



Planning Statement: In Vessel Composting of Food Waste Pilot Program at Salakee Farm

Background

At present, food waste on the Isles of Scilly is not recycled but disposed of in the residual waste stream. This has both a large financial cost (it must be shipped to the mainland for incineration) and an environmental cost (a waste stream that can be recycled into a locally useful compost product is instead being incinerated). Several feasibility studies into recycling Scilly's food waste have been conducted in recent years by the Council of the Isles of Scilly. These have determined that it is technically feasible to achieve this through In Vessel Composting, but they have not yet led to any implementation of this solution.

The Isles of Scilly Community Venture CIC is a non-profit-making Community Interest Company based on St Mary's, originally arising from the Smart Islands program, with a mission to develop the infrastructure of the islands to ensure a sustainable future for our community. Our current activities involve operating various solar photovoltaic installations on commercial sites around the islands as well as operating the electric vehicle charging infrastructure and the GO-EV electric car share scheme. We have identified food waste recycling as a priority area for further development, which has already seen successful feasibility study outcomes and is now ready to develop to the pilot stage.

Location

The location of Salakee Farm has been chosen for this pilot project as it is being carried out as a collaboration between Salakee Farm and the Isles of Scilly Community Venture. Initial compost output will be used on land elsewhere within the Salakee Farm tenancy. The specific location within the farm has been chosen due to the need to keep it away from other agricultural activities, provide adequate access and to minimise the impact on natural and heritage assets in the surrounding area. There will be no significant impact on the existing operations of the farm as only a small piece of land will be used for this pilot scheme, which can be returned to agricultural use once usage for in vessel composting ends.

Access & Transport of Waste

Access will be via the existing lane leading to Salakee farm, branching off where the agricultural track shown on the plans splits from this lane and passes by the composting site. As this is a pilot program, the composting will be operating at a very small scale, and any additional traffic is likely to be very limited. At the peak of the program we estimate there will be fewer than 5 additional vehicle movements per day on the lane to Salakee Farm, which will have only a very minimal impact when considered in the context of existing daily movements on the island's roads. As part of the pilot program we will be exploring different models for food waste to arrive at the site, both "bring" based, and also potentially via small-scale "collection". Primarily vehicle movements will be using small vehicles such as cars or light commercial vans.



Implementation and Operating Model

The pilot program will run for a time limited period of 12 months. It will install an In Vessel Composting (IVC) system contained entirely within a 20ft shipping container. Compost leaving the self-contained IVC unit will be stored in small windrows in the open until it is needed. Animal By-Products legislation, with which the scheme will be complying, requires that all liquid waste from the IVC system must be disposed of through mains drainage. As mains drainage is not present at this site, it will be instead directly collected in an IBC and a local septic tank emptying contractor will be used to collect this and transfer it to the local water treatment plant on St Mary's to ensure compliance. This will also ensure that no waste from the IVC process will be released into the local environment of the site and ensures it will have no impact on the nearby Higher Moors SSSI.

Scale of Operations

The theoretical operating capacity of the in vessel composting system being used for this pilot program is 34 tonnes per annum. However, actual operations during the pilot program will be well below this. We expect fewer than 15 tonnes of food waste to be processed within the 12 month pilot period. Completed compost stored in the windrows on site will not exceed 5 tonnes at any time.

Permits & Exemptions

The scale of the scheme means it will operate under Environment Agency exemptions T23, U10 and U11. As part of the program, animal by-products (ABP) legislation compliance and Compost Quality Protocol / PAS100 certification will be secured for the resulting compost output allowing it to no longer be considered a "waste product" once it leaves the IVC system. At this stage in the project the applications for Environment Agency exemptions, and ABP/CQC/PAS100 have not yet taken place. EA exemptions will be secured once planning permission is in place prior to the installation of the composter. ABP and CQC/PAS100 compliance will be secured during the course of the pilot program, prior to any activities that require these permissions/certifications being undertaken.

Vermin & Pests

Prior to composting, food waste may be attractive to rats and other vermin. Food waste will be kept in sealed rat proof containers, and will be composted promptly on arrival at the site to minimise volumes of uncomposted food waste on site at any time in accordance with the EA exemptions we will be operating under. Appropriate active pest control measures will also be taken to minimise vermin on the site in accordance with Animal By-Products legislation.

Use of Compost

The modest amount of compost that will be produced by this pilot program will initially be used elsewhere on Salakee Farm land, under EA U10/U11 exemptions, as a soil improver. Once we have been able to achieve Compost Quality Protocol / PAS100 accreditation, we hope to test the local market to sell some as a soil conditioner and a potting compost for use by the general public on the islands.



Conservation Designations

This application recognises that there are several designations across the Isles of Scilly that will have relevance to this application. The designations are listed below:

Local Plan	Isles of Scilly Local Plan 2015- 2030	https://www.scilly.gov.uk/sites/default/files/planning-apps/Adopted%20Local%20Plan%202015-2030%20Website%20Version.pdf
Historic Environment	Conservation Area	https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/conservation-areas/ https://www.scilly.gov.uk/planning/heritage-conservation-environment#Conservation
Historic (Marine) Environment	Heritage Coast	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heritage-coasts-protecting-undeveloped-coast/heritage-coasts-definition-purpose-and-natural-englands-role
Natural Environment	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/index.php/about-aonbs/aonbs/isles-scilly
Natural (Marine) Environment	Special Area of Conservation	https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK0013694

In relation to the historic environment and natural designations, the development of the project has been carried out to minimise visual impact. The IVC system and its shipping container are positioned in a field behind the tree line so that they are hidden from all directions except from the farm field to the immediate south-west. Similarly, the location of the windrows for storage is visible only from the south-west and the farm track immediately adjacent to it. Beyond that, it is again shielded by the treeline. The impact on other heritage assets close to the site is addressed in the separate Heritage Impact Assessment.

St Mary's plays host to two SSSIs which are near to the proposed development: Lower Moors & Higher Moors. The location for this project does not fall within the Source Protection Zone for either of these SSSIs. As the composting process occurs within a closed vessel, any leachate from that process is captured and disposed of safely through mains sewerage, rather than producing any runoff to the land which could potentially affect the SSSIs. Compost being stored in the windrows after the IVC process has completed could still produce nutrient rich runoff, however, the volumes involved in this project are very small and therefore are extremely unlikely to have any significant effect on surrounding land. Aerobic composting processes produce ammonia as a by-product which can have an impact on organisms in the surrounding area. However, the extremely small scale of this composting pilot (15 tonnes over the course of a year) means that the amount of ammonia produced will be very low and therefore there will be no significant effect on the nearby SSSIs.



The Isles of Scilly Local Plan

The following specific policies under the Local Plan provide the following support for this pilot scheme:

- Under Policy SS1 development will be permitted where it makes a positive contribution to the social, economic and environmental needs of the Isles of Scilly by 'locating, designing and constructing development where it makes a positive contribution to reducing the islands carbon footprint and consumption of natural resources'.
- Policy SS5 states that development will be permitted where it makes a 'positive contribution to the sustainability of the islands'.
- Policy OE5 states that: 'Waste facilities for re-use, recycling, composting and the generation of heat/energy, or the co-location of such uses, will be permitted where they improve the sustainable management of waste on the islands and accord with other relevant policies in the Local Plan'.

Birds

Food waste is known to attract birds, in particular gulls. All food waste will arrive at the site in sealed containers, which will be taken into the composting unit before being emptied directly into the in-vessel composter. Both the in-vessel composter and the in vessel composting unit (shipping container) are fully enclosed "indoor" areas, secured in such a way that birds will not be able to get inside. Only once the composting process has completed and there is no longer any "food like" content will material come out of this contained indoor area. This output compost, which no longer contains any food-like product that would attract gulls or other birds, will then be stored in the outside areas. Although no significant increase in birds in the area of the development is thus expected, because of the proximity of the site to St Mary's airport, operational staff will monitor for any increase in bird numbers when compost material is on site, and take further actions to prevent this should it occur.