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How it Works

Version 3

Introduction

Renewable Energy Assurance Ltd (REAL) administers a range of certification schemes and consumer codes, which promote circular economy principles and renewable energy assurance.

Two of the certification schemes that REAL owns and administers - the Compost Certification Scheme (CCS) and Biofertiliser Certification Scheme (BCS) (the Schemes) - encourage the use of waste-derived products and ensure that a range of organics recycling sector participants comply with the relevant quality standards and end-of-waste criteria.

The Schemes provide assurance to consumers, farmers, food producers and retailers that compost produced from composting processes and biofertiliser produced from anaerobic digestion processes are safe for human, animal, and plant health. For more details about the Schemes please visit the CCS website via www.qualitycompost.org.uk and the BCS website using www.biofertiliser.org.uk.

The Research Hub is a mechanism to fund research designed to ensure that the Schemes are robust and fit for purpose. The Research Hub was established on the 1st of January 2019.

The role of the Research Hub

The Research Hub was established to generate new, accessible research and evidence to support innovation and improve the robustness of the Schemes and associated standards and end-of-waste frameworks.

It is vital to keep the Schemes relevant and in line with the technical and scientific progress made by the industry. The quality standards (BSI PAS 100 and PAS 110) and laboratory test methods must be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to reflect changing legislation and relevant scientific developments. Research-based evidence is essential to inform the continuous development of the Schemes and the composting and anaerobic digestion industries.

The Research Hub (Hub) funds original research to enable the Schemes to maintain high quality standards and to contribute to growth, creativity, and innovation within the organics recycling sector. Through this work, the Hub intends to support the UK circular economy, remaining grounded in principles of transparency and quality.

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1. The objectives of the Research Hub

The Hub's objectives are to:

- I. Maintain and improve the robustness of the Schemes and related standards.
- II. Reinforce confidence in the compost and anaerobic digestion markets.
- III. Contribute to the development of new markets, including identifying barriers.

The objectives are achieved by commissioning a range of research projects and industry data collection.

2. Governance of the Research Hub

To ensure that the work of the Hub is transparent and in line with its objectives, REAL established the Governance Committee and the Research Panel. A Steering Group is also assigned to each research project. These groups are responsible for different aspects of the Hub's governance and operation.

2.1 Governance Committee

The Governance Committee (the Committee) meets twice a year and is responsible for overseeing the governance and operation of the Hub. Specifically, the Committee manages the funds, reviews progress of Hub projects and developments and monitors the composition of the Research Panel.

The Committee is comprised of individuals working for or closely with REAL, who are familiar with REAL's operations and priorities.

Please refer to Attachment I for the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Committee.

Members of the Governance Committee	
Michael Chesshire	Chair
Justyna Staff	Director of Organic Materials Schemes (REAL)
Toyin Owadayo	Director of Finance (REAL)
Jon Harley	Managing Director (REAL)
Stephen Lister	Legal Advisor for REAL

2.2 Research Panel

The Research Panel is responsible for deciding which research projects the Hub will fund, and for authorising a Steering Group to provide advisory support for each selected research project. The Panel may also review each completed project and recommend way(s) in which the results may be used and shared with Scheme participants and the wider organics recycling community.

The Research Panel comprises representatives across the composting and AD sectors, drawn from academia, the environmental regulators, trade bodies, and Scheme participants. Members of the Research Panel are listed on the Hub's web site, [Governance - About - REAL Research Hub](#)

Please refer to Appendix II for the ToR for the Research Panel.

3. Research fees and funding

The Hub is funded through an annual Research Fee paid by Scheme participants.

The Research Fee was introduced on 1st January 2019. From this date, all Scheme participants have been required to pay the Research Fee as part of their annual CCS and BCS certification fee.



At initial application or renewal, the relevant Certification Body invoices the Schemes' participants for the Research Fee (and for its certification services). REAL recovers the Research Fee from the Certification Body. REAL then uses the Fee to pay the Hub running costs and ringfences the remaining balance for research projects.

How the Research Fee is Allocated:

- 30% (maximum) is allocated to administration, project management, and project development
- 70% (minimum) is available for research projects.

The Hub is managed independently from the Schemes. Each year, REAL issues an Annual Report, containing a summary of recent developments, and an update on the availability of funds.

How the Research Fee is Calculated:

The Research Fee charged to each operator is relative to the plant's input tonnes per annum (tpa). As shown in the table below, Scheme participants are grouped (I to VI) according to their tpa and charged the corresponding Research Fee. The fees are reviewed on a regular basis (at least every two years).

Groups	CCS Input (tpa)	BCS Input (tpa)	Annual research fee (VAT excl.)
I	0-3,000	0-6,000	£100
II	3,001-6,000	6,001-15,000	£300
III	6,001-12,000	15,001-25,000	£600
IV	12,001-20,000	25,001-50,000	£800
V	20,001-50,000	50,001-75,000	£1,200
VI	>50,000	>75,000	£1,500

4. Selection and Management of the Research Projects

The Research Panel is responsible for evaluating the Proposals and subsequently selecting and reviewing the Research Projects.

4.1 Project Selection

Phase 1 – Sourcing Research Ideas (January-February)

- The Hub issues an open Call for Proposals, inviting Scheme participants, and any stakeholder with an interest or expertise in the organic materials sector to put forward suggestions for research projects by submitting Research Project Proposals, using the Research Proposal Form (found [here](#)).
- The submission period runs for approximately six weeks.

Phase 2 – Refining Submissions and Schemes Participants Survey (Spring)

- The Hub collects the Proposals submitted and, if necessary, sorts them according to similar topics and themes they cover. If more than one submission covers the same topic or theme, the Hub may suggest ways ideas could be combined.
- The Hub may work with a Technical Advisor to refine the submissions.
- The Hub creates high-level Summaries of each Proposal. The Summaries and anonymised Proposals are shared with Scheme Participants. The Hub may also organise and host a webinar to inform Scheme Participants about each Proposal.
- The Hub then runs an online Scheme Participant Survey (Survey), inviting BCS and CCS Participants to indicate which proposals they would like to see taken forward, together with any comments. Scheme Participants' feedback on the Proposals will be considered during the evaluation process.

Phase 3 – Shortlisting, Project Briefs and Final Decision (Summer/Autumn)

- The Research Panel meets to discuss, evaluate, and shortlist the Proposals, considering the results of the Survey. The Research Panel uses the Phase 1 Evaluation Criteria (found [here](#)) to assess the Proposals and shortlists those scoring the highest.
- The Hub further develops each of the shortlisted Proposals, creating a Project Brief for each. The Hub may contact organisations or individuals who submitted research project ideas to obtain further information as needed.
- The Research Panel meets for a second time to decide which of the shortlisted and further developed Proposals should go forward to tender, using the Phase 2 Evaluation Criteria (found [here](#)). In taking this decision, they consider the available budget, the feasibility of achieving meaningful outcomes and the topic's relevance to the sectors. The Research Panel may have additional meetings to conclude the discussions.

4.2 Project Announcement

The Project Brief for the selected Proposal(s) is announced publicly. The Hub will provide feedback to any parties whose Proposals were not selected for funding.

4.3 Project Management

Day-to-day project management is the responsibility of the Hub.

Appointment of the Steering Group

To ensure the project has appropriate oversight, a Steering Group is established for each project to guide the project and provide technical, scientific, and/or regulatory expertise as needed. The Steering Group is led by a representative from the Hub with other members appointed by the Research Panel. For more information on the Steering Group please refer to Appendix III.

Appointing a contractor

The contractor is appointed by the Steering Group through the tender process or as agreed with the Research Panel. The tender process includes but is not limited to the following steps:

- A Tender Invitation Document (TID) is prepared by the Steering Group and circulated via appropriate communications (e.g., uploaded to the Hub Website, emailed to relevant stakeholders, etc.).
- Questions about the TID are invited from prospective tenderers until the deadline date set by the Steering Group. A Q&A document is prepared, containing all anonymised questions and responses – this document is made publicly available on the Hub website.
- The tenders are evaluated and scored by the Steering Group against five assessment criteria: cost; methodology; authority, skills, and technical capability of nominated personnel; corporate environmental commitment; and relevant experience.
- Clarification or additional information is sought from the tenderers if necessary.
- Tenderers may be invited to an interview by the Steering Group, if necessary. Interviews are evaluated and scored against five assessment criteria: understanding of the project; explanation of the methodology; competency; enthusiasm and interest in the project; and relevance of questions posed to the Steering Group.
- The Steering Group meets to review the interview(s) and, taking the entire process into account, selects the successful tenderer.

Contracting

The Contract is drafted and agreed between the Hub (REAL) and the contractor. The Contract, including the objectives, milestones, costs, and payment terms is signed by both parties.

Project Delivery

The Steering Group will agree the final draft of the Project Report and circulate it to the Research Panel.

4.4 Dissemination of project outputs

Project reports are made available to all Scheme participants free of charge. Scheme Participants may also attend project-related webinars hosted by the Hub for free.

Non-participant organisations/individuals may request access to Project Reports, Hub webinars and any other project-related materials by contacting info@realschemes.org.uk. However, access may be subject to a fee.

4.5 Project review process

Following the completion of any Research Project, the Research Panel, with support from the Hub and Project Steering Group shall review the outcomes of the project to assess:

1. Whether the contractor has met the research objectives and performance criteria as set out in the Research Project TID.
2. The extent to which the project has achieved the Hub's objectives.
3. Any relevant parties with whom to share project outcomes and identify any next steps.

Achievements shall be noted as well as learnings and opportunities for future improvement.

5. Contacting the Research Hub

For more information about the Hub please visit the Hub website: www.realresearchhub.org.uk

If you have any questions about the Hub, please do not hesitate to contact us on:
info@realschemes.org.uk

APPENDIX I Terms of reference for the Governance Committee

1. The Governance Committee (Committee) is the body authorised by Renewable Energy Assurance Limited that is responsible for the governance of the Research Hub (Hub).
2. The Committee will comprise of at least five people. The secretariat will be provided by REAL, and the meetings will be chaired by a person appointed by REAL.
3. The Committee will provide the governance for the Hub. Its remit will include:
 - a. Reviewing progress of Hub development.
 - b. Approving the annual budget and managing the funds.
 - c. Monitoring the composition of the Research Panel.
4. The Committee will meet not less than twice a year. Papers will be circulated at least one week in advance.
5. The Committee representatives have an obligation to ensure the confidentiality of information arising from the Committee meetings.

APPENDIX II Terms of reference for the Research Panel

1. The Research Panel is set up by the Hub Governance Committee. It is responsible for deciding which research projects will be funded, for authorising Steering Groups to oversee the delivery of the research projects once selected, and for reviewing project outcomes at project completion. These ToR should be read alongside the ToR for the Hub Governance Committee.
2. The Research Panel carries out its functions to ensure that the Hub meets its objectives in an efficient and effective manner.
3. The Research Panel is chaired by an individual who is independent of the Schemes, standards, relevant end-of-waste frameworks and the wider organics recycling industry. The Research Panel comprises stakeholders with expertise in assessing research needs in the compost and anaerobic digestion sectors, including representatives from:
 - I. Environmental Regulators
 - II. Government Representatives
 - III. Scheme Participants
 - IV. Trade Bodies
 - V. Academia
4. Research Panel Members are nominated for their expertise in the sector and knowledge of stakeholders' interests. In carrying out Research Panel functions, Panel members will act impartially and in the best interests of the Hub.
5. The Research Panel Members are required to:
 - I. agree criteria against which to evaluate Research Project Proposals;
 - II. review and evaluate Research Project Proposals against the agreed criteria, considering the current and foreseeable situation in the sector;
 - III. draw up a shortlist of Research Project Proposals that best meet the evaluation criteria and consider the views of the scheme participants;
 - IV. decide which Research Project Proposal(s) are put out to tender, considering their further assessment of the shortlisted Research Project Proposals;
 - V. monitor the appointment of members to the Steering Group for each funded research project; and
 - VI. with support from the Hub and Project Steering Group, review the project outputs to assess whether the project achieved the Hub's objectives and identify any next steps.
6. The Research Panel is not responsible for any findings, conclusions or opinions expressed in a contractor's report nor for any methodology, assumption, data, facts, or other approaches used in carrying out the Research Project, for which the contractor will have sole responsibility.

7. Research Panel Members and the Chair are appointed by REAL for a term of three years. Members can be re-appointed to the Research Panel for further terms by mutual agreement. If a representative from one of the stakeholder bodies listed in paragraph 3 (above) changes role, their successor will automatically be eligible to be appointed as a Research Panel Member.
8. Either party can end this agreement with one month's notice. REAL may remove a Research Panel member with immediate effect if they breach these ToR.
9. The Research Panel will meet at least twice a year.
10. Research Panel members may nominate an alternative representative from their organisation in their absence by giving prior notice of two weeks to the Chair.
11. To facilitate open and constructive debate, meetings will be held under Chatham House Rules. Outcomes of Research Panel Meetings will be recorded as necessary in summary and published; views will not be attributed to specific individuals or organisations.
12. The decisions of the Research Panel will be taken by consensus. If a consensus cannot be reached, the decision will be taken by simple majority in a voting process facilitated by the Chair. In the event of a split vote, the Chair will work with the Hub and other Research Panel Members to determine the way forward. All Research Panel Members have the right to vote, excluding the Chair.
13. The Research Panel is quorate if at least four Research Panel Members (including the Chair) are present.
14. Research Panel Members have an obligation to ensure the confidentiality of information arising from the Research Panel meetings.
15. It is incumbent upon Research Panel Members to declare any financial or other interest or circumstance that gives, or could give, rise to a conflict of interest. Research Panel Members must not participate in the evaluation, decisions, or part of a meeting on their own initiative or at the request of the Chair if any material conflict of interest has been identified.

APPENDIX III Terms of reference for the Steering Group

1. The Steering Group is the body authorised by the Hub’s Research Panel and is responsible for providing advisory support for a specific project. These ToR should be read alongside the ToR for the Research Panel.
2. Each Steering Group is typically led by a representative from the Hub and consists of members selected for their expertise in the project area.
3. Members of the Research Panel are strongly encouraged to sit on the Steering Group, provided they possess relevant expertise to the project at hand. If no Panellist can sit on the Steering Group, the Hub shall identify other appropriate members.
4. The Steering Group provides the advisory support for a project. Its remit includes:
 - I. Signing off the Project Brief, project objectives and the project timeline as developed by the Hub.
 - II. Contributing to the development of tender documents, participation in evaluation meetings, attendance at tenderer interviews and the appointment of the successful contractor. Assisting in finalising the project contract.
 - III. Reviewing the outputs produced by the contractor to whom the Steering Group awards a research project. The purpose of the review is to assess whether the contractor has met the objectives, performance criteria and milestones as set out in the research project tender.
 - IV. Signing off the final report from the contractor.
 - V. Supporting a review by the Research Panel to assess whether the project achieved its objectives, the Hub’s objectives, and identify any next steps.
 - VI. Providing updates to the Research Panel or wider industry about a specific project, as deemed appropriate/necessary by the Hub.
5. The Steering Group shall not accept or assume responsibility for any findings, conclusions or opinions expressed in the contractor’s report, nor for any methodology, assumption, data, facts, or other approach used in the performance of the research project, for which the contractor shall have responsibility.
6. The Steering Group meets as necessary; the meeting dates will be agreed in advance.
7. The Steering Group members have an obligation to ensure the confidentiality of information arising from the Steering Group meetings.