



Spotlight

Larger-scale composting solutions

March 2024



In addition to promoting composting at home, the Highland Community Waste Partnership explored other options for local composting solutions, i.e. at business or community scale. Such sites normally work on a different scale to home composting as they are composting a greater amount of food waste. Some may want to include animal by-products (e.g. eggs, dairy and meat) which all impact the solutions and regulatory processes. Here we provide an overview of this work.

How it started – Rehoming a Rocket A700 composter

(July 2023 - Spring 2024)

Lochaber Environmental Group were aware of a Rocket A700 composter from an earlier project, that had not been used since the Covid-19 pandemic. Rocket Composters, made by [Tidy Planet](#), are “in vessel” machines that process food, green and organic waste on-site, converting it into a valuable resource.

We were keen to get this composter back into use, which we saw as an exciting opportunity to support another organisation to reduce the amount of food waste that would have to travel long distances to then go to landfill.

It was hoped that the learning from this project could then be used to identify and support other larger scale composting solutions.



As a first step, we needed to find a suitable organisation that could make use of it and also organise a full service of the machine to get it back into operation.

To rehome the Rocket we developed a selection process and invited organisations from across Lochaber to apply to host it.

In addition, we had to learn more about the regulations linked to composting. We used the highlandcompost.scot website as a starting point to plan for the implementation and tried to understand as much as we could about the regulatory frameworks and necessary paperwork that were needed.

Although the website is very comprehensive, the perceived complexity of the regulations alongside the limited number of Scottish case studies and exemplar documentation was still daunting leading us to wonder whether other organisations or communities had faced similar challenges. We decided to run an online scoping survey to gather details of others who were interested in learning more about larger scale and in-vessel composting solutions.

In the meantime, following the selection of [Ardtornish Estate](#) on the Morvern Peninsula, we worked alongside them to complete their Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) paragraph 12 exemption application and to organise relocation and refurbishment. Data recording was also put in place and support offered on an as-required basis for the operation and reporting.

A separate [case study](#) about this project looks at learning to date on taking food waste from holiday cottages and using this to create compost for their extensive kitchen gardens.

Highland In Vessel Composting Common Interest Group (IVC CIG)

The need for a way to link up organisations, individuals and communities interested in larger scale composting became apparent during this work.

As such, in January 2024, we applied to the Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE) TechHub for support in developing an In Vessel Composting (IVC) Common Interest Group (CIG). We worked on this together over the following months and had our first Highland-wide In Vessel Composting CIG meeting in April 2024.

A further five meetings were held, including a Learning Exchange Visit (funded through [Scottish Community Alliance](#)) to Mull, to look at the composting solutions put in place by the Mull and Iona Community Trust.

This also led to the creation of the new [Highland in vessel composting network Facebook group](#) to allow for peer-support between the members.

Further local food waste composting pilots

Interest from organisations due to this work, alongside the In Vessel Composting Common Interest Group, has led to further composting pilot solutions being put in place within Lochaber by [Lochaber Environmental Group](#), and across the Highlands through the [Highland Good Food Partnership](#). This includes:

- [Knoydart Community Farm and The Old Forge Inn](#) (Jora JK800 composter)
- Craighdu Croft (Jora JK270 composter)
- Greenfingers community garden (Jora JK125 composter)



Each of these pilots has been selected for different learning opportunities.

In addition, the [Highland Good Food Partnership](#) took the lead on developing community composting initiatives based on householders bringing their food waste to a central composting site. Projects included [Kilmallie Community Fridge & Garden](#) Lochaber, [Holm Grown community garden Inverness](#), Ardgay Sutherland, and Ullapool.

Concluding remarks

What started as a very specific project to refurbish an in-vessel compost machine and get it back into operation led on to much wider interest in composting food waste. Much learning has taken place and the findings and case studies will be provided through both the [Highland Community Waste Partnership legacy website](#), but also on the [highlandcompost.scot](#) website.

The success of a small number of installations has provided inspiration and generated interest from a wider area. We've shown that, with dedicated support and guidance through the seemingly complicated regulatory framework, it is possible to establish successful local composting projects.

[Scotland's Circular Economy Routemap to 2030](#), contains a priority action to Develop with stakeholders effective options to implement mandatory reporting for food waste and surplus by businesses from 2025/26. In this context, we hope this work helps highlight the importance and feasibility of composting and supports others to start on their food waste composting journey.

See also:

- [Business composting - Ardtornish Estate](#)
- [Business composting - Knoydart](#)
- [Community composting and other food waste case studies](#)

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.keeptoscotlandbeautiful.org/highlandcommunitywaste/