



Spotlight

Engaging Highland Hospitality Businesses in Food Waste Measurement and Reduction

March 2025



As part of the Highland Community Waste Partnership (HCWP), the Highland Good Food Partnership (HGFP) engaged with hundreds of hospitality businesses in the Highlands around food waste reduction. This work presented unique challenges due to the region's distinct characteristics and the nature of the hospitality industry in general.

This document outlines some of the challenges encountered around effective engagement. Understanding these is crucial for developing successful strategies for promoting food waste reduction initiatives going forward.

Geographical and logistical challenges

Remoteness and dispersed locations: The Highlands' vast distances and widely scattered businesses make on-site support and training difficult.

Limited Infrastructure: Some areas lack adequate waste management and composting facilities, making food waste reduction more challenging.

Waste obligation: Rural exemption in the Highlands means that businesses are not required by Highland Council to separate out their food waste for collection, which means food waste measuring is seen as an additional task for busy businesses to take on.



Business-specific challenges

Seasonal variations: The fluctuating nature of the Highland hospitality industry complicates the establishment of consistent food waste measurement practices, as businesses are reluctant to take on a new initiative during peak months. This leaves a very short window for engagement.

Staffing and training: High staff turnover and limited training resources hinder long-term implementation of food waste measuring.

Diverse business types: The hospitality sector includes a wide range of businesses, from small cafes to large hotels, each with unique needs and challenges regarding food waste management.

Knowledge barriers

Limited awareness: Many businesses and staff have a limited understanding of the significance of food waste reduction. As a result, efforts often begin with raising awareness and fostering engagement before meaningful action can be taken.

Misconceptions and perceived costs: Businesses often assume food waste measurement is costly for staff time and complex, discouraging participation.

Short-term financial focus

Profit-driven priorities: Given the volatility of the hospitality sector, the focus on short-term profits and cost-cutting can overshadow the long-term benefits of food waste reduction and circular practices.

Lack of financial incentives: The absence of clear financial rewards or penalties reduces motivation to engage in food waste measurement.

Learning & recommendations

Address geographical challenges: Provide remote support options, such as online training, resources, peer to peer support etc and consider establishing regional hubs for in-person training and collaboration.

Tailor support to business needs: Offer flexible and customised support programs that cater to the specific needs and challenges of different types of hospitality businesses in the Highlands.

Address the 'cultural void': Develop targeted awareness campaigns and educational programmes to highlight the environmental and economic benefits of food waste reduction and circular economy practices.

Challenge the 'prevailing measure of value': Promote the long-term cost savings and business benefits associated with food waste reduction, and advocate for policies that incentivize sustainable practices.

Collaboration and partnerships: Robust networks and collaboration among businesses, local authorities, and support organisations will create a network of knowledge sharing and mutual support. Facilitation and maintenance of this network could be a role for HGFP or similar going forward.

For more information about this work, check out the following case studies:

- [Measuring and reducing business food waste in the remote Knoydart peninsula](#)
- [Measuring and reducing business food waste at Stramash Nursery](#)

The Highland Community Waste Partnership (2022-2025)

Funded by The National Lottery Climate Action Fund, and coordinated by Keep Scotland Beautiful, the Highland Community Waste Partnership (HCWP) brought together eight community groups in the Highlands to reduce waste and promote more sustainable consumption.

Learn more here: www.keeptscotlandbeautiful.org/highlandcommunitywaste/