

## **9 Public Relations & Marketing 1**

### ***Promoting the enterprise***

Positive publicity can be used to your advantage to gain support in many areas. Once you have people on your side you will soon find that you have enough workers for your scheme, funds coming in, plenty of composting material, sales for your product if you so desire, and little in the way of antagonism.

For a Community Composting scheme to work you need the good will of a lot of people: volunteers to run the operation and sort out any hitches, donors of materials, officials who deal with licensing and other permits, those holding the purse strings for funding, and those who can sway public opinion. The last thing you need is bad publicity which could lead to the failure of your venture. Complaints, real or imagined, could snowball until you are faced with serious opposition and must therefore be prevented before they have had the chance to develop.

### ***Attracting volunteers and members***

If you are operating within an existing group there will already be a mechanism such as a newsletter to inform the membership about new developments. If the newsletter regularly promotes the work in a positive way members of the group are more likely to come forward. When you are starting from scratch, or need to attract new blood to an existing scheme, it will be necessary to reach the general public.

### **Options for reaching the public**

- Leaflets and fliers
- Posters and stickers
- Local newspaper
- Local radio and television
- Open days and other events

Using a combination of different methods reaches a wider range of people. Don't forget, the community grapevine is a powerful tool and can work for you if you are in touch with the right community members.

### ***Educating the public***

It is not enough to simply say 'we are here and we want your rubbish'. According to decisions made when devising a plan for your enterprise you will want only certain types of material for composting. It is necessary to inform the public, who will be providing the feedstock, what it is that you require. Bearing in mind that only a small area will be targeted, the best way to do this is probably by leaflet to all homes. The effectiveness of this approach is reinforced if you offer a collection

service. Members of your scheme can inspect the material on offer as they collect it. You can't beat the personal touch.

### ***Home composting***

A Community Composting scheme can also encourage home composting. If your project has decided not to accept kitchen and food waste and if it is not composted at home it will simply go into the waste stream. If feasible, one of the services you could offer is simple advice – in the form of a leaflet, short courses at the composting site, or just talking to the people who supply the raw material for composting – on how to compost successfully at home. This service should be seen as being complementary to your scheme and it could be a useful marketing exercise as well.

### ***Dealing with complaints***

In general people are less likely to complain about a scheme which is popular. Showing that your venture has the approval of the public and officials will tend to reduce antagonism. However, it must be acknowledged that some genuine complaints may be made. You must establish a system to deal with) these.

There are two likely sources of complaint – official sources such as the Environment Agency and the general public. The chances of such problems occurring can be reduced by seeking advice from the relevant officials or the CCN and by advance planning. Always make sure you act within any licence restrictions and are adequately insured (see *Legal Aspects*). If you are likely to produce any leachate, for example if you are composting manure, seek advice on pollution minimisation (see *Site Issues*).

Complaints from the public could be about noise pollution, quality of the compost or availability. Problems such as dust, noise, exhaust fumes or smell can be minimised by careful siting of operations (see *Site Issues*). Some queries such as those about smells, diseases or vermin may simply be expressions of concern rather than a response to an actual problem. In such cases questioners will need to be informed of the relevant facts. If the same concerns are brought up frequently, it would be a good idea to address them in a newsletter or leaflet for public distribution, for example at open days.

Ensure that prospective users of the compost are clear about what they are buying, and what it should be used for. If distributing direct from the site, consider leaving bags open so that customers can see what they are getting.

The supply of compost may not be regular. At certain times finished compost may be unavailable because it has all been distributed and the next batch is not yet ready. Informing potential users when it will be ready or launching the "new batch" as a publicity event may help in these circumstances. If insufficient compost is being produced due to other constraints it will be necessary to address these problems as they occur. If you receive too much material for the available

space consider expanding operations. If insufficient raw material arrives, advertise for more.

### ***Other relevant sections***

- Grants and Other Funding
- Planning the Enterprise
- Compost Materials
- Site Issues
- Legal Aspects

### ***Useful contacts***

- CCN