



In 2023 the Highland Community Waste Partnership visited businesses and community composting sites across the Highlands to gain an insight into what makes a composting initiative work.

The month of May saw the Partnership visiting the town of Fort Augustus to meet the team behind the Community Composting site before heading to a business at the forefront of reducing and reusing, the four star rated Lovat Hotel.

The Partnership brought along representatives from the community-run Rosemarkie Beach Café to help businesses see first hand how composting in hospitality works in practice.

Business Case Study – Reducing, Reusing and Composting at the Lovat Hotel, Fort Augustus

If you want to read about a business where sustainability is central to their ethos, then look no further than The Lovat Hotel. Situated in the heart of Fort Augustus on the shores of Loch Ness, the hotel prides itself on seasonality, growing onsite, operating with minimal waste and reusing the food waste they do produce for their own compost. The proof is in the pudding with the hotel continually awarded a Gold rating for sustainability from Visit Scotland..

Asked by the Community Waste Partnership what drove them to be sustainable, owner Caroline Kelly simply stated “I hate seeing waste.”

Taking a delve into business composting, the Highland Community Waste Partnership caught up with Caroline and Head Gardener Andy in May 2023.

Andy’s expert knowledge in growing in the Highlands was evident in the multiple beds situated in the Hotel grounds, “Our chefs come outside and take what they need for the menu that evening. The twenty steps back to the kitchen is probably the lowest carbon footprint journey we can possibly manage.”

Whilst there is very little left on the plates thanks to head chef Sean Kelly’s expert menu, there is still food waste produced, through peelings and other unavoidable waste.

And that’s where composting comes in.

Purchased through funding in 2008, The Lovat sourced a Rocket in-vessel composter. This piece of kit enables businesses to collect their food waste, drop it into the composter and within a matter of weeks, have peat-free high-grade compost.

Sitting down with Andy, the Partnership asked him how the process works and any top tips for businesses looking for a way to get more sustainable with their food waste with an in-vessel composter.

“It’s been a lot of trial and error to perfect our compost,” says Andy. “When we first started using it, there was too much liquid going into the system, this led to some very watery sludge – great for the plants, not so great for our guests as the smell was, well you can imagine.”

Andy’s top tip #1 If your compost is too liquid, add in wood chips

“You’ve got to be careful what you’re putting in the composter. Whilst meat, eggshells and the like can go in, some products which are supposed to be biodegradable just won’t break down in the composter. Tea Bags for example, just won’t break down the way you want them to.”



Andy's top tip #2 Check and educate your staff about what's going into your machine, signage helps to keep things clear and if in doubt, keep it out

"Site a space for your compost to go and before it gets put to use, riddle it through. Anything too big for the riddle can go back through your composter which will help it break down further."

Andy's top tip #3 Site your compost storage and riddle space before situating your composter. And riddle it through!

"A lot of it comes down to making sure the kitchen team are onboard and it's an easy process from them. Previously we've used big deep containers in the kitchen for putting food waste into but that led to the odd fork getting into the machine. So we learned from that and switched to long troughs to make sure everything going in can be seen more clearly."

Andy's top tip #4 Make it easy for the staff to use. Shallow food waste bins mean nothing that could break the composter ends up inside the machine for example bones, the odd piece of cutlery

Asked about how often the machine is used, Andy showed the team how it is constantly in use.

"About three bins of food waste are taken out to the machine each day. The vessel is turned once every 1-2 hours which gives us a great compost mix. A higher temperature and a slower speed seems to work well for us and that's been perfected through trial and error. We have about a 50/50 dry to wet mix ratio"

Andy's top tip #5 Trial and error will help perfect your mix.

Andy and Caroline also advised of the yearly completion of the SEPA regulation forms.

"It's very simple. SEPA have kept us right in the forms necessary to compost food waste" says Caroline. If you have any queries about the regulations for setting up your own composter, SEPA can be contacted here [<https://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/waste/composting/#six>]

Setting up in-vessel composting might sound like a daunting task. But the rewards for the Lovat Hotel are shown in the compost that helps grow their veg and flowers across their grounds. It's paid off in cost savings with little reliance on buying in compost. Yet the main driver for The Lovat Hotel will always be in creating a sustainable business.



Community Composting Case Study

Community Composting. The idea that everyone in your community gets their garden waste turned into lovely compost. It sounds great doesn't it? But how does it work in practice? What are the pitfalls to avoid? The Highland Community Waste Partnership visited the Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Company composting site to get some answers.

Situated in Fort Augustus is 19 acres of community owned land. A small portion of this land is now being used to support residents to dispose of their garden waste. HCWP were shown around the site by Glen Campbell and Ian Leaver. We asked some questions about the background to establishing the site.

Why did you create the community composting area?

We created the composting site to deal with the mountains of material our Community caretaking team produce from grass cutting, landscaping and general trimming back of trees and shrubbery. Initially it was just for the caretakers to use. This created the opportunity for members of the community to dispose of their garden waste too. We don't have a brown bin collection service in the area so what started as a way to help our caretaking team has also benefited the wider community. This was always our intention with the site. It's just great to see it being used.

Food Waste – are you tackling this at present?

No not at the moment. This site is strictly garden waste only. But we may look to branch out to food waste once we have the needed infrastructure in place.

How is the site run – volunteers or paid staff?

Paid staff! It ensures the work is getting done. And the way the site was set up [from the community care taking team], we already had our staff in place carrying out gardening before we looked towards setting this up.

What are your top tips for setting up a community composting site?

- Get proper signage so everyone knows where everything goes!
- Decent access to the site is key so that folk can get their waste down and can sort it correctly
- Make sure you have a strong relationship with the community – this ensures that folk dispose of things correctly and don't dump things that aren't meant to go into the site
- Paid staff ensures the site can keep running – get paid staff in place before committing to the composting site.
- Do "skip days" to allow folk to dispose of household items that may otherwise be fly-tipped in your composting site – this goes back to having that strong relationship with the community