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Press Release

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New OPRL Rules Will Drive Change Ahead of EPR Reforms

New rules governing OPRL's market-leading recycling labels will give greater transparency on the final fate of packaging, highlighting what gets sorted and reprocessed and which pack designs are likely to be landfilled or incinerated. The move is expected to drive more rapid switching into sustainable packaging ahead of Extended Producer Responsibility reforms as new labels are applied over the next 3 years.

The comprehensive review has drawn together extensive data and evidence, wide consultations and consumer testing. The new rules move the majority of packaging into a binary labelling system i.e. "Recycle" or "Don't Recycle". As now, there are a small number of exceptions for packaging dependent on bring site or front of store collections.

OPRL Rules Review in numbers:

- 3 new consumer insight research studies
- 4 major reports and industry guidelines
- 5 expert reviewers
- 6 technical advisers
- 7 collections databases
- 12 cross-industry Steering Group members
- 25 expert witnesses

Commenting on the Review process **Stuart Lendrum, Chair of the Steering Group and OPRL Ltd Board director, said** "This has been the most inclusive, extensive and rigorous Review to date of our recycling labelling rules. We've gathered together a broad and diverse array of expertise and evidence and subjected it to scrutiny and challenge by respected figures from inside the industry and beyond. I'm massively grateful to everyone who has contributed."

"The results deliver our commitment to give consumers clarity on the true recyclability of packaging. As part of that commitment to transparency and accountability we are making our evidence base publicly available today. As further new evidence becomes available, we will fine tune these Rules so that we reflect the UK's developing recycling technology and infrastructure, and further refining of industry technical standards."

Key Labelling Changes:

- 3 polymer types move from *Check Locally* into *Recycle*
- NIR detectability determines whether some black plastics move from *Check Locally* to *Recycle* or *Don't Recycle*
- 2 polymers widely collected but mainly landfilled or incinerated move from *Check Locally* to *Don't Recycle*
- Coated paper and card quality tolerances immediately tighten up to a maximum of 15% plastic by weight for *Recycle* status and reduce further to 10% in January 2023, giving markets time to respond
- Coffee cups get a Specialist label to support in-store collections for recycling



THE ON-PACK RECYCLING LABEL

Reflecting on the move to a binary system and its impact on collection services **Carole Taylor, Chair of LARAC and Steering Group member, said** “LARAC welcomes the move to the new binary system for recycling labels, which will be much clearer and simpler for consumers to understand and should help to improve the quality and quantity of recycling collected by local authorities. Reducing non-target materials and contamination in the recycling we collect is very important to ensure costs to councils are minimised.”

Iain Ferguson, Environment Manager at founding OPRL member, the Co-op, and Steering Group member, added “Consumers increasingly want clearer information on what to do with their packaging. We welcome all moves that simplify messaging around correct disposal routes and hope that OPRL’s latest review will help drive better habits and more informed action amongst the UK population.”

External expert reviewer and challenger Paula Chin, Materials Specialist at WWF, commented “Due to the visible impact of plastic pollution on our natural world, the UK public is increasingly interested in how their products are packaged. What to recycle and how to do that is vital – and these clear, evidence-based labels are part of the solution. Shoppers will now know which packaging is most sustainable and what to do when they’ve finished using it. This is key in ensuring we use our natural resources as efficiently as possible rather than just throwing them away.”

Notes to Editors

- 1) OPRL Ltd operates the UK-wide On-Pack Recycling Label scheme used by over 420 member companies and charities. OPRL is an independent not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, established to help retailers and brands engage their customers in recycling. OPRL Ltd opened membership to the wider packaging supply chain in 2017, and subsequently to compliance schemes and sustainability consultancies. The company’s guarantors span ACE UK, Alupro, CPI, INCPEN, LARAC, MPMA and RECOUP.
- 2) OPRL’s widely drawn Steering Group (see 9 July 2019 release) identified and reviewed the evidence between July and November 2019, taking account of UK recycling infrastructure’s ability to sort, process and find markets for packaging materials, as well as the availability of council collection services. These changes move the scheme in line with ISO 14021 for self-declared environmental claims such as recyclability, matching OPRL’s PREP UK tool.
- 3) Under the new Rules most packaging will be designated:
 - **Recycle** (75% or more of UK local authorities collect that type of packaging which is then effectively sorted, processed and sold as recyclate for use in new packaging or products).
 - **Don’t Recycle** (fewer than 50% of UK local authorities collect that type of packaging and/or it is not effectively sorted, processed or sold as recyclate for use in new packaging or products).

A handful of fully recyclable packaging types where collections fall between 50-75% of local authorities will retain the intermediary **Check Home Collections** status. Specialist labels, where bring site or front of store collections enable at least 75 percent of the population to access collection services feeding reprocessing infrastructure, remain available for beverage cartons, metal paint cans and PE films, with the addition of a new Specialist label for coffee cups.

Previously the OPRL label had three categories based solely on council recycling collections:



THE ON-PACK RECYCLING LABEL

- **Widely recycled** (75% or more of UK local authorities collect that type of packaging).
 - **Check local recycling** (between 20% and 75% of UK local authorities collect that type of packaging).
 - **Not currently recycled** (fewer than 20% of UK local authorities collect that type of packaging).
- 4) OPRL is making publicly available details of the Review's methodology and evidential sources by publishing its document '*On-Pack Recycling Labelling rules 2019: Evidence Base*' alongside issuing the new Rules to its membership. A new supporting labelling tool is being launched which ensures characteristics such as size, colour and NIR detectability, polymer and material compatibility etc which affect recyclability are properly considered in labelling decisions, together with updating PREP UK parameters and thresholds to take account of new evidence established during the Review.
 - 5) OPRL's recycling labels are recognised, understood and acted on by 3 in 4 consumers (2,580 online and 50 in depth face to face surveys of GB residents in November/December 2018, by Tangible for OPRL). The labelling scheme is used on hundreds of thousands of product lines, including by 95 percent of multiple groceries retailers.
 - 6) OPRL sponsors the Design Team of the Year Award at the UK Packaging Awards and the Ecopack Theatre and Ecopack Challenge at the Packaging Innovations Show.

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