ZWNW AGM Thursday 5 Nov 2026 - AGM Chairpersons Report

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Introduction



Zero Waste North West is a continually evolving network of brilliant people doing brilliant work; supported by a small structure of a committee, that keeps up the housework required for maintaining charitable status, our ways of working structures and things like keeping each other right, accounts and insurance.

It has been an honour and a privilege to be chair for the past 12 months. And I want to thank the committee for all the, blood, sweat and tears that they pour into this fabulous, visionary organisation.

This allows people to do their brilliant work, in their circles, bubbles, strands or subgroups with the support of Zero Waste.

The committee's work in the past year included getting as many folk together as possible for our Plots and Plans Session in February with external facilitators Bryony Roberts and Kruti Kattige. ZW, as a teenager of 13 years old, recognised a little bit of a struggle of identity, and came to the conclusion that we love our logo and each other, to trust in this and hold emergent possibilities, some the feedback included: “I didn't appreciate how much work we all do... We should do this more often... How awesome are we?”

The ZWNW network/team/family of committed activists has been busy in the past year.

Climate Fresk, Active Hope, Website

Conall Morrison

In the last 12 months I have been involved with organising our Plots and Plans event with external facilitator Bryony Roberts, see above.
Ongoing work on the website updates with Jim, Mary and Kal, with steering help from Gerry McGovern, speaker at 2026's Gathering.
I attended Active Hope Ireland facilitators network retreat in Dublin.
I facilitated Active Hope and Climate Fresk workshops, both in Derry. Thanks to Jim Keys and NIRN.





North West BAPS

Maria Herron

This year has been a busy and positive one for North West BAPS (Breastfeeding and Perinatal Support). With the dedication of our wonderful volunteers and a few small but important pots of funding, we've continued to grow awareness, visibility and encourage more practical support for breastfeeding and perinatal wellbeing across the Derry City & Strabane District Council area.
Over the past year, we have:

- Kept families informed about local, online & telephone breastfeeding and perinatal support through our social media channels.
- Hosted two Walking Groups – one in Derry and one in Strabane – offering gentle connection, peer support & outdoor meet-ups for mums and babies. The Strabane Walking Group featured in the North West Learning City Region Lifelong Learning Festival (March 2026)
- Co-chaired the North West BAPS Network alongside Councillor Sandra Duffy, bringing together parents, advocates and community organisations to help strengthen local collaboration.
- Established a new Bilingual Breastfeeding Café in partnership with Edenballymore Sure Start, La Leche League of Ireland and Cultúrlann Uí Chanáinn (May 2026). This initiative recently featured in the first newsletter of the All-island Breastfeeding Policy Network (Sept 2026)
- Delivered a Reuse & Repair Week event at the Bilingual Breastfeeding Café in conjunction with the Zero Waste Toy Library (June 2026), promoting sustainability and community connection. Mums appreciated the beautiful eco-bags provided by the Herbal Health Hub with reusable products donated by the Useless Shop (thanks Ruth!)
- Launched our World Breastfeeding Week 2026 banner at Free Derry Corner (July 2026), increasing visibility about breastfeeding and support.
- Hosted a World Breastfeeding Week celebration at the Bilingual Breastfeeding Café (August 2026), with information stands, peer support and a welcoming space for families.
- Delivered presentations about the North West BAPS Project to the DCSDC Health & Communities Committee (Feb 2026) and the All-island Breastfeeding & Human Milk Research Gathering at Dundalk (Sept 2026)

We look forward to the year ahead, and welcome volunteers to join us to sustain & develop more local initiatives to ensure that families across the North West who want to breastfeed feel welcomed, informed and supported.


GRÁ CÓIR
cultúrlann uí chanáin


zerowaste northwest




BILINGUAL BREASTFEEDING CAFE
CELEBRATE WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK
Ceiliúradh an tSeachtain Dhomhanda um Cothú Ciche
3RD AUGUST 2026
CULTURLANN, DERRY 11.30AM - 12.30PM
SureStart
cultúrlann uí chanáin

Toy Library

Becca Bor

We have had an excellent 18 months from when we moved into our new toy library shed at the play trail until now. We have a small, but mighty team of volunteers and facilitators. We have maintained a consistent schedule of weekly (and sometimes twice weekly) stay and plays, with families coming along to borrow toys. Currently, we have a weekly stay and play on Saturdays from 12 to 1. We hope to use this consistent time to help build our membership.

Over the past 18 months, we have facilitated:

March 2025 to December 2025: 171 separate family visits (but not distinct families, ie repeat visits from same families), 286 children, 276 toys borrowed

January 2026 to March 2026: we have has 44 separate family visits, 72 children, 85 toys borrowed.

March to Sept 2026:
105 toys borrowed, 81 family visits and 131 children visited.

This next year we plan to paint the shed to insulate it and protect it from the elements, freshen up our inventory of toys, grow our membership through better advertising of the toy library and using our social media better. We will continue to collaborate with other toy libraries across the island and with the resources network.

Consciousness Shift/Culture Shift

Jim Keys

In September Conall and Jim began the promised work of the CONSCIOUSNESS SHIFT - CULTURE SHIFT subgroup. It took place in Judi's art space in Pilot's Row. From the feedback it was deep and nurturing for one and all, reviving numbed out emotions and deepening a sense of what might be each of "ours to do" in transforming our world for the sake of all beings.

In our everyday sense of self that sounds like a tall order we might rather leave for others. But in this beautiful work, gifted to us by Joanna from some 60+ years of sustained work with others in the cause of peace, something miraculous happens. Our emotional responses begin to unblock in response to the crisis we face. And as our numbness thaws, our hearts break open to the joy of being, and the gratitude for getting to be. We get transformed from our everyday sense of an overburdened separate self, severed from connection to each other and life, into agents of life connected to all life, with a felt vocation to BE THE CHANGE WE WANT TO SEE.

Joanna Macy left us, 96 years young, last year on the 19th July 2025.

Life Cycles

Emily O Brien

It's been another busy year for Life Cycles!
We have continued full-speed ahead on our mission of recycling, refurbishing and rehoming bikes, with our total number of bicycles saved from landfill reaching 6200.
One key highlight is our securement of funding from the National Lottery Community Fund to launch our 'Pedal Forward' programme, which will enable us to upskill our wonderful team and purchase the necessary equipment to increase our longevity as an organisation.
Our 'Things on Wheels' donations scheme has really got off the ground this year, with a myriad of local schools, youth clubs and playgroups receiving preloved scooters and bikes.
We have continued to provide community repairs sessions every Saturday at our workshop, offering accessibly priced services, with the aim of keeping more bikes out of landfill for longer and empowering people with the knowledge to repair their own bikes.
Our pool of volunteers continues to grow, thanks to our ongoing relationship with North West Volunteer Centre, and we now have 25 active volunteers in our Life Cycles family! Our volunteers have been awarded their EPiC awards for their ongoing hard work and dedication.
We are over the moon to have expanded our operations into St. Columb's Hall this year, where we have new and improved storage space, allowing us to rescue even more bikes and salvage twice as many secondhand parts!
We ran another enjoyable instalment of 'On Yer Bike' cycling skills for teenagers, in association with Apex Housing Association, providing bikes to low income families.
Upskilling our team has remained a priority for us, and we held team-wide 'Basic Bike Mechanics' training where our qualified and seasoned mechanics shared their experience, giving our volunteers a chance to finetune their skills.
This year, we expanded our digital presence by launching the Life Cycles Instagram, appearing on the BBC Radio Ulster Consumer Fightback programme, and even being the subject of a documentary!
We also welcomed two new committee members (Jean McGinley-Patton, Kevin Gormley) and appointed our new chairperson, Mo Durkan. We thank Cat Brogan for her immeasurable contributions over the years!
This year also saw us attend The Gathering (ZWNW), deliver a series of community repair sessions for Reuse and Repair week (NIRN), organise a bike raffle for international students at Ulster University and run three instalments of 'Dr Bike' in local primary schools.
It's amazing to stand back and take a moment to reflect on all we have achieved, but now it's back to work to prepare a selection of Santa bikes for the busy festive season ahead!







Network Weavers

Marcella Di Palo

My work as a “Network Weaver’ for Repair Café Northern Ireland has its roots in the volunteer work I did with Zero Waste North West and Repair Café Foyle.

The understanding I gained through that volunteer work, of Northern Ireland’s history, the structures and dynamics of its communities, and some of the political context that shapes them has been incredibly important in the work I now do across the country.

One of the biggest challenges, but also one of the most rewarding parts of my role, is working with small, rural communities and supporting them from the very beginning of their journey towards setting up and running a new repair café. These communities can sometimes require a lot of time, patience and relationship-building, but they are also the ones that give the greatest sense of fulfilment with their amazing enthusiasm and positive energy.

There is so much tangible value in this work: supporting people, strengthening communities, creating positive social change, and helping to protect the environment. It is a role where I can see the impact of what I do, not only on individuals and communities, but also on the wider transition towards a more sustainable way of living.

Zero Waste Alliance Ireland

Christine Neer

I am a member of Zero Waste Alliance Ireland (ZWAI) and over the past year I have assisted ZWAI with 5 submissions to EU and Irish government bodies regarding environmental Directives. These submissions are calls for evidence as to the effectiveness of the legislation in question, or for public responses to proposed measures, such as potential 'revisions' to a Directive. In the case of the Water Directive Framework, for example, we were responding to the European Commissions' planned revision of the WDF (and, like many other environmental organisations, we were strongly opposed to any attempts at weakening it.)

When assisting with these submissions, each writer chooses a specific topic or theme related to the 'evidence sought'. For instance, my topic/selection for the Single Use Plastic (SUP) Directive submission was 'Plastic Pollution and Ecological Threats caused by Oceanic Traffic: Industrial Fishing and Commercial and Passenger Vessels', in which I wrote a detailed account of the violent harms of plastic waste on marine life, and the incredible, global problem of container shipping accidents dumping waste - especially plastics - into the world's oceans and seas.

The other submissions/calls for evidence I assisted ZWAI with are: the Single Use Plastics Directive (Ireland); the EU Island Directive; the European Ocean Act, and the National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap 2026 - 28 (Ireland).

Young Friends of the Earth

Darragh Graham

There is a longstanding relationship between Young FoE and ZWNW. For several years we have organised the Freshers Fair at NWRC together and a lot of young people associate the two organisations with each other. This leads to collaborations down the line with trips, etc and also gives young people who have an interest in ZWNW an avenue to channel their energies with FoE. Young FOE Derry (an independent group of young people) also have their own links to ZWNW where they've had Jim & Conall in to meet with them over the past year. There is lots of potential for further work together with young people!

Work with Artitude

Maeve Leahy

This last year I have been working on and off as an artist with Artitude, using theatre, story and song sharing to engage people with ideas about how we can be more conscious about how we live and interact with our environment.

Better Than New: Toy Stories with Loopy Lou and Linney Bin

- Culture Night 2025 at The Playhouse: I created and performed this interactive piece exploring how old and repaired toys carry stories that can make them even more valuable than new toys. With the ZWNW Toy Library, children made “Story Tags” for donated toys, for future borrowers to add their adventures too.

A Wake

I worked with Gemma Walker-Farren and Triax community participants on this event exploring climate grief. I helped participants develop two original songs and taught and led other songs. Drawing on Irish traditions of wakes and keening, the event included spoken word, music and a procession carrying a wicker coffin through Creggan Country Park, acknowledging worries and grief for our changing world before coming together through song in a spirit of hope and connection.

The Lost Words / Spell Songs

I'm currently developing a children’s performance inspired by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris, encouraging children to notice and reconnect with the natural world. The first performance is at The Playhouse on 7th November.





The Gathering

Mary McGuiggan

The Gathering at Silverbrook Mills in the Sperrins, Na Sperrini, was the 21sth Gathering and the biggest one to date. The host community were Save the Moat Campaign led by Ann-Louise Bresnahan. Damien Devine who manages the site really welcomed us and wanted us to celebrate with them. The setting in the heart of the Sperrins, next to the river Dennett was perfect. There were walks, workshops along the banks of the river, and a bus tour to show the beauty of mountains, rivers and boglands; and also to learn of the threat of wind turbines and mining. Save Our Sperrins had a great presence and sold £1,000 worth of t-shirts on the day! There were 21 stalls.
There was a jig composed and an accompanying dance as well as a Declaration of the Rights of the Sperrins in English agus As Gaeilge. Dinner for everyone, fire pit for music and singing in the evening, camping on Friday and Saturday night. There was great weather we were so lucky, lots of kids activity including archery, there was tea and coffee for donations.
Speakers included:

- Ann-Louise herself – Save the Moat,
- Gerry McGovern – author 99th Day,
- Shauna McGroarty – From Dungiven, Save Benbradagh
- Fidelma O'Kane – Save Our Sperrins
- Damien Devine – site manager and environmentalist

The Gathering itself has only been once a year recently as its getting to be a very big job!

Monthly meetings/ get togethers:

- every 2nd Tuesday of the month Rights of Nature Derry, and Rights of Nature Ireland.
- 2nd Thursday Waste Crime – moderated by Doris Noe
- 3rd Tuesday Aarhus convention - organised by Lynn Finnegan
- 3rd Thursday Health conversation – led by Christine Benson
- 4th Tuesday Planning conversation – curated by Ann-Louise Bresnahan and Dean Blackwood
- 4th Friday Language and Creativity – hosted by Maura Johnston and Colum Sands

RON Derry

have great links working with DCSDC council towards legalising the Rights of Nature, great relationships with Biodiversity Officer Rachel Bain, and Climate Officer Cathy Burns who are writing RON into some of their policies.

RON Ireland

had a different theme every month with guest speakers/organisers. Very busy Island wide. Recently launched a European Citizen Initiative (ECI), a 2 year strategy to strengthen a European movement.

Waste Group

Continuing to follow up on Mobouy, pushing for a community enquiry, there are other landfill sites around the country ongoing work including challenging use of glycosphate.

Aarhus Convention

Very lucky to now have leadership from Lynn in Ballycastle, just had 1st meeting ,anyone interested please join.

Health

Group have had a range of speakers sharing knowledge on how health relates to their campaigns including: Colm Buick, Jackie Loughrey.

Planning

Thanks to Ann Louise for taking up the reins, they are responding to planning consultations and giving people a voice and opportunity for long time campaigners to support others. Data centre opposition etc.

Language and Creativity

supporting each other in our creative life, supporting anybody in the creative arts who wants to tie in to going to Public enquiry and singing at the Strule Arts Centre, how important the arts are.

Summary

Overall the ongoing work from the Gathering is supporting work around Lough Neagh, Friends of the Earth and Save Our Sperrins campaigns, March for Clean water at Stormont, Data Centres concerns and challenging the planned Data Centre for Lisahally.

