

How to set up a Community Composting Scheme

1: Research and fact finding

Set up an action group or working party, a core group of 2 to 3 volunteers is a good starting point.

Conduct some market research - Do people want a community composting scheme? Do they want the product? Can they volunteer on a regular basis?

Is your parish or town council interested in supporting the scheme?

Investigate site options - This is essential if one hasn't already been identified!

How will your site operate:

- a) Collection from householders (to keep some control over the material received)?
- b) Receive garden waste at the site (traffic management arrangements will need to be included in your plans)?
- c) Do you want to pay a scheme co-ordinator?

2: Planning

Planning Permission

If you would like to set up a community composting scheme you will need planning permission. This is obtained from Norfolk County Council, the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority.

If you relocate your site at any time, you will have to obtain new planning permission from Norfolk County Council and a new licence/exemption from the Environment Agency.

You can obtain a copy of the planning application form online by using the following link: <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling-and-planning/planning-applications/submit-an-application>

For a pre-application discussion, to make an informal enquiry or to obtain an opinion about whether your scheme is likely to be successful, you can contact:

Minerals & Waste Planning Section
Norfolk County Council
County Hall
Martineau Lane
Norwich
NR1 2SG
Telephone: 0344 800 8020
Email: mawp@Norfolk.gov.uk

Environment Agency exemptions

To ensure that your community composting scheme satisfies the Environment Agency's requirements under the Environmental Permitting Regulations (England and Wales) 2010, you will need to apply for a permit or an exemption to operate your scheme.

The Environment Agency is concerned about managing risk, and the composting process is the riskiest element of a community composting scheme.

Community composting is most straightforward for schemes that collect garden waste only, where households in the community use the resultant compost on their own land, and where treatment at the composting site involves less than 60 tonnes of waste at any one time.

To access the full guidance document and application form go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/waste-exemption-t23-aerobic-composting-and-associated-prior-treatment>

Groups should also obtain a Waste Carriers Lower Tier exemption. You can do this by following the instructions on <https://www.gov.uk/register-renew-waste-carrier-broker-dealer-england>

Site

Think about how it should be laid out.

Pay attention to how close neighbouring residents are, and possible environmental impacts such as noise, traffic, where local streams are.

Advertise your scheme

It is important that the local community is aware of the aims of the scheme and what they can expect from it.

This is also an opportunity to find more volunteers.

Constitution

Some schemes have a formal constitution setting out the aims of the scheme and details of who is doing what and how.

Insurance

Your community composting scheme insurance policy should cover your volunteers as well as third parties.

Insurance for community composting schemes can be obtained as an extension of a Parish Council's existing insurance policy.

It is also possible to obtain group insurance from organisations such as The Conservation Volunteers. They have put together an Insurance guide to explain the policies on offer to composting groups, for more information visit: www.tcv.org.uk/volunteering/volunteer-policies/insurance

Recruit volunteers

You need several volunteers to ensure that the workload is spread more thinly and over the long-term. This also means better cover for holidays, sickness, etc.

Funding/grants

Look into funding opportunities and grants that may be available to help cover the set-up costs, such as the hire/purchase of equipment and insurance.

3: Countdown to launch

Infrastructure & equipment

Once funding has been obtained, construct secure storage, if appropriate, and purchase or hire equipment.

Train volunteers/staff

All volunteers or staff need to know what they are doing – why, how, when, and where. Some volunteers will be happy doing physical work (but will need health and safety training for handling garden waste and compost); others may prefer to do the accounts/administration; and others may prefer publicising the scheme.

Marketing plan

'Sell' the scheme to the community through regular newsletters. This will not only help to continue to publicise it, but it will help persuade people to use it and keep residents informed about the benefits of the scheme, such as money raised and opportunities for local groups. Such a plan may also help obtain future grant funding and attract new volunteers.