levy." Plastics & Rubber Weekly. Ed. David Eldridge. 8 November 2007. 8 November 2007 <<http://www.PRW.com>>