

Tackling Climate Change Beacon - Worcestershire County Council CASE STUDY – FOOD WASTE AT COUNTY HALL

Summary

Worcestershire County Council installed a rocket composter at County Hall in 2007 in order to reduce the amount of food waste that was being sent to landfill from its premises.

Key learnings

- By composting food waste the Council is cutting down on the amount of waste that needs to be removed from the site and, by using the resulting compost on the site gardens the area becomes a more pleasant environment.

Background to the authority

Over the last four years Worcestershire County Council has steadily increased the amount of waste recycled and reduced that being sent to landfill. As a result of the authority's increasing awareness of climate change the Council now recycles a variety of things including cardboard, paper, plastic, aluminium, light tubes, printer toner and cartridges and food waste.

Who was involved

Property Services
Head of Facilities
Caretaking Team
Assistant Sustainability officer

The problems and how we tackled them

- Worcestershire County Council were concerned about the amount of food waste that was being sent to landfill each year - food waste from County Hall accounts for 30% of our waste that needs to be disposed of. It was decided that the solution to this would be to install a rocket composter.

Outcomes and impact

The rocket composter based at County Hall has been in operation for over a year disposing of food waste produced at County Hall and Wildwood.

Across County Hall and Wildwood small food waste bins have been placed in staff kitchens and canteens to collect waste food so it does not go to landfill where it would produce methane (one of the greenhouse gases). The waste from these bins is then collected and put into the rocket composter.

Waste food combined with dampened wood chippings is added to the composter everyday and turned every 30 minutes. This process is carried out at high temperatures (67C) with a small amount of biochemical to aid

the breakdown of the food. Higher temperatures allow for a faster composting process compared with a normal compost bin and is thus more effective for this large scale.

This process takes seven to eight weeks and produces compost which can be used on the gardens on site at County Hall, Wildwood and the Countryside Centre. By composting this food waste the Council is cutting down on the weight of the waste which needs to be removed from the site and, by using the resulting compost on the site gardens the area becomes a more pleasant environment.

Now 26000 litres of food waste is composted every year.

What could we have done better?

The site of the rocket composter (in the underground car park) has led to complaints from the staff about the smell. However, although some may not consider it the ideal site for the composter it is secure and easily accessible for maintenance staff. When the site was chosen the council had to take into account access to a power supply and water supply.

Next steps

Worcestershire County Council will continue to compost all food waste. Due to the success of the waste collection and recycling systems that have been put in place at County Hall and Wildwood the Council is looking at increasing recycling in other areas.

Further information

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