



Case Study: Compost Works, Liverpool

Web: <http://compostworks.co.uk/>

Location: Liverpool

Organisation Background: Compost Works is an environmental charity set up in 2019. It is a Liverpool-based social enterprise with the mission of diverting food waste from incineration and landfill. It has a small team of staff (2), plus board members and volunteers.

Current status of composting project: Set up 16 sites with 10 more in the pipeline in the Liverpool area.

Relevance to the Highlands: An illustration of community composting projects that are set up and lightly managed by a small charity, primarily community driven. The projects are cheap to install and operating costs are low. Some of the 16 sites have been funded by the local authority.

Type of composting solution: Small-scale compost bins built from wood - employ a member of staff to build the bins rather than approach a technology provider. They made a deliberate choice to keep sites small, so that they are exempt from waste licensing. They want to minimise their impact on the environment, so keep bins/sites easy to disassemble. The projects require householders to bring their own garden and food waste to the sites, to avoid the costs and complexity of household collections - works well.

How the staff, volunteers and community work together: One member of staff manages the 16 sites with the support of volunteers. The staff member checks the site for damage, contamination, provides training when necessary, while volunteers and householders are expected to add the waste to the compost bins and turn them when necessary. Also employs an additional part-time member of staff to build the compost bins. Compost Works estimate that they spend about 14 hours per month managing each site and providing training to ensure that people know what can go in, etc.

Scale: Each site services 40 – 50 householders. At the outset Compost Works' aim is to keep the membership of each site to 40 householders. They monitor how much food waste is being input - may increase the number of participants to circa 50 householders if capacity allows. They could increase the capacity to 100 householders and still not require a waste management licence, but prefer to keep it smaller and more manageable. Each site has approximately 3 tonnes of material being composted in a box at any one time.

Input material: Green (veg/fruit) and garden waste from householders. Householders transport the waste independently - are currently looking into collections, but would significantly increase complexity.

End use: The householders that drop off and put their food waste into the composting box are able to utilise compost free of charge. If there is any excess compost, this is advertised to local allotments.

Partners/collaborators: The charity works closely with the many community gardens in Liverpool, and are a founding member of the Liverpool food growing network. Compost Works is responsible for liaising with the council and other interested parties on siting compost bins.

Funding: Community compost sites have been funded by a variety of different sources including the local authorities e.g. funding may be available for a specific ward or by 'private' clients e.g. churches or 'friends of a park'. Typically locations are community gardens, parks, etc. The average cost is £3,000 to build and manage a compost bin for one year. There is lots of local interest in setting up compost sites and it was reported that the main limiting factor is funding rather than finding a site. Compost Works are currently looking at selling compost as a means of generating an income.

Main motivator: Environmental, there is no food waste collection system in Liverpool, plus the residents were looking for a local solution.

Number of years the scheme has been running for: 2 years

Additional Comments: Need to keep the system simple and ensure that everyone understands what can go in. Need to ensure that people have the skills, but most importantly need an organisation to manage. The project would fall apart if reliant solely on volunteers. No major issues, a couple incidents of vandalism.