



Spotlight

Kilmallie's Community Composting Pilot Project: Learnings for Highland Allotment Groups

August 2024



The Kilmallie Community Composting pilot project is designed to reduce the amount of household food waste sent to landfills by transforming food scraps into nutrient-rich compost. This compost is then used in the community growing space, creating a closed-loop system that benefits the community and the environment.

The [Highland Good Food Partnership \(HGFP\)](#) and [Lochaber Environmental Group \(LEG\)](#), partners from the [Highland Community Waste Partnership \(HCWP\)](#) have been working with Kilmallie Community Fridge and Garden to create a beneficial community composting project.

It aims to raise awareness around reducing household food waste and provides an opportunity to sustainably manage unavoidable household food waste. The project not only addresses the growing concern around food waste but also fosters a sense of communal responsibility and environmental stewardship.



The Kilmallie Garden community composting site, a 200L hot bin and a 900L cold composting bin. Image by HCWP

At a Glance

The Kilmallie pilot is part of a broader strategy to explore sustainable solutions to local waste management challenges. Currently, 10 households are filling their 3.5 litre caddies with raw fruit and vegetable scraps and dropping them off at the community garden on a weekly basis. We have in place a 200 litre hot bin composter, purchased by LEG, and a standard 900 litre wooden composting bin made by [The Workshop Studios at Lochaber HOPE](#). In the five months since starting in April 2024, participants have composted over 120kg of food waste that would otherwise be heading to landfill.

This initiative is particularly significant in rural areas like Kilmallie, where conventional food waste pick up is limited, and the environmental impact of waste disposal is more acutely felt. By providing a local solution to a global problem, the community composting project aligns with Scotland's ambitious environmental targets and promotes a circular economy at the grassroots level.



Key Learnings So Far

For allotment groups in the Highlands considering a similar initiative, the Kilmallie pilot project offers several key takeaways so far:

- **SEPA Registration and Guidance:** One of the main barriers for communities looking to set-up composting programs is confusion around SEPA registration. For the Kilmallie project, we made the decision to only accept raw fruit and vegetable scraps, excluding any animal by-products such as meat and eggs, to keep things simple. We were able to apply for the **“Paragraph 12- Notice of intention to carry out small scale composting (<2m³) at business or education facilities”** as each of our composters are less than 2m³. This is a short 2 page form that applies to small scale composting of biodegradable **meat excluded matter** (such as tea bags, apple cores, vegetable peelings etc.) from any premises other than domestic properties (e.g. office, school etc). For more information about different compost exemptions check out, <https://sepa.org.uk/regulations/waste/composting/#six>.
- **Start Small, Then Scale Up:** Starting on a smaller scale with limited participants has allowed for the fine-tuning of processes and has made it easier to address challenges as they arise. For example, getting the mix and temperature right with the hot bin was difficult in the beginning. We had to experiment with the mix of green (nitrogen) and brown (carbon) materials to get the composter up to optimal temperature, which is between 40-60 degrees Celsius. We have encouraged participants to include small household brown material (toilet rolls, shredded paper etc.) to their caddies, as well as adding a handful of woodchips each time they drop off.
- **Education and Training are Key:** One of the critical factors in the pilot's early success was the emphasis on educating the participants about composting. Providing training on how to properly compost, what materials to include, and how to manage a composting site have empowered participants to take ownership of the process.



Project Officer, Brenna Anderson, shows composting participants the site. Image by HCWP.

Looking Ahead

The Kilmallie community composting pilot is more than just a local initiative—our hope is that it serves as a model that can be replicated by allotment groups throughout the Highlands. By turning food waste into a valuable resource, Kilmallie Community Fridge and Garden is demonstrating how small communities can make a big impact on sustainability.

For allotment groups eager to embrace sustainable practices, Kilmallie's experience offers a practical guide. With careful planning, community involvement, and the right partnerships, any allotment group can set up a successful composting initiative that benefits both their members and the environment.

Interested in setting up a community composting project in your area?

Contact brenna@highlandgoodfood.scot

The Highland Community Waste Partnership (HCWP): Led by eight community groups across the Highlands, coordinated by Keep Scotland Beautiful, the HCWP is working to reduce waste in our communities by changing the way that we all consume, that is, buy, use and dispose of things.

www.keeptoscotlandbeautiful.org/highland-community-waste-partnership/