

Sustainability News



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A Year in Review

I can't quite believe we're about to wrap up 2025. It's been another busy and productive year for the Environment Committee and an exciting year with Katy's new baby arriving in August and Nikki joining Plastics NZ while Katy is on maternity leave. With Christmas nearly upon us, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the fantastic work the Plastics NZ Environment Committee has achieved together this year.

This year we hoped to grow our impact through educational initiatives that support our members, something we are proud to have achieved. Our **Lunch & Learn sessions** have become a real highlight for all of us, creating space for open discussions, learning, and sharing practical solutions across the industry.

Our **environmental newsletters** have kept everyone informed through a rapidly evolving environmental space, showcasing innovation, best practice, and the great work being done throughout the sector.

To top these all of we had a very successful Operation Clean Sweep Clean up week and have some great projects in the pipeline for 2026.

These achievements reflect the spirit of this productive committee. Thank you to our committee members for all your input, expertise, insights and your willingness to contribute. It's been awesome to see how much we have accomplish working together.

As we head into the holiday season, I hope you all get some well-earned rest, time with family and friends, and a chance to recharge. I'm looking forward to continuing our momentum in the committee for 2026, building on everything we've achieved this far.

Wishing you all a great Christmas and a safe, happy, and refreshing break.

All the best,
Ally Hopwood
Chair, Plastics NZ Environment Committee



Future Post – Post Fires



Thankfully the processing area of Future Post's facilities wasn't affected by the [fires](#). So just a quick note to wish them all the best for the clean-up where storage was affected, but for members to not worry and to continue supporting them via the [Soft Plastics Recycling Scheme](#).

Circular Plastics by Design in 2026

As we move into 2026, the opportunity to rethink how we design plastic products becomes more pressing.

Around 80% of a product's environmental impact is locked in at the design stage, long before it ever reaches a customer or a recycling bin. That means the biggest gains we can make toward circularity begin not at end-of-life, but at the drawing board.

Designing for circularity is about more than choosing a recyclable polymer. It's about **designing out waste, keeping materials in use**, and ensuring products fit into real recovery systems in Aotearoa and in export markets. Whether by simplifying material choices, increasing durability, enabling repair, or ensuring components can be separated and recycled, even small design shifts can have ripple effects across an entire supply chain.

Every business — no matter where they sit in the plastics system — has a role to play. Redesigning an existing often reveals opportunities for efficiency, innovation and cost savings too, which can be a competitive edge in our economic climate.

With the new year approaching, this is an ideal moment for our industry to pause, reconsider, and refresh our approach.



Farm Plastics Scheme Accredited

The Ministry for the Environment (MfE) has accredited a new **Rural Recycling Scheme**, which will be run by the Agrecovery Foundation.

The scheme will be funded by a mandatory stewardship fee (levy) paid by the producers (manufacturers, importers, and distributors) of in-scope products, which is often passed onto the consumer as an upfront cost.



Image: Agrecovery

In-scope products include agrichemical containers and drums, bale wrap and silage film, small bags used for agricultural products and bulk woven polypropylene bags.

It's not only farmers who will see the advantages; with national take-back services available to forestry, manufacturing, hospitality, tourism and local councils, safe disposal becomes easier and more convenient for communities throughout New Zealand.

Over the last 20 years, Agrecovery and Plasback have been running voluntary recycling programmes for farm plastics. These will now be brought together into a single national Products Stewardship regulated scheme to ensure consistent and accessible recycling is available across New Zealand's farming sector.

Once regulations are drafted, the new scheme is expected to become mandatory by late 2026 or early 2027. In the meantime, the voluntary schemes will continue to run.

Sustainable Solutions for Plastic Print Media



Kirbyco is dedicated to providing sustainable print media solutions, specifically targeting the wide format print industry. Founded by Denise Kirby, the company focuses on enabling print converters and media buyers to select green products that are less impactful on the environment while maintaining high-quality, cost-effective visual communication campaigns.

With over 32 years of experience in print media, Kirbyco is on a mission to transition promotional print advertising away from traditional PVC plastic print materials which create persistent landfill waste and environmental harm. Kirbyco's flagship initiative: ZERO represents a true, zero waste, print media solution. ZERO is a range of PVC-free films that not only deliver excellent printing and performance, but its top sheets and release liners can also be fully recycled in New Zealand.

Beyond supplying circular materials, Kirbyco facilitates the collection and recycling of used ZERO print media, transforming it into environmentally positive products such as Future Post fence posts. The posts can be recycled end of life offering an ongoing circular solution for ZERO materials. The Zero Waste Solutions recycling program also accepts corflute which can be transformed into fence posts and other materials.



Kirbyco is Sustainable Green Print Certified and provides waste diversion certificates so businesses can track and report on their recycling efforts. This approach empowers businesses to enhance their sustainability credentials. To find out more, contact: Denise Kirby, Kirbyco, denise@kirbyco.co.nz
www.kirbyco.co.nz

ZERO WASTE SOLUTIONS MEDIA & CORFLUTE RECYCLING



An Interview With... Ally Hopwood



Tell us a little about yourself and your role

I'm the Sustainability Manager at Pharmapac. I've been involved in the business / industry for more than 15 years and have been volunteering for Plastics New Zealand in the Environment committee / National Executive Board for around 7 years. Outside of work, I'm a mum to three teenagers and a dog called Tui 😊. You'll usually find me on our local beach, shuttling kids around, coaching netball or running our local community residents' group, I'm usually surrounded by an entourage of teens. I love being outdoors, running, yoga, music, a good (big) glass of wine, my family / friends and anything that lets me be creative.

What motivated you to join the PNZ Enviro Committee?

I've always been obsessed with the environment, but this enviro committee role started quite unexpectedly... My husband Brett and I were out walking our dog on our local beach after a storm, when we came across a scattering of plastic nurdles. We were horrified! That moment led us to connect with Simon Wilkinson and begin a project with NIWA around tide / weather conditions to try and work out where they could have originated from and to investigate the issue further. Simon later suggested I join the PNZ Enviro Committee, which I did around 2017 / 2018, and I've been involved ever since.

What's one thing you wish everyone understood about your field of work?

The incredible innovations and developments within the plastics industry over the last 10-20 years and how epic this work has been for sectors like automotive, medical, aviation and packaging (lightweighting biopolymers etc).

What's one sustainability trend or innovation that excites you right now?

I'm fascinated by the innovations we're seeing coming in the **polymers (recycled / biopolymer) space**. It's pretty cool to watch science and creativity come together to reshape what's possible.

If you weren't working in this field, what would you be doing?

Probably something creative, probably in design. I've always loved being creative and bringing ideas to life, whatever the medium.

Enjoy a Kiwi Summer, Sustainably

Summer in Aotearoa is all about beaches, barbecues, camping, and family fun but it's easy for waste to pile up. Here are some ways to enjoy the holidays sustainably:

- **Pack with purpose:** Bring reusable coffee cups, drink bottles, and shopping bags out with you. For picnics/barbecues, have a set of plates, cups and cutlery in a handy grab-bag.
- **Recycle right:** Check local rules about what can't/can be recycled (and how) if you are from out-of-town.
- **Reduce food waste:** Plan meals ahead and put leftovers in reusable containers, then in the fridge/freezer quickly.
- **Leave no trace:** Contain and take your rubbish home to help keep beaches and parks clean. Pick litter up too!
- **Celebrate in a low-waste way:** Give gifts with minimal packaging, avoid novelty plastics, and reuse decorations.

A little planning goes a long way.