

The Research Hub Annual Report 2020

About the Research Hub

The Research Hub was established in 2018, and 2019 was the first full year of its operation. The Research Hub is part of the Compost Certification Scheme (CCS) and Biofertiliser Certification Scheme (BCS), both of which are administered by Renewable Energy Assurance Ltd (REAL). REAL is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology. It carries out a range of certification and consumer protection activities.

The CCS provides assurance to consumers, farmers, food producers, and retailers that quality compost derived from source-segregated biowaste, or source-segregated biodegradable materials, is safe for human, animal, and plant health. The BCS provides assurance to consumers, farmers, food producers, and retailers that biofertiliser produced from anaerobic digestion is safe for human, animal, and plant health. 'Biofertiliser' is the name used for the digestate certified under the BCS.

REAL recognised that there was a need for new, accessible research to support innovation and revisions to the CCS/BCS and the standards they rely on (BSI PAS 100 and BSI PAS 110). These standards, and their associated laboratory test methods, must be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to reflect evolving legislation, the latest scientific evidence and good practice.

In view of this, in cooperation with the members of the CCS/BCS Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and in discussion with industry, REAL designed the Research Hub as a mechanism for fulfilling these objectives. REAL intends that evidence generated through the funded research projects will underpin the long-term competitiveness and growth of the sector. The Research Hub is funded by contributions from CCS/BCS participants. The funds are ring-fenced.

Governance of the Research Hub

REAL set up the Research Hub Governance Committee to review the Research Hub's development and manage the funds. The Governance Committee meets three times a year. The members of the Governance Committee are:

- **Michael Chesshire (Chair)**
- **Virginia Graham**
- **Justyna Staff**
- **Stephen Lister**
- **Toyin Owadayo**

REAL also set up a Research Panel to ensure that the Research Hub meets its objectives in an efficient and effective manner. The Research Panel is responsible for deciding which research projects the Research Hub will fund. Once selected, it is responsible for overseeing the management of each research project. The Research Panel consists of independent stakeholders with expertise in the composting and anaerobic digestion sectors, including representatives from the Environmental Regulators, Government, Trade Bodies, and the CCS/BCS participants.

The Research Hub Project Selection Process

A clear and transparent process has been set-up for the annual selection of research projects. The Project Selection Process was reviewed and revised in July 2020, to be implemented from January 2021. The new, revised process is as follows:

- I. In January, the Hub Secretariat issues a call for research project ideas among CCS/ BCS participants and the wider industry. A REAL representative attends the winter Fora Meetings to promote the call. The call runs for approximately 6 weeks.
- II. In March, the Secretariat collects research project ideas and sorts them according to similar topics and themes covered. REAL's advisor contacts organisations or individuals who submitted research project ideas to obtain further details where needed.
- III. In April, REAL's advisor pulls together a summary for each distinct research project idea. The summary contains sufficient but not excessive level of detail to allow for initial evaluation and ranking of the idea.
- IV. In May, the Secretariat runs a SurveyMonkey poll inviting CCS and BCS participants to provide a score and a ranking for each summary, together with any comments. The Research Panel meets to discuss the research project summaries, considering the results of the SurveyMonkey poll. The Research Panel uses the Phase 1 Evaluation Criteria to assess the research project summaries and shortlists those scoring the highest.
- V. In June, REAL's advisor further develops each of the shortlisted research project summaries.
- VI. In July, the Research Panel meets for a second time to decide which of the shortlisted and further developed research project summaries should go forward to tender. In taking this decision, they consider the available budget, the feasibility of achieving meaningful outcomes and the topic's relevance to the sectors. In practice, this is likely to be a minimum of one and a maximum of two research projects.
- VII. In August, the Secretariat establishes a Project Management Team for each research project selected for commissioning.

The first project of the Research Hub

The first project commissioned by the Research Hub is entitled "*The development of a Research Library for the Organics Recycling industry*". NNFCC (The Bioeconomy Consultants) was selected to carry out the research through a competitive tender process. The Research Library will be an informative and valuable resource for both the composting and anaerobic digestion industries. Its establishment will help prevent the duplication of research in future and in this way, ensure the best use of research funds. As such, the Research Library will shape and inform the objectives of future research projects selected for funding by the Research Hub.

REAL signed the Services Agreement with NNFCC in May 2020 and the project work commenced the same month. The work is scheduled to complete in January 2021.

You can find further information on the project within the Research Hub website here:

<https://www.realresearchhub.org.uk/research-projects/project-1>

Research Hub Funds

The total funds available for research projects in 2020 was £221,700. This amount excludes the cost of the first project of the Research Hub which was £68,674. The second project of the Research Hub will cost £57,901. The contract for the second project of the Research Hub was agreed in 2021 and therefore the total amount of funds carried from 2020 into 2021 was £221,700.

The second project of the Research Hub

The second project selected for funding through the Research Hub is entitled "*To develop a 'data pack' on the properties, characteristics, and content of digestate that will provide the context for the development of new uses of outputs from Anaerobic Digesters*." Following a competitive tender process, the contract for the project work was awarded to Solidsense Ltd. Solidsense is subcontracting Aqua Enviro and Cambridge Eco Ltd to assist with elements of the work. The three organisations form a consortium. The project is designed to investigate alternative markets for digestates and technologies to develop new products from digestates.

The work will build on the work of the first project of the Research Hub, and will consist of three phases:

- I. 'Data pack' on digestate characteristics
- II. Identifying alternative digestate uses
- III. Roadmap to market

The project work is due to complete in November 2021.

You can find further information on the project within the Research Hub website here:

<https://www.realresearchhub.org.uk/research-projects/project-2>



In 2019 REAL achieved certification of its Quality Management System to the ISO 9001:2015 standard.

The ISO 9001:2015 standard is based on a number of quality management principles including a strong customer focus, the motivation and implication of top management, the process approach and continual improvement. Using ISO 9001 helps ensure that customers get consistent, good-quality products and services, which in turn brings many business benefits.

The seven quality management principles are:

- customer focus
- leadership
- engagement of people
- process approach
- improvement
- evidence-based decision making
- relationship management.



Compost Certification Scheme (CCS) is part of Renewable Energy Assurance Limited.

Biofertiliser Certification Scheme (BCS) is part of Renewable Energy Assurance Limited.

REAL Research Hub is part of Renewable Energy Assurance Limited.

Registered in England and Wales | Company No. 05720606 | Brettenham House, 2-19 Lancaster Place, London WC2E 7EN