

The Research Hub Annual Report 2019

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 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 operators. 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 BCS/CCS operators.

The Research Hub Project Selection Process

A clear and transparent process has been set-up for the annual selection of research projects, as follows:

- I. In January, REAL circulates a call for research ideas among CCS/BCS operators and the wider industry.
- II. In April, the Research Panel evaluates the research proposals submitted and draws up a shortlist of projects.
- III. In May, REAL invites CCS/BCS operators to score each shortlisted project by means of a SurveyMonkey poll and to provide comments, should they wish.
- IV. In June, the Research Panel meets again to determine which project should be selected for commissioning, taking account of the SurveyMonkey results, and sets up a Project Management Team.
- V. In July, the Project Management Team draws up a Project Brief for the selected project and announces the chosen project to BCS/CCS scheme operators and the wider industry.
- VI. In September, REAL issues an Invitation to Tender for contractors to carry out the research.
- VII. In November, the Project Management Team evaluates the responses to the Invitation to Tender received and decides which should go forward for interview. Following the interviews, and taking everything into account, the Project Management Team recommends the successful bidder for the research project.
- VIII. In December, the contract is awarded to the successful bidder.

The first project of the Research Hub

The first project selected for funding by the Research Hub is "The development of a Research Library for the Organics Recycling industry". NNFC (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.

You can find further information on the project within the Research Hub website here: (www.realresearchhub.org.uk) .

Research Hub Funds

The total funds available for research projects in 2019 was £139,034. The first project of the Research Hub will cost £68,674. The contract for the first project of the Research Hub was agreed at the beginning of 2020 and therefore the total amount of funds carried forward from 2019 into 2020 was £139,034.