

## Biofertiliser Certification Scheme Newsletter December 2023



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### Operators' Forum and TAC

We held the latest meeting of the Operators' Forum in October, which took place online. The key topics of discussion at the meeting related to the progress of the ADQP revision, the session during which research project ideas for the Hub were presented, an operator's query regarding changing screen sizes, and REAL's considerations around plastic limits in relation to the ADQP revision, which operators were given a chance to feed into.

Comments from operators at the Forum were taken to the TAC meeting in November by the BCS Operators' Representative. The discussion around changing screens was shared with the CBs and other TAC members. REAL noted that a new scheme position on this will be published alongside the new BCS Scheme Rules, with the Operators' Representative providing comments on this position. There was also some discussion during the TAC meeting on the

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### Certification Body telephone numbers

#### OF&G

+44 (0)1939 291 800

#### NSF

+44 (0)1993 885 610

#### ACL

+44 (0)1984 624 989

### Approved Laboratory telephone numbers

#### NRM

+44 (0)1344 886338

#### Eurofins

+44 (0)1449 721 192  
(Chemistry) / +44 (0)1449 721  
637 (Microbiology)

### ADQP Revision

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We have been engaging in ongoing discussions with the Environment Agency (EA) around the ADQP revision over the last several months and since the last meeting held on 22nd November.

The focus of the discussions has moved to proposals and REAL has submitted two proposals. In relation to plastic levels, the

latest developments within the Research Hub, particularly in relation to the Hub's intended contribution to the ADQP revision. More information on Hub projects can be found below.

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### **Scheme Rules Revision**

The final draft BCS Scheme Rules have been updated to include a new clause on certification for both End of Waste and End of Waste Scotland status if an operator is looking to supply their digestate as a product to any country in the UK. REAL have also clarified and refined aspects of the rules following discussion with the CBs and environmental regulators.

REAL are still awaiting UKAS' formal review, so that any necessary changes to ensure the scheme remains accreditable can be made before publication. We hope to publish the new rules early next year and will communicate this and transition times in due course.

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### **Independent Auditor Tender**

REAL opened a tender earlier this year to appoint an Independent Auditor to audit the REAL BCS and CCS Approved Laboratories from the beginning of 2024. REAL evaluated the responses and held interviews in summer. We are now finalising the new contract in discussion with the successful contractor and hope to announce this early in the new year!

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### **Laboratory Terms & Conditions**

REAL have drafted changes to the laboratory T&Cs which were circulated for consultation to the CBs and the labs in two consecutive consultation phases.

The most significant draft change is around UKAS accreditation requirements. We are adding a limit to the number of samples a laboratory can test before they achieve UKAS accreditation for standard non-scheme tests. The purpose of this is to encourage new laboratories to join the scheme, which would both benefit scheme participants, and be beneficial from REAL's perspective because it would open further opportunity for inter-laboratory trials and performance monitoring. This proposed change has been introduced as REAL have been contacted by laboratories which would like to

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following matters were discussed at the meeting last month:

- Whether tightened limits would lead to more failures given the certified digestate data failure rate presented in the REAL report on plastics analysis; and
- The importance of education around household waste recycling (including the call for) an EA communications strategy and a greater social media presence.

The following matters were considered specifically in relation to manure-based digestate:

- There was general acceptance that data on this type of digestate (manure-based) is required to inform developments.
- PAS 110 parameters could be used as a starting point for hazard analysis/risk assessment for this type of digestate.
- Concerns over the level of administration in regulating this type of digestate and whether sites will be discouraged from putting this manure into digesters.

REAL will continue to contribute to any meetings held in the new year and look forward to seeing the revision process move forward.

## **Annual Report 2022**

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REAL published the Annual Report for 2022 in September.

The report found that by the end of 2022, there were 103 plants certified under BCS by the end of 2022, with a total registered annual throughput of

become approved, but the UKAS requirements are a barrier due to the significant cost associated.

REAL have addressed all comments from the Approved Laboratories on the draft changes and hope to publish the new version of the T&Cs by the end of the year.

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## Research Hub

### Ongoing Projects

#### ***Evaluation of the potential for the improvement of the Residual Biogas Potential test and investigation of alternative test procedures for PAS110 biofertilisers***

This project aims to undertake a comprehensive technical evaluation of the Residual Biogas Potential test, the only digestate stability test currently recognised under PAS 110 (more details [here](#)).

Aqua Enviro was appointed as the contractor and work commenced in April 2022. The work is projected to be completed shortly. The final report will include analysis of RBP data to identify potential causes of failures and nonresponses, an exploration of predictive models for RBP test outcomes, experimental analysis to investigate the use of different inoculum, and an investigation into alternative procedures to the standard RBP test.

#### ***How the benefits of applying compost and digestate to soils can be accounted for under the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol***

This project aims to demonstrate to compost producers and AD operators the benefits of engaging with the GHG Protocol and to provide guidance to operators on how to account for the production and application of compost and digestate under the GHG Protocol (more details [here](#)).

AECOM was appointed as the contractor and work commenced in June 2023. A final report is expected to be published in early 2024 and will include background info on the GHGP and relevant Standards and Guidance as well as a methodology for how operators can calculate the emissions associated with these products. In November, the Research Hub also hosted two workshops with AECOM, covering an overview of the GHGP and how to calculate a product carbon footprint for compost/digestate, respectively. These sessions are recorded and available for CCS/BCS Participants on request.

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approximately 5 million tonnes. Of the 103 plants, 75 were located in England, 7 in Northern Ireland, 13 in Scotland, and 8 in Wales. Out of the total number of certified plants, most produced certified whole digestate and 26 plants produced more than one type of certified output. In total, 56 plants were producing only certified whole digestate, 18 producing only certified separated liquor, and only three producing certified separated fibre alone.

The report can be read in full on the BCS website [here](#).

## BCS Blog

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REAL BCS' first blog is live on the new website.

Our first blog introduces the BCS Operators' Representative, a role shared between Jo Chapman, Compliance Coordinator at A.C. Shropshire Ltd, and Tom Brown, Compliance Manager at Andigestion Ltd who have both been in the industry for over 15 years. In this post, they were asked about their time in the role and the industry.

The blog platform provides a space for REAL to share useful or interesting stories, research and relevant work carried out by other organisations, with our scheme participants.

You can view the first blog [here](#).

## New Website

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REAL launched a new BCS website in September. The purpose of the recent upgrade was to modernise and refresh the website to make it easier to navigate and find information.

Enhancement of the website includes: a simpler interface, more

### ***Plastic contamination method assessment: Evaluating current mass-based method and possible alternative methods of assessment for plastics in compost and digestate***

This project aims to evaluate current plastic assessment methods for CCS and BCS and any potential improvements or alternatives to these methods. This includes an assessment of the current mass-based method sensitivity and robustness, consideration of an area-based method, and research into methods of assessment for microplastics (more details [here](#)).

Solidsense was appointed as the contractor and work commenced in June 2023. A final report is expected to be published in 2024.

### **Risk assessments updates for compost and digestate to inform Compost Quality Protocol and AD Quality Protocol revision (Phases One and Two)**

In July 2023, the Research Panel selected Phase 1 of this project (Risk Assessment to maintain the framework) as the main priority to be taken forward for Research Hub funding. Phase 2 of the project (Risk Assessment for digestate use in horticulture and soft landscapes) was agreed to be taken forward as a subsequent project, contingent on the completion of Phase 1.

Both projects aim to support the revision of the Compost- and AD Quality Protocols. REAL are awaiting the delivery of a scoping paper to initiate this work and look forward to getting started.

### **Other Developments**

- September 12th – 14th the Hub attended RAMIRAN, hosted at Cambridge University. Talks were attended to inform potential future Research Hub Projects; the Research Hub's work was presented, and its network expanded.
- The Research Hub website was updated in November 2023. It now contains more information on current projects and improvements to site navigability and content.
- We are considering hosting additional webinars in future to share the outcomes of Research Hub projects. Please let us know if you have any questions or thoughts on this.

More information about other compost-specific Hub projects can be found on the Hub website.

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relevant and appealing imagery, and an added feature for the introduction of a new blog providing space for relevant contributions from individuals or companies in the sector.

The new website can be accessed [here](#).

### **Workshops & Webinars**

REAL have held our first BCS Physical Contaminants & Stones Analyst Webinar for the Approved Laboratories. The BCS physical contaminant and stone (PC&S) method is labour intensive and require a high level of decision making in the identification and classification of PC&S fragments. As such, following a suggestion given in a previous WRAP report, REAL developed webinars for analysts to further give operators confidence in their results. The engagement was very positive, and REAL will be considering whether to hold further webinars or follow-up webinars going forward.

Additionally, following the successful BCS & CCS Regulators Webinars that REAL held for the NIEA and SEPA in summer, REAL held this webinar for the EA recently. The aims of these webinars are to introduce REAL and the schemes to Regulatory Officers, improve the awareness of the schemes amongst Regulatory Officers, and further open lines of communication between BCS, CCS, and the Regulatory Officers, which were strengthened during the pandemic with the introduction of remote auditing. REAL are working to schedule this webinar with the NRW for next year.

### **Participant & Research Hub Survey**

The annual Participant and Research Hub Survey was



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### Contact Us



+44 (0)207 981 0875



[www.biofertiliser.org.uk](http://www.biofertiliser.org.uk)



[info@realschemes.org.uk](mailto:info@realschemes.org.uk)

conducted in September. The results of this survey are used to assess scheme satisfaction, prioritise areas for further scheme development and to assess how producers use and interact with the Research Hub. There was a relatively low response rate of <5% on the scheme, but the feedback was overall very positive. REAL also received suggestions through the survey for future guidance topics and changes which could be introduced to forum meetings – these will be considered by REAL. Additionally, the survey sought feedback on guidance topics and engagement with the Research Hub, which revealed a positive view of the Hub and called for continued promotion.

Biofertiliser Certification Scheme is part of Renewable Energy Assurance Limited.  
Biofertiliser Certification Scheme, Brettenham House, 2-19 Lancaster Place, London WC2E 7EN  
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