

SUSTAINABILITY NEWS

Environment Committee



IN THIS EDITION:

THAT'S A WRAP; 2024 REVIEW.

As we reach the end of the year, it is fantastic to look back at what we have accomplished. It's been an exciting year for the EnviroCommittee. Check out our yearly review.

NEWLY CERTIFIED OCS SITES

A huge congratulations to all of our newly OCS NZ Certified sites! Read on to find out who was involved.

REPORTS INCOMING!

Plastics NZ will soon release the final Waste Minimisation Funded working group reports focused on EPS Product Stewardship and C&D Plastics. Keep reading for a preview.

SUSTAINABLE CHRISTMAS?

Are you dreaming of a more sustainable Christmas? The Enviro Committee share their top tips for responsible consumption this festive season!

ASK EARTHA

This month, Eartha explores opportunities to advance sustainability by harnessing innovation!

THAT'S A WRAP: 2024 REVIEW

FRESH FACES, NEW IDEAS!

As 2024 ends, we're thrilled to reflect on a dynamic and impactful year for Plastics New Zealand's Enviro Committee. The year kicked off with fresh faces joining the committee, bringing new energy and innovative ideas. This proved invaluable in helping us shape an engaging programme, including the launch of this very newsletter. Now in its third edition, the newsletter has become a key platform to share updates on PNZ's sustainability initiatives, explore general sustainability challenges and opportunities in our industry, and feature our beloved Ask Eartha environmental advice column.

We're excited to keep the momentum going into 2025, and we want to hear from you! If there are topics you'd love us to cover in future editions, please get in touch at katy@plastics.org.nz.

LUNCH AND LEARN: BUILDING KNOWLEDGE, INSPIRING ACTION

This year, we delivered four thought-provoking Lunch and Learn webinars, covering a range of important topics for the industry:

- Key Learnings from Marley's PVC Take Back Scheme: Dwayne Carrol shared insights into this innovative initiative.
- Opportunities to Improve Energy Savings: Karen Orr from EECA highlighted practical steps and the benefits of energy efficiency.
- Global Update: PNZ's CEO provided a global perspective on trends and challenges affecting our sector.
- Bioplastics Update: Alec Foster from Scion introduced the latest developments in bioplastics and their implications for the industry.

These sessions aimed to keep industry players informed and inspired about what's next on the path to sustainability. If you have suggestions for topics you'd like to see covered in 2025, let us know!



Top to Bottom; Dwayne Carrol; Karen Orr; Rachel Barker; Alec Foster

OPERATION CLEAN UP WEEK: A COMMUNITY TRIUMPH

Operation Clean Up Week was a standout success in 2024. The Enviro Committee began planning in June, and we were thrilled to see increased engagement compared to last year. Volunteers across the country joined forces to remove significant amounts of litter from our environment. *Continued next page.*



To keep spirits high, sausage sizzles sponsored by Dutton Stormwater, 3R, and EPL provided much-needed morale boosts for our hardworking volunteers. We also collaborated with the Rosebank Industry Association, East Tamaki Business Association, Hamilton Council, and Auckland Council to amplify the event's impact. The results were remarkable and we're incredibly proud of the collective effort.

A special mention to Scion who conducted an analysis of their collected litter and sought reuse or recycling options where possible! An overview of the other clean up events can be found in the November edition of the [Plastics NZ newsletter](#).

Operation Clean Up Week has proven to be a fantastic opportunity for networking and community good, and we'd love to hear your ideas for how we can make it even better in 2025!



Through Scion's clean up event, the following items were found:

- 12kg of small bits of plastic to go to landfill (big bag in picture).
- 56 aluminium cans to go into the "Cans for Trees" programme.
- A bin of recyclable bottles.
- 6 glass bottles and a small jar for recycling.
- A pile of metal for metal recycling.
- A couple of vaping devices.
- An umbrella top which might be able to be repurposed.
- A beanie that will head to the second-hand shop after a clean.
- A couple of bike tubes for reuse when stretch is required for tying up a tree.
- Some larger bits of plastic for landfill.

LOOKING FORWARD.

As we wrap up 2024, we're already looking forward to another impactful year ahead. Hot topics on the cards for the coming year include bioplastics, labelling, global trends and regulations, and recycling.

Your feedback is essential to help us refine our initiatives and ensure they remain relevant and valuable. We'd love your input on:

- Topics or issues you'd like covered in the newsletter.
- Ideas for future Lunch and Learn sessions.
- Suggestions for enhancing Operation Clean Up Week or other potential events.

Please reach out to us at katy@plastics.org.nz with your ideas. Together, we can continue to drive meaningful progress towards sustainability in our industry. Here's to a successful 2025!

NEWLY CERTIFIED OCS NZ SITES

CELEBRATING INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE!

We are thrilled to announce that several sites have recently achieved certification under the Operation Clean Sweep (OCS) New Zealand programme! Over the last couple of months, Simon has been working closely with these organisations to audit their practices, ensuring they meet the high standards required for OCS NZ certification. These sites have demonstrated an exceptional commitment to preventing plastic pellet, flake, and resin loss by implementing robust systems to protect the environment and prevent pollution.

Please join us in congratulating the following newly certified sites:

- IP Plastics, Auckland
- RX Plastics, Ashburton
- LEP Engineering Plastics, Christchurch
- Ristrom Packaging, Christchurch
- RX Plastics, Horotiu
- Expol, Wellington
- EPS Foams, Christchurch



This work demonstrates how proactive measures can significantly contribute to reducing plastic waste in our environment. Their efforts set an example for the industry and highlight the benefits of joining the OCS NZ programme.

READY TO JOIN THEM?

If your organisation is interested in becoming certified, now is the perfect time to start preparing. Certification is a fantastic way to showcase your commitment to environmental responsibility and join a growing network of companies taking action for a cleaner future.

Visit the OCS NZ website (<https://operationcleansweep.org.nz/>) for more details or contact Katy Constance to book your audit for 2025.

Let's work together to protect New Zealand's environment and ensure that every piece of plastic is properly managed.



REPORTS INCOMING!

CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION PLASTICS CIRCULARITY AND EPS PACKAGING PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP REPORTS 'SNEAK PEEK'!

PNZ are excited to announce the upcoming release of two key reports: one from our Construction & Demolition (C&D) Plastics Circularity Working Group and the other from the EPS (expanded polystyrene) Packaging Product Stewardship Working Group. Both reports reveal critical insights and practical solutions to enhance plastics circularity. Here's a sneak peek at some of the key findings!

EPS PACKAGING PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP REPORT: EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF EPS RECOVERY

The EPS Packaging Product Stewardship report addresses the challenges and opportunities of managing EPS packaging through product stewardship.

Most EPS packaging used in Aotearoa is imported on consumer goods and remains clean throughout use. A smaller amount is used for seafood, medical goods, and other biologics. This can result in contamination, complicating recovery/recycling. The working group explored opportunities to improve material use, collection, and reprocessing for enhanced circularity.

One of the most positive findings was that some EPS is successfully recycled into new construction products here in New Zealand. For example, Expol partnered with Mitre10 to set up a successful EPS collection scheme. EPS is also compressed and sold to offshore markets where it is reprocessed into new products such as furnishings and picture frames.

However, there are complexities to recovering this bulky, lightweight, and crumbly material! To increase volumes recovered and ensure they are managed responsibly, a wide range of collection and reprocessing options was explored. These were analysed within the New Zealand context to determine which are active now, which may be available soon, and which are not applicable.

These findings have been shared with 3R who are now conducting further research into scheme design and management options.

Case Study:

E-Cycle Ltd (Palmerston North) have recently extended their services to include EPS recycling for the lower North Island. Through this service, EPS is received, compacted, and reprocessed into picture frames & mouldings.

E-cycle partnered with Palmerston North City Council and some other lower North Island Councils to set up material collection points. These are accessible to a broad range of stakeholders from manufacturers to retailers, and consumers to community groups.

This initiative demonstrates one example of effective material recovery that could be used by an EPS product stewardship scheme! You can learn more on www.e-cycle.co.nz or by contacting their Palmerston North manager Jason on 021 199 1090.





C&D PLASTICS CIRCULARITY REPORT: ADVANCING CIRCULARITY IN THE CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION SECTOR

The C&D Plastics Circularity Working Group report provides an in-depth exploration of PVC, EPS, and Soft Plastics in the construction and demolition (C&D) sector. With a focus on advancing the circularity of these materials, the report uses the waste hierarchy framework to review options for reducing waste.



Key findings highlight a significant volume of C&D plastic waste is lost from the economy to landfill each year. Mismanaged material is also lost to the environment. One of the primary challenges identified is the need for cross-sector collaboration across the C&D value chain. To enable a circular economy in this space, stakeholders must work together to enhance material recovery and reuse.

The report calls for a national approach to circularity in the C&D sector, noting several promising pilot projects that have identified opportunities to reuse, recycle, and reduce material consumption. However, successful implementation will require sustained collaboration and investment in circular infrastructure.



One of the report's critical findings is the need to raise awareness and improve education about circular options. By providing training, celebrating positive case studies, and showcasing the benefits of circularity, we can help shift mindsets and grow demand for sustainable practices in the C&D sector. Furthermore, ensuring accountability on-site, with developers taking responsibility for waste management, can foster greater adoption of circular practices.

SOLUTIONS FOR ADVANCING CIRCULARITY: FROM WASTE PREVENTION TO REUSE

Both reports emphasise the importance of an “all of waste” and solution using the entire waste hierarchy to tackle the EPS packaging and C&D plastics. A key message from both reports is the need for initial investment and planning. Although circular practices may come with upfront costs, the long-term benefits far outweigh them. To support these efforts, industry-wide collaboration and stakeholder engagement across all sectors, from developers to waste managers, are essential. Public-private partnerships and governmental support will also be crucial in scaling up these solutions.

Stay tuned for the full reports, which will be delivered to the Ministry for the Environment and released to the public soon. These insights provide a compelling case for the need to act now, and the solutions-focused recommendations will play a pivotal role in shaping New Zealand's path to a more sustainable, circular future.

DREAMING OF A SUSTAINABLE CHRISTMAS?

BUY LESS, CHOOSE WISELY, RECYCLE RESPONSIBLY!

The festive season is often a time of excess—extra packaging, single-use items, and increased waste often overshadow the holiday cheer. But there is opportunity for us to lead the charge in promoting festive sustainability through the use of responsible choices and practices!



Buy Less, Waste Less

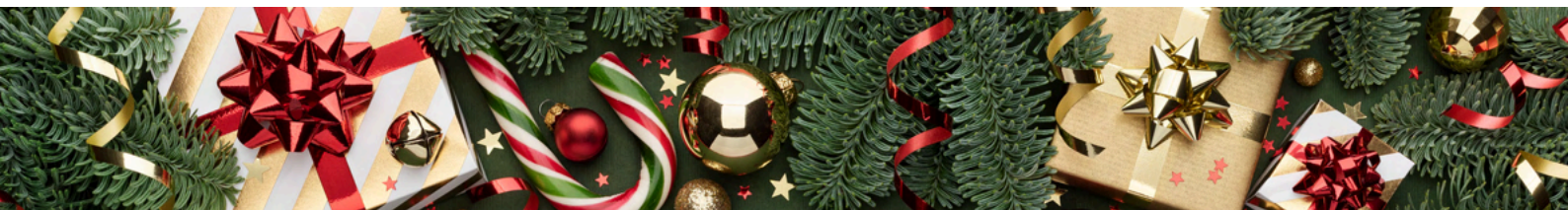
The most effective way to reduce waste is to consume less - try these tips to minimise your purchases!

- Create a gift giving shopping list to avoid overbuying.
- Focus on quality over quantity and consider gifting experiences rather than physical items.
- Organise a 'sustainable secret santa' where participants give home made or regifted items.
- Showcase sustainability within the industry by offering products and services designed for durability, reusability, or recyclability, and prioritise marketing strategies that encourage conscious consumption.

Minimise Food Waste

Reusable containers play a significant role in minimising food waste at Christmas. Unlike single-use options like foil and cling film, durable containers help preserve leftovers for longer and reduce the need for disposable alternatives. To maximise efficiency, households can:

- Clearly label containers with the date they were filled to track freshness and avoid unnecessary food waste.
- Use stackable containers to optimise fridge and freezer space, making it easier to organise and access holiday leftovers.
- Always check the fridge before cooking up a fresh kai!



Conscious Shopping

Thoughtful consumption can have a huge impact towards a more sustainable Christmas. Encouraging the selection of food items with minimal or no individual wrapping reduces waste and packaging weight. Choosing local produce supports reduction in airmiles! Top tips:

- Buy pick and mix/bulk bin options instead of individually wrapped snacks.
- Buy from the butcher/deli counter to get the amount you need, avoiding excess.
- Purchase fresh, locally sourced produce to reduce air miles.
- Support brands that prioritise minimal, recyclable, or reusable packaging - if your brand is amongst them, share the message loudly and proudly!



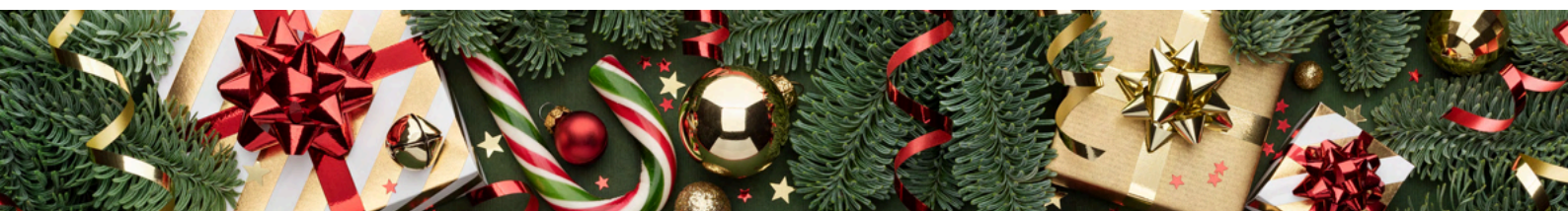
Promote Proper Recycling Practices

While some waste is inevitable, ensuring it is disposed of correctly is crucial. By following New Zealand's standardised recycling rules, individuals and businesses can make a meaningful impact. Make sure you clean your recyclables to avoid contamination, and follow the guidance below to ensure you're recycling correctly:

- Wrapping paper & cards: Recyclable if not printed with glitter or metallic foil.
- Laminated cardboard backing (e.g., the card & plastic pack that an electric toothbrush comes in): If you can get the cardboard out, the remaining plastic goes in the rubbish bin.
- Only plastic **bottles and containers** labelled 1, 2 & 5 are accepted in kerbside recycling.

Materials for kerbside collection:	
	Glass bottles and jars
	Paper and cardboard
	Plastic bottles, trays and containers 1, 2 and 5
	Aluminium and steel tins and cans

For all your recycling questions, see the national guide at Ministry for Environment's website [Recycle right at kerbside](#) | [Ministry for the Environment](#).



ASK EARTHA

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL AGONY AUNT ANSWERS YOUR ECO-ENQUIRIES

Q. HOW TO INNOVATE FOR SUSTAINABILITY?

How Do We Harness Sustainable Innovations in the Plastics Industry?

A. HOW TO INNOVATE FOR SUSTAINABILITY?

There are countless sustainable innovations available to the plastics industry, but knowing which are legitimate and how to harness them effectively can be challenging. With the right approach, businesses can advance their competitive advantage by integrating sustainable innovations into their practices. Eartha is here to guide you toward solutions that make environmental and business sense!

Material Choices

Choosing the right materials is a key step in adopting sustainable innovations. Here are some approaches to consider:

- Incorporating recycled content into products can reduce reliance on virgin polymers and appeal to environmentally conscious customers. Availability & cost of recycled polymers can vary, however, developing material take-back schemes allows companies to source their own recycled content.
- Use of biopolymers can support the transition away from fossil based plastics. Different biopolymers require different end of life management - conducting R&D into biopolymers tailored to specific applications can ensure performance while supporting positive end of life solutions. This involves upfront costs, but many customers are willing to pay a premium for such innovations.
- Building strong relationships with sustainable material suppliers creates a robust and traceable supply chain. Highlighting this to customers can enhance brand value and establish a competitive edge.

Leveraging Industry 4.0

Industry 4.0 technologies, such as IoT sensors, AI, and real-time data analytics, offer transformative opportunities to advance sustainability. For example:

- Smart sensors and AI can minimise waste by detecting inefficiencies in manufacturing processes.
- Using data-driven insights to maintain equipment proactively reduces downtime and energy consumption.
- Blockchain technology ensures traceability of materials, verifying sustainable sourcing and recycling.

Continued next page.

CONTACT US:

To ask Eartha a question, make a suggestion for an article, or for general enquiries and feedback contact:
Katy@plastics.org.nz



Invest in Cutting-Edge Equipment

New machinery and technologies can dramatically improve environmental outcomes. Some things to consider include:

- Advancements in manufacturing/recycling technologies can significantly improve efficiency of processes and help to mitigate the loss of materials into the environment.
- Upgrading to energy-efficient equipment can significantly reduce operational carbon footprints.
- Precision Manufacturing Tools such as advanced moulding and extrusion systems help to minimise material usage and waste.

Participate in Sustainable Initiatives

Joining or supporting programmes such as Operation Clean Sweep NZ and material take back schemes help businesses to ensure positive environmental outcomes from production processes to product end of life. Publicly demonstrating engagement with these can advance their impact and enhance your image as a responsible brand.

By focusing on innovative solutions that align with sustainability principles, the plastics industry can continue to thrive while playing a pivotal role in creating a greener future. Got more questions about sustainability? Drop Eartha a line—let's keep the conversation going! katy@plastic.org.nz

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!

