How to set up a Community Composting Scheme (CCS)

There are a number of steps involved in setting up a community composting scheme. The following checklist is a suggested approach, highlighting issues you may need to consider. You may find that you need to swap the order of some tasks, or carry out different tasks at the same time, depending on the circumstances and requirements of your local community, and the schemes starting point. The best schemes are those that meet local needs most effectively and consistently. Most schemes start small but it’s worth considering capacity for future expansion at an early stage (e.g. when considering potential sites) if the need is there in the community.

Set up an action group or working party - a core group of 2 to 3 enthusiastic volunteers is a good starting point.

Investigate site options - this is essential if one has not already been identified! Networking locally can produce positive results – try and approach community-minded farmers and landowners in the first instance.

Conduct some market research - do people want a CCS for their garden waste? Do they want the finished compost and would they consider paying for it? Can they volunteer on a regular basis?

Parish/Town Council - is your parish or town council interested in supporting the scheme (particularly in help with publicity and cheaper insurance provision)?

Advertise/publicise the scheme - it is important that the local community is very much aware of the aims of the scheme and what they can expect from it – they may be a householder using the scheme, neighbours, or part of the community that will benefit from the scheme, and so on. This is also an opportunity to find more volunteers.

Operating model - do you want to collect from householders (to keep some control over the material received) or are you prepared to receive garden waste at the site (traffic management arrangements will need to be included in your plans)? Do you want to pay a scheme co-ordinator?

Constitution - some schemes have a formal constitution setting out the aims of the scheme and details of who is doing what and how, etc.

Developing the Site - choose the site and start pulling together information about how it should be laid out. Pay attention to how close neighbouring residents are, and possible environmental impacts such as noise, traffic, where local streams are, etc. This information will be required by Suffolk County Council.

Community Composting Schemes
Information Sheet – CC3
County Council Planning team and the Environment Agency (see separate ‘Planning’ and ‘Environmental Permits’ Information Sheets).

**Planning permission, licence exemption (Environmental Permitting), recycling credits etc** - see separate Information Sheets.

**Insurance** - see separate Information Sheet.

**Marketing plan** - ‘sell’ the scheme to the community through regular newsletters and articles in the press. This will not only help to publicise it, but it will help persuade people to use it and keep residents updated on the benefits of the scheme, such as money raised, opportunities for local groups, etc. Such a plan may also help get you some grant funding.

**Recruit more volunteers** - you need a good number of volunteers to ensure that the work load is spread more thinly and over the long-term. This also means better cover for holidays, sickness, etc.

**Funding/grants** - look into funding opportunities and grants that may be available to help cover the initial set-up costs, such as the hire/purchase of essential equipment (e.g. a shredder, scales, sieve, wheelbarrow, tools - unless these can be donated to the scheme), insurance, personal protective equipment (e.g. gloves, masks, goggles, high visibility vests, etc) - see separate ‘Funding’ Information Sheet.

**Infrastructure & equipment** - see grant funding above, and set about purchasing such items once funding has been approved.

**Train volunteers/staff** - all volunteers or staff need to know what they are doing, why, how, when and where. Some volunteers will be happy doing physical work (but will need health and safety training for handling garden waste and compost/ operating shredders etc); others may prefer to do the accounts /administration funding applications or prefer to provide publicity for the scheme.