

## 4 Getting Started

### *Initial contacts*

When considering starting a Community Composting project there are places you can go for help and guidance before you start. Talk to others who have already made their way through the necessary maze of decisions. This can help to make sense of it all and answer immediate questions. Read case studies to see how others have coped. This pack includes several which give ideas of what can be done in various situations. Visit existing projects to see how operations can be set up, and gather ideas of layout, managing the site and possibly even situations to avoid. Operations vary a great deal according to the different aims and existing conditions of each project. Make personal contact with as many different groups as is reasonable to give you an idea of the range of possibilities.

The first port of call should be to the Community Composting Network (CCN). They can tell you who you need to speak to and what you need to find out in order to set up a successful venture in your situation. They may be able to tell you who is operating a scheme close to you and who to contact.

### *Local Agenda 21 (LA21)*

LA21 is the means by which the local authority (county council or district council) carries out their commitment to producing plans for sustainable development for the local area arising from the Earth Summit in 1992 (see *Using This Pack*). A Community Composting scheme could meet a number of the criteria for an LA21 project.

- Taps grassroots enthusiasm from within the community
- Addresses a pressing environmental problem (waste disposal)
- Offers a low-tech, environmentally friendly solution (recycling organic waste)
- Provides employment and training
- Helps communicate the message of sustainability in a meaningful way to ordinary people

Approach the local LA21 officer to find out if anyone else has expressed an interest in setting up a composting project in your area. If so then you can contact that person to discuss a strategy. If no one else has contacted the LA21 officer, register your own interest and ask about the likelihood of financial assistance and help with finding a suitable site.

### *Recycling officer*

The local recycling officer may also be able to offer advice and guidance. Details can be found in the telephone book, listed under your local authority.

## ***Setting up the project***

To maximise the chance of official recognition and in the hope of avoiding expensive licences it is advisable to form a Composting Club (see *Legal aspects 2*). It is also possible to set up a composting scheme within an existing group such as an allotment association, gardening club, school, scout group or city farm. Once a core of interested persons have got together and decided on a plan of action, the next step is to arrange an inaugural meeting to get the community involved.

## ***The inaugural meeting***

The inaugural meeting is a public meeting to inform all interested parties in the local community that you plan to set up a Community Composting scheme and to discuss how this should happen. Notice of the scheme can be given through newsletters, by letter to parents or members as appropriate, or through leaflets distributed in the district and posters in local shops and libraries. Try to reach as many local people as possible to recruit potential volunteers, contact donors of raw materials and inform possible objectors so that all worries can be addressed. It may be advisable to have an expert on hand to help with the presentation of your plans. The CCN may be able to help here. Plan the meeting well in advance. Display material will help to put the point across and may be obtained from other schemes.

## **Suggested agenda**

- Welcome and introduction
- Introduction to Community Composting
- Possible sites
- Possible funding
- Name of composting group; should it be a "Composting Club"?
- Election of officers and other members
- Who should be contacted: planning officer, recycling officer, waste licensing officer
- Date, time and place of first working group meeting

You should come away from this meeting with support for the venture from the community and a core of people ready to organise it. To prevent interest waning the first meeting of the new working group should take place as soon as possible after the inaugural meeting.

## ***First working group meeting***

The purpose of the first meeting of the new working group is to sort out the organisation of the enterprise. All those interested in taking part in the work should attend. Planning is essential to make the meeting go smoothly and address the essential points. A considerable amount of background work has to be done in order to present the intended organisation of the group. A working party will need

to do a lot of homework ahead of time. Again it would be helpful to have an experienced Community Composter at this meeting for guidance.

### **The topics which need to be addressed**

- Preferred site location
- Size of facility
- Number of members
- Composting method
- Material to be composted
- Collection / delivery details
- Tools, machinery and equipment required
- Outline working plan
- Discussion of constitution
- Publicity
- Start date

### ***Subsequent meetings***

Further meetings of the working group will be required to cover administrative and development details including costing, funding, publicity, and legal considerations. An annual general meeting open to all interested parties may be necessary to allow the election of new officers and to report back on progress to the local community.

### ***Other relevant cards***

- Using This Pack
- Planning the Enterprise
- Site Issues
- Legal Issues 1 & 2
- Case Studies

### ***Useful contacts***

- Community Composting Network