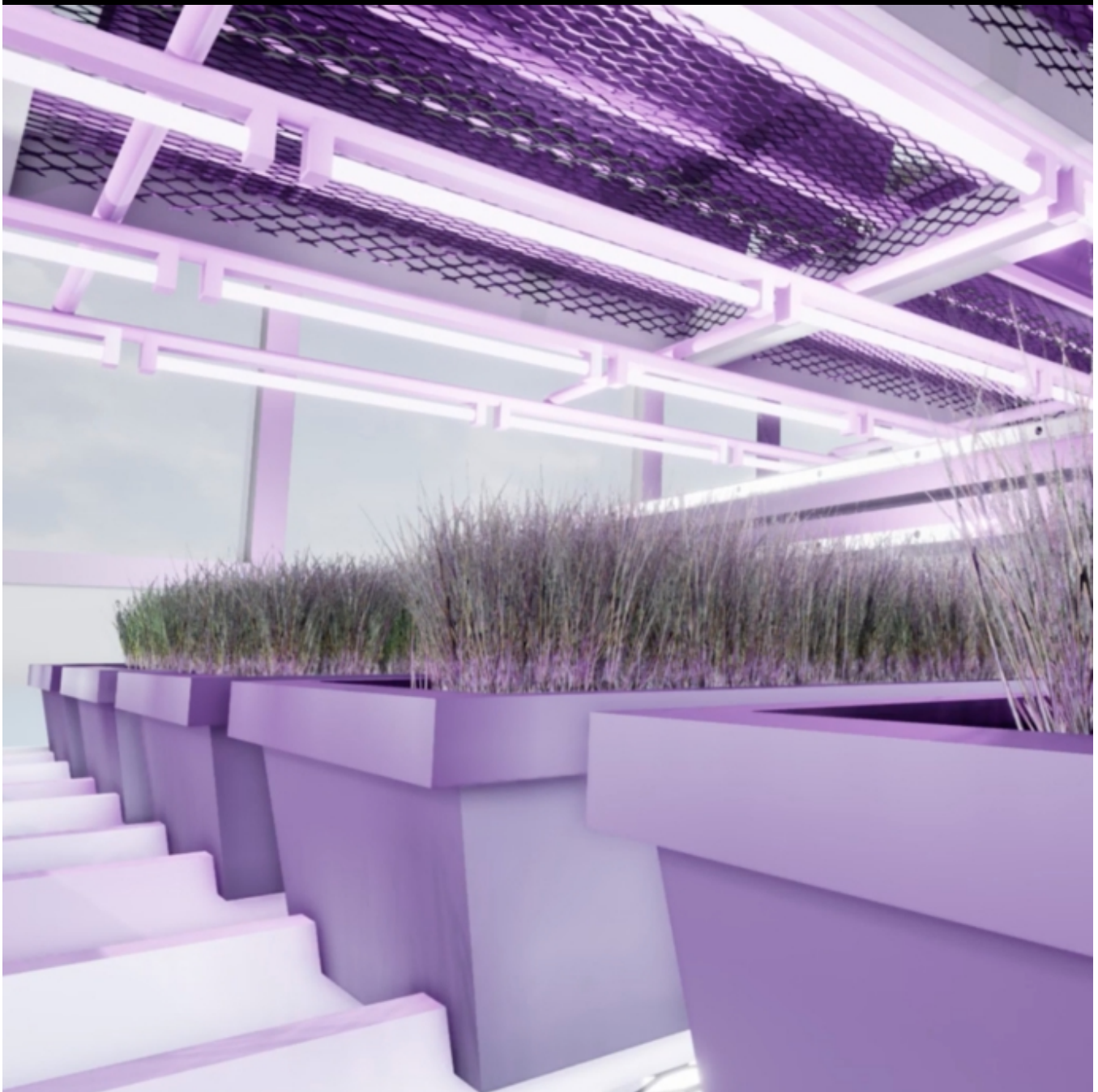


THOUGHT-STARTER: ARE BRANDS GUILTY OF GREENWASHING?

By Livvy Houghton and Holly Friend

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Hailed as an environmentally friendly alternative, bioplastic has been widely adopted by brands, says senior creative researcher Rachael Stott. But are we failing to address the real problem?

We are in the midst of a global plastic crisis. With an estimated 90.5% of the plastic waste we produce having never been recycled, we are drowning in a deluge of packaging, cutlery, carrier bags, coffee cups and bottles, and yet manufacturers continue to produce more.

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Brands, too, are eager to demonstrate they are taking positive action. They are championing plastic alternatives that are eco-friendly, biodegradable or compostable to cater for consumers' desire for more sustainable products. Items and packaging made from bioplastics are increasingly being adopted by retailers, however these products aren't always as virtuous as they appear.

Recent research from the University of Plymouth found that carrier bags labelled as biodegradable were still fully intact after three years left in the sea or buried in soil, with several examples still capable of carrying items of shopping. These findings raise the question: should bioplastic really be proposed as a viable alternative if the degradation rates are so slow that they still contribute to plastic pollution?

Read the full Opinion piece [here](#).