12 Site Issues 1

Community Composting projects are run on a variety of sites – from allotments to disused quarries to farms. *Site Issues 1* and *2* outline the factors to consider when looking for a site, how to go about finding one, and discusses the space and facilities that a Community Composting project may require.

Site location

A Community Composting site should be:

- Close, or central to the area producing the waste. This keeps transport costs down, and puts over a better environmental message
- Accessible to vehicles that will need to visit the site – lorries, private cars and so on
- Well drained. Mud underfoot and pools of standing water make working difficult and unpleasant
- Screened from neighbours who might object to the project
- Not immediately adjacent to, or upwind of housing, or other locations, where problems, either real or perceived, of smells, rodents, noise (from shredding, deliveries, or customers) are likely to arise
- Not likely to pollute local waterways. For advice, contact your local Environment Agency pollution control officer

Finding a site

The following may help you find a suitable site:

- Council recycling officer
- Local Agenda 21 contact
- Parish, town or local authority

Sites to consider

- Allotments
- Local authority (or other) nurseries
- Capped landfill sites
- City farms
- Organic or other farms
- Schools
- Disused quarries

Planning permission?

See *Legal Aspects 1*

Paying or free?

Ideally, look for a free site, as the project is unlikely to have spare funds. Supportive local authorities may be persuaded to offer a site free of charge. Quarry companies may offer a part of their site that is no longer used – a good PR exercise on their part. Allotment sites are unlikely to make a charge.

Area of site

Existing community composting sites vary from around 40m^2 to 5000m^2 - varying with the volume of materials recycled, the speed at which you are likely to recycle it, and the efficiency of the layout.

A compact, well-organised scheme can process a lot more than a sprawling badly managed enterprise. Don't, however, skimp on space at the expense of health and safety, ease of working and facilities. You will always need more space than you think.

See *Case Studies* for examples of existing Community Composting sites.

Site facilities

The check list over the page will help in choosing a site, and in planning the layout. Some sites may already provide the necessary facilities – otherwise it will be up to the project to do so. Some items are only likely to be required by larger operations. For further clarification consult the relevant cards listed overleaf.

Space requirements

- Reception / storage area for incoming compost materials, including separate bays for different types (see *Collecting Materials to Recycle)*

- Storage of large branches for firewood, bean poles, pea sticks and such like that may have been 'rescued' from incoming materials

- Vehicle access and turning space. How large this area needs to be will depend on whether you are getting the public to deliver, or bringing in material with your own transport. A typical family saloon car measures 4.5m by 1.7m and requires and additional 1m either side for opening doors fully. A car of this size requires a turning circle of approximately 5.5m radius. Good access is needed in both wet and dry conditions. Encourage people to share lifts

- Access for large deliveries such as leaves, manure or hedge clippings. Also storage space for these

- Compost bins or windrows – for 'working' and maturing compost

- An area for mixing ingredients prior to composting and for turning the compost

- A level area for shredding woody materials, with at least 2m space in each direction around the shredder. Shredders vary in the space they will take up. This area could be the same space used for mixing and turning ingredients, or, depending on the mobility of the shredder, it may be better near the shredder shed

- Good access between storage, shredding and composting areas

- Storing finished compost loose and in bags. A secure structure, such as a shed, may be necessary to prevent vandalism, theft and to protect from the elements

- Screening and grading compost – an area of around 4m x 4m hard standing should suffice

- Bagging compost – by hand or machine

- Storing empty bags

- Car parking space for workers, and people coming to buy the compost

- Secure storage shed for shredder, tools, project vehicle / trailer and bagged compost. Or compost could be stacked on pallets under secured tarpaulin or plastic

- Shed for shelter / tea making for workers

- If workers are employed, HSE requires toilet and washing facilities to be provided

- Future enterprises – such as a greenhouse heated by compost heat; other recycling facilities; composting training workshops

Ground surfaces

A combination of all-weather hard surface, and bare soil, is likely to be required. Compost is generally made on bare soil – allowing any liquid produced to drain into the soil. Your local Environment Agency may however recommend hard standing (with facilities to collect any runoff) to prevent pollution of watercourses (see *Site Issues 2*).

Good, all weather roads and paths around the site, and around the compost areas are essential to allow operations to continue all year round.

Other relevant sections

- Site Issues 2
- Legal Aspects 1 & 2
- To Contain or Not

- Collecting Materials to Recycle
- Making Compost 1 & 2
- Case Studies

Useful contacts

- Environment Agency
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE)