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The Conway Centre

The Conway Centre in Wales is an impressive 420-bed residential arts and outdoor education centre feeding over a thousand hungry mouths every day.

Background

This amount of catering created a lot of waste then housed in thirteen 1,100 litre bins and four 800 litre bins. Not only did this look unsightly and attract vermin but with increased waste collection costs it became apparent that this was unsustainable both financially and environmentally.

In 2003 Cheshire County Councils Environmental Planning Department invited the Conway Centre to carry out an Eco Audit. This revealed the need to reduce the amount of heating oil and electricity consumed, reduce un-recyclable plastics and most interestingly to us - to improve sewage treatment facilities.



The problem

To rationalise the sewage process for the entire site as grease traps and settlement tanks were being used to discharge sewage into the Menai Straits. The BOD readings at this time were around 7000.

The Solution

The Rocket® In-Vessel Composting system and a de-waterer were installed for the on-site treatment of all food waste (including meat and fish). All food waste is put into our sealed containers by the kitchen team and three times each day this waste is put into the Rocket® by the Maintenance & Groundworks team. In 2006 4,235 litres of food waste was processed through the Rocket®.



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The Conway Centre (Continued)

The product

A700 Rocket[®] In-Vessel Composter

The mid-range A700 is capable of processing up to 700 litres of mixed food waste per week. Thermostatically controlled to ensure temperatures greater than 65°C are maintained, the average power consumption is as little as 70kwh per week. Fully automatic and measuring 3.0m long by 0.9m wide and 1.6m high the A700 is probably one of the most versatile small scale in-vessel composting systems currently in use in the UK.



Results

As a direct affect of The Rocket[®] In-Vessel Composting system the BOD reading for material being released into the Menai Straights went from 7,000 to 260. This saved an astonishing £1,400 a year on emptying the grease traps and £660 a year on emptying the settlement tanks. A further £2,200 of fresh water costs is saved every year due to the addition of a food waste dewaterer, which is used prior to the composting process. Along with the reduction in waste disposal costs and purchasing costs for compost materials the Rocket[®] has paid for itself in the three years since the installation.

These achievements along with other energy saving and recycling successes have not been overlooked by external agencies and the Conway Centre has been awarded FEE Eco Centre status, Level 4 Green Dragon (Arena Network) and in October 2007 the Centre won the Environmental Management System Award for the Public Sector in the Welsh Sustainability Awards.

What they said about us

Paul Southall, Buildings and Environmental Supervisor

“We are now at the end of the final year of a three year study and if the Rocket[®] didn’t work it would be going back to the manufacturers. But it does work. We have saved money on waste collections, and it provides a useful product - compost - that has been used over the past three years to plant more than 1,000 trees on our 160 acre site. Making the utility and recycling area accessible to the children who visit the centre has increased their awareness of the consequences of producing waste and the environmental benefits of recycling. It’s great to see the visitors faces when they see the compost and are told, ‘that was someone’s breakfast two weeks ago!’ It really brings the process home to them.”