



# Spotlight

## Measuring Business Food Waste: Remote challenges in Knoydart

March 2025



The Old Forge Community Benefit Society (CBS) partnered with the Highland Good Food Partnership to assess the amount of food being wasted in their kitchen. This spotlight shares their experience in taking part in the Zero Waste Scotland's One-Month Food Waste Challenge and looks at the challenge of food waste in a remote, rural context.

### Introduction

The Knoydart peninsula is one of the most remote regions of Scotland.

The collaboration with the Highland Good Food Partnership (HGFP) began after a joint visit with Lochaber Environmental Group (LEG) to [Knoydart Farm CIC](#) and [The Old Forge CBS](#). During the visit, it became clear that there was potential to develop [composting solutions for the Old Forge](#) that could also benefit Knoydart Farm. However, before implementing a composting system, the team wanted to first assess and reduce the amount of food waste being generated.

Currently, all waste on the peninsula ends up in a single large skip before being ferried off-site. Given this, the first priority was to reduce unnecessary food waste, ensuring that less food was being brought in only to end up discarded.

To tackle this, they committed to the Zero Waste Scotland's [One-Month Food Waste Challenge](#), that HGFP was helping them deliver as part of the Highland Community Waste Partnership. This initiative allowed them to identify the main sources of food waste and take targeted action to minimize it.

This case highlights the importance of embedding waste measurement into everyday business practice, recognising that it is an evolving process that requires ongoing adjustment rather than a one-time fix.



Prep waste from Old Forge kitchen.

## Measuring and Evaluation

The team chose the quieter January–March period to carefully measure and assess food waste. During this time, the pub operated limited hours, opening Friday to Sunday, with all prep work taking place on Thursdays.

It quickly became clear that there were two main factors were contributing significantly to overall waste:

- **Prep Waste:** A large volume of potato peelings, due to chips being served with many main dishes.
- **Spoilage:** Many food deliveries arrive via ferry with limited shelf life remaining, leading to higher rates of spoilage. Combined with lower customer numbers during the off-season, a significant portion of the food ordered was ending up as waste before it could even reach customers' plates.

In January alone, food waste was recorded at **635g per cover**, costing an average of **£0.79 per meal served**. Extrapolated over a full year, this would equate to approximately **1.62 tonnes** of food waste, representing a financial loss of just over **£2,000 annually** for the Old Forge.

In February, as covers increased, food waste dropped to **195g per cover**, costing an average of **£0.024 per meal served**. This indicated a strong correlation between spoilage waste and amount of covers.

## Key Learnings

### Spoilage is the Primary Concern

Spoilage accounts for 42% of waste at the Old Forge, compared to the UK hospitality average of 20%, making it the most significant waste stream to address.

When comparing other types of waste with industry averages we found that:

- Plate waste is slightly lower than average (33% vs. 35%).
- Prep waste is significantly lower than average (25% vs. 45%).

### Timing of Spoilage Peaks:

Waste data shows that spoilage spikes around days when the business is closed (Thursdays and Sundays), likely due to a limited window to sell fresh produce during the off-season.

Several operational challenges contribute to high spoilage rates, including:

- Limited delivery schedules due to reliance on ferries, reducing stock flexibility.
- Unpredictable customer demand.
- Adverse weather affecting deliveries and customer footfall.
- Previously insufficient storage capacity (now improved with additional freezers).
- A tendency to over-order, partly driven by 'just in case' practices.
- A broad menu leading to slower turnover of ingredients.

## Recommendations

- To reduce waste and improve efficiency, it is recommended that The Old Forge continues to monitor all three waste streams to track progress and highlight areas for improvement.
- Investing in a vacuum packing machine could help extend the shelf life of produce and minimise spoilage.
- Keeping a close record of covers, orders, and waste data will enable more accurate ordering, reducing excess stock.
- Reviewing delivery schedules and experimenting with different order splits, such as a larger delivery early in the week with a smaller top-up later, may also help cut waste.
- Finally, encouraging ingredient crossover across menu dishes, while maintaining creativity, will support better stock turnover and reduce financial losses.

### **See also:**

[Business food waste - Stramash outdoor nurseries](#)

[Engaging with hospitality businesses: challenges and learning](#)

### **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.KeepScotlandBeautiful.org/highlandcommunitywaste/](http://www.KeepScotlandBeautiful.org/highlandcommunitywaste/)