



Clackmannanshire Council: Alloa Community Enterprises



Alloa Community Enterprises (ACE) is one of the largest social enterprises in Scotland, providing recycling services for businesses and the community. Working in partnership with ACE, Clackmannanshire Council achieved the highest recycling rate in Scotland for 4 out of the last 5 years. ACE also works with the Council's Housing Services to provide furniture packs and with its Education Services to provide supported employment opportunities.

BACKGROUND

In the spring of 1984 a group of volunteers in Clackmannanshire successfully raised funds to furnish a halfway house, which provided training and support to assist long stay patients in a nearby psychiatric hospital to regain their rightful place in society. From these humble beginnings arose what is now arguably the most successful community recycling business in Scotland.

Due to the success of their fund raising venture the volunteers recognised the need for an ongoing business which would create local jobs and help alleviate poverty in a high unemployment area.

With the help of a £1000 Small Business Grant and one employee Alloa Community Enterprises Ltd (ACE) was launched in 1984. The first venture of the organisation was to establish a furniture reuse project.

Over the years ACE have diversified into other areas of recycling such as glass, cans, paper, textiles, books and plastic. The organisation works in partnership with a number of local authorities, including Clackmannanshire Council, to collect waste for recycling; it also offers recycling services to business customers.

Waste collected at the kerbside is hand-sorted at the point of collection, reducing the amount of usable materials lost through contamination. Glass is processed locally at the OI glass factory in Alloa, the only commercial glass factory left in Scotland. Textiles and books are either recycled or sold on for re-use, depending on their quality.

Because it is a social enterprise, ACE aims to make a social return for every community it works with. Profits from the organisation's commercial activities are ploughed back into its charitable work.

As well as providing recycling services, ACE also work in partnership with Clackmannanshire Council's education services to provide supported employment opportunities for adults with disabilities. The scheme promotes social inclusion in the workplace and allows employers to see the potential in people from diverse backgrounds and abilities. Five of the organisation's 45 full-time employees joined it through this route.



KEY CONTACTS

Malcolm McArdle
ACE Group Managing Director
M.mcardle@recycleit.org.uk
01259 215111

Graeme Cunningham
Integrated Waste Manager,
Clackmannanshire Council
gcunningham@clacks.gov.uk
01259 452548



ACHIEVEMENTS

When Clackmannanshire Council introduced kerbside recycling in 2002, in response to the National Waste Plan, ACE was selected as the partner. The scheme began with paper recycling, but over time this has expanded to cover many more materials, and in 2009 Clackmannanshire Council became the first local authority to introduce a regular kerbside collection of waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE).

The partnership with ACE has led to Clackmannanshire Council achieving the highest recycling performance in Scotland for four of the past five years. Clackmannanshire's recycling rate was 45% in 2008/9, and this success is in no small part due to the goodwill felt by communities towards ACE and its charitable motives, which helped smooth the transition to separation of waste at the household level.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Council is keen to retain the link between waste management and the communities it serves, so the contracts for future kerbside collection provision express a preference for organisations which provide social benefits.

In recent years ACE has expanded its operations, and in 2009 moved to new premises in Alloa. It is increasing its fleet and looking to work with more local authorities, as well as expanding the range of materials it collects. Work is ongoing to develop an innovative method of recycling polystyrene.

The organisation is now renewing its focus on its charitable work. It is returning to its roots, both selling second hand furniture and providing furniture starter packs to those in need. ACE furthermore intends to increase its intake of trainees in supported employment over the next 3-5 years.