

Turning trash into cash

For a cleaner environment

The Green Party will work with communities to clean up our beaches and reduce the amount of plastic harming our oceans, birds, and marine life.

Plastic bottles and lightweight plastic bags form a considerable part of the pollution cluttering up our oceans and waterways. The Green Party has a plan to fix this:

1. Enable “trash into cash” drinking container refund programmes nationwide.
2. Phase out single-use plastic grocery bags in our first term of Government.
3. An immediate 20 cent charge on single-use plastic bags, with 15 cents going to community groups for environmental clean-ups and 5 cents for research and development into alternatives.
4. Reduce plastic packaging and products through product stewardship schemes.
5. Commit to a goal of zero waste to landfill in New Zealand by 2050.

We can achieve this by declaring plastic bags, plastic and glass bottles, and aluminium cans as “priority products” under existing legislation. Bottle buy-back programmes and plastic bag levies are proven to work to reduce plastic waste, and are supported by 90 percent of local and regional councils in New Zealand.

Plastic is killing our oceans and filling our landfills

Eighty percent of rubbish in the marine environment is plastic. By 2050, oceans are expected to carry more plastic mass than fish, and an estimated 99 per cent of seabirds will have ingested plastic. Because Kiwis love the beach and most of us live close to the ocean, we increase the risk of single-use plastics ending up in the marine environment, even by mistake.

In New Zealand, waste going to landfill has increased from 2.5 million tonnes in 2009 to 3.2 million tonnes in 2015. By volume, plastics are the second biggest type of waste going to landfill after organic waste (food and gardening), though because plastic bags are lightweight they often get dismissed as an insignificant proportion of total waste weight.

The best way to reduce the debris going to the ocean is to reduce the amount of plastic waste we’re generating and increase the level of recycling for the plastic waste that we do use. The Green Party’s solutions will reduce pollution and generate jobs in communities.

Enable nationwide refunds for recycling containers

Over one billion plastic and glass bottles were either landfilled or littered last year. Container refund programmes complement kerbside recycling and make it easier and more appealing to recycle when out and about. The Green Party will enable councils and communities to establish a nationwide network of refund programmes for plastic and glass bottles, and aluminium cans. A nationwide refund scheme has been estimated by Envision to double recycling rates, create 2,400 jobs, generate revenue for community groups, and save councils \$26-40 million each year. A 10 cent deposit would be added to the sale of containers, refundable at collection points throughout the country. Revenue would cover the costs of running the programme, and any extra would fund community environmental projects. Establishment costs would be met from the existing waste levy.

Phase out plastic grocery bags by 2020

It's time for New Zealand to ban the bag. New Zealand communities, business, and other countries around the world are taking leadership in phasing out plastic bags. In Australia, the two biggest retailers (Coles and Woolworths) have announced that they're banning plastic bags from their stores. China, France, Italy, India, among other countries have banned plastic bags. To help drive consumer behaviour change and raise money for the development of alternatives, in government we will put a 20 cent charge on plastic bags immediately. Fifteen cents will fund community environmental clean-ups and 5 cents will fund research and development into alternatives to plastic. Based on the UK's experience, every year this could raise \$36 million for clean-ups and \$12 million for the development of alternatives. Some bags required for food safety, such as for meat, could still be available.

Reduce plastic packaging and products using mandatory product stewardship

Too much unnecessary plastic packaging is either unrecyclable or hard to recycle because it is a mix of different plastics. Current voluntary product stewardship arrangements allow companies to take responsibility for the waste associated with their products, throughout the life of the products, and build the associated costs into the initial purchase price. The Minister for the Environment may declare "priority products" that require mandatory product stewardship – but has never done so. The Green Party will declare all plastic packaging, cutlery, plates, and cups as priority products requiring mandatory product stewardship. Alternatives such as bamboo are becoming readily available and affordable.

Commit to a zero waste New Zealand by 2050

We are committed to a bold, transformative vision for the waste sector in New Zealand with no waste going to landfill by 2050 – the same year we have set a goal of zero net greenhouse gas emissions. Reducing waste to landfill will reduce pollution in our waterways and beaches, and generate jobs. We will review the existing waste levy to ensure it's acting as an incentive to reduce landfill waste and a trigger for innovation.

[www.greens.org.nz/
trash-into-cash](http://www.greens.org.nz/trash-into-cash)

The logo for the Green Party, featuring a stylized green leaf above the word "Green" in a white serif font.