



REAL'S CERTIFICATION SCHEME FOR QUALITY COMPOSITS

## CCS Newsletter August 2025



### CCS Producers' Forum and TAC

The CCS held a Producers' Forum on 15th May, welcoming several returning participants as well as new attendees.

At that time, discussion centred on key updates to the draft Compost Resource Framework (CRF), its expected publication timeline, and the implications for scheme participants and stakeholders. The EA was aiming for a June publication date for the CRF. CCS reported ongoing engagement with the EA on finalising the CRF. Concerns were raised regarding how the EoW criteria may affect compost storage infrastructure and downstream compliance.

The concern was that "end of waste achieved at point of dispatch" would cause problems for many compost producers trying to store material with no designated end user. This concern was also raised shortly after at the May TAC meeting by the forum representative. At the TAC, a representative from the EA provided additional contextual information regarding the point at which end of waste is achieved, and TAC members were asked to provide any further queries after reading the meeting minutes. TAC members were invited to submit any further questions following circulation of the meeting minutes.

Compost sample courier challenges were raised again. Attendees shared examples of inconsistent laboratory communications,

particularly regarding sample receipt notifications and the provision of interim reports. CCS affirmed its commitment to responding to these issues and informed the forum that guidance on depot drop-offs had been issued. An action from the March 2025 TAC was for CCS to continue exploring potential options for producers to take samples directly to a depot in order to avoid courier-related issues. Since then, CCS has discussed courier depot drop-off with the Approved Labs and published a guidance document explaining the process for scheme participants.

There was also discussion regarding the requirements for internal QMS auditing and associated training. CCS clarified the PAS100 (and PAS110) requirements and informed attendees of plans to further discuss the topic of QMS auditing with the certification bodies, sharing any further updates at the next forum. CCS is considering the creation of an internal QMS auditing training course either in-house or to refer to another organisation.

Other topics raised by forum attendees included disposable vapes in green waste, with participants noting it as a growing fire risk, prompting discussion of collection reforms and engagement with CIWM and the REA. However, it was concluded that this issue was prevalent far beyond the scope of the schemes and would require much greater reforms.

Another issue raised at the TAC was the difficulty that a Local Authority was facing regarding being unable to meet procurement rules, which typically require three quotes for laboratory services. With now only two Approved Labs under CCS, this has created procurement barriers.

With advice from the TAC, CCS is considering how best it can support producers working within strict procurement frameworks, to address this.

### Ad-hoc CRF Producers' Forum

Following the expectation of a June publication date, the EA later announced that the CRF would instead be published on 4th August, giving less than five weeks' notice to the scheme and its participants. In response, CCS held a dedicated Producers' Forum in late July, focused solely on the CRF changes and how these would be integrated into the schemes.

Attendees voiced significant concern regarding the lack of a transition period and the short notice period, along with the change to when compost achieves end-of-waste status (mentioned above). Scheme Participants also raised the issue of no transition time for bagged material referencing QP compliance or using the conformity mark that will have become obsolete with the publication of the new scheme rules. CCS responded that they would continue the discussion with the EA and would consider how best to implement the new conformity marks to avoid wasted packaging and promotional material.

Shortly after this Forum, the EA delayed publication of the CRF in order to resolve specific issues, including the above. A new publication date has not yet been confirmed.

### Labs Reappointed with New T&Cs

CCS is pleased to confirm that NRM and Eurofins were reappointed with the new 2025 Laboratory Terms and Conditions at the beginning of the year. These reappointments reflect each laboratory's ongoing commitment to quality and reliability in delivering scheme-approved testing services. The 2025 version of the Lab T&Cs can be found on the CCS website [here](#).

The number of laboratories approved under CCS decreased from three to two between 2024 and 2025. The schemes have been reaching out to new laboratories and are committing to increasing test capacity.

### Certification Body Tender

The tender process for CCS Certification Bodies (CBs) formally commenced in May 2025. A Tender Invitation Document was issued directly to all existing CBs and other organisations that expressed interest and was advertised via CCS's usual communication channels.

The process is expected to conclude in autumn, with new contracts awarded in winter 2025. All newly appointed CBs will be contracted from the start of 2026 and will be appointed for a three-year term. CCS will provide further details to scheme participants once the appointments have been confirmed.

### Annual Regulator Meetings

Every year, the CCS aims to have annual meetings with the four national regulators of the UK, the Environment Agency (EA), the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).

At the beginning of 2025, we had very productive meetings with the EA and SEPA. We then followed these up with a meeting with a productive meeting with NRW in July. In these meetings, we provided an update on the CCS, the latest from the Research Hub and the projects that are either underway or completed, and an update on the relevant policy areas (for example, discussions on an expected ban on the use of peat in horticulture). Looking at the NRW meeting in particular, we discussed their position on the ADRF and how the CCS can and will certify Compost following the publication of the ADRF. With the delay to this publication, we remain in conversation with NRW to stay up to date on their position.

Once these individual regulator meetings have concluded, we intend to host a meeting with all four national regulators together to go over the key topics raised in these meetings that would benefit from group discussion. This joint meeting is expected to happen towards the end of the year.

### CCS Research Hub

*Project 4: Plant Response Test Interpretation and Comparison: Investigating performance of the UK Tomato PRT and German Spring Barley Test on CCS Compost*

The Research Hub is in the process of evaluating the tenders received for the next phase of our important project on Plant Response Tests (PRTs). This project compares tomato and spring barley performance in CCS compost.

Once a contractor has been appointed, the upcoming phase of the project will involve statistical analysis of brand-new data on spring barley responses to CCS compost, as well as extensive existing data on tomato responses.

The aim of the project is to find out how spring barley performance compares with tomato performance in CCS compost. This may shed light on the reasons for tomato failure in CCS PRT tests.

For full project details, you can read the Tender Invitation Document (TID), [here](#).

*Project 7: Risk assessments updates for compost and digestate to inform Compost Quality Protocol and AD Quality Protocol revision*

This project aims to provide up-to-date information on the relevant risks associated with compost and digestate to inform the revision of the EA's Resource Frameworks.

WSP was appointed as the contractor for this project in March, and since then the project team has completed a rapid evidence assessment, and with the Steering Group, has identified the hazards to be taken forward for Risk Assessment.

'Exposure scenarios' are in development, which will be completed for all the hazard groups identified, and these scenarios will be used to characterise the risk in each case to human, animal and plant health. The project is scheduled for completion in November 2025.

*Project 10: Alternative control growing media for REAL CCS plant response tests*

The current REAL Compost Certification Scheme (CCS) plant response test (PRT) compares the growth of tomato plants in a 'control' peat medium against a mixed medium of peat and 'test' compost sample.

In light of changes in planning requirements for peat extraction, the purpose of this project is to evaluate and test alternative control growing media for use in the CCS PRTs.

RSK ADAS were appointed as the contractor for this project, and work began in June 2025. Since then, the project team has been working with the Steering Group to agree the test methodology and to finalise the list of peat alternatives for evaluation.

### Project Selection 2025

The Research Hub received 5 project proposals this year. Schemes Participants were invited to feed back on the proposals via the annual Survey, which closed on 13th June. Participants' responses informed the 'shortlist' for funding, which took place in June and July.

During the summer meetings, the Research Panel shortlisted two proposals. The panel will meet again in the autumn to make the final decision on which project to take forward.

### Contact Us

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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

#### Eurofins

+44 1902 955300

#### NRM

+44 (0)1344 886338

### Courier Depot Drop-off Guidance

A new guidance document on courier depot drop-offs, designed to support producers in ensuring timely and compliant sample deliveries was published on the CCS website. It explains how scheme participants can deliver samples to courier depots directly; to increase producer control over their own samples. Available [here](#).

### Certification Codes Visual Guide

A new visual guide on locating certification codes, designed to support producers in completing analysis request forms accurately has been published on the CCS website. It explains where to find both your PR number and your certification codes on the latest versions of certificates issued by different certification bodies. Available [here](#).

### Lab Application Form

An updated Laboratory Application Form, reflecting the current test methods used under the scheme was released. The latest version of the application form can be found on the CCS website [here](#).

### Annual Report 2024

CCS published its eighth annual report offering a detailed overview of scheme activity and key developments across 2024.

The report highlights continued resilience and engagement from the composting sector, with a total of 175 certified composting processes in operation across the UK and Republic of Ireland by year-end. The geographical breakdown reveals 134 processes in England, 21 in Scotland, 13 in Wales, 8 in Northern Ireland, and 1 in the Republic of Ireland.

Alongside CCS updates, the report includes a summary of the Biofertiliser Certification Scheme's progress over the past year, as well as the 2024 Research Hub Annual Report, which provides updates on funded projects and emerging research themes.

We encourage all participants and stakeholders to explore the document, which captures the year's developments, as well as the ongoing efforts to support robust, evidence-based certification across the sector. Available [here](#).

### Test Method Revision Working Group

The Test Method Revision Working Group is meeting in June 2025 at the REAL Office.

London, with online participation for other attendees. The group brings together a broad range of stakeholders from CCS, approved laboratories, and environmental regulators to support the continued improvement of analytical methods used within the CCS and BCS.

The meeting focused on the Phyto Contaminants and Sludge (PO&S) test methods, reviewing current methods, identifying areas for evaluating evidence for potential improvements. The Terms of Reference for the group were agreed, and participants began planning the methodology improvements that will be further reviewed at the next meeting, scheduled for September 2025.

These ongoing discussions aim to ensure method consistency, reliability, and alignment with the intentions of the PAS limits and test methods.

### CRF Publication Delayed

The EA has announced a further delay to the publication of the CRF, which was scheduled to be published on 4th August 2025.

The delay has been introduced to address the point at which waste material meets 'end-of-waste' criteria. As highlighted in both the recent CCS Producers' Forum meetings, scheme participants had raised significant concerns about the revised End of Waste point, particularly how the change from 'receipt of a passing PAS 100 result' to 'point of dispatch to end user' would impact participants storing unsold material.

This follows extensive feedback from both REA and CCS and their members and participants respectively regarding the practical challenges that would arise from the proposed changes, especially given the lack of a transition period.

At present, we do not have further information on the timing of this delay or whether other aspects of the CRF will be revised. CCS will remain in active dialogue with the EA to ensure that when the CRF is eventually published, it is workable for scheme participants.

We will continue to keep participants informed as more information becomes available. In the meantime, current Quality Protocols remain in effect.

For any questions regarding the CRF, please contact our policy manager at [duncan@realsschemes.org.uk](mailto:duncan@realsschemes.org.uk). If you have any questions regarding CCS operations, you are welcome to email our schemes manager [oliver@realsschemes.org.uk](mailto:oliver@realsschemes.org.uk), or talk to your CB.

### Circular Economy Taskforce

In November 2024, the Circular Economy Taskforce was established as an independent expert advisory group to support the government in creating a circular economy strategy for England. There are five key workstreams they are focusing on, which include:

- Agri-food
- Chemicals and plastics
- Construction
- Textiles
- Transport

The CCS has met with members of the Taskforce and the Agri-food group in particular where we reinforced the importance of quality standards and certifications to provide confidence and trust in products derived from waste. We hope to have further conversations and to continue contributing to this work given its importance to the CCS as well as the wider organics industry.

The circular economy strategy is scheduled for publication towards the end of 2025.

### Other Policy Updates

The first phase of the Simpler Recycling reforms was rolled out on the 31st March 2025, but only for non-municipal households, such as businesses, hospitals and schools among others. They are required to have collected their food waste, dry recycling and residual waste separately.

For domestic households, this won't be a requirement until the 31st March 2026, though it is still important to understand what is required to be prepared to comply when this date comes around to ensure that the right materials are placed in the right bin.

Work is being done on preparing CCS for this roll-out and to ensure that the scheme is well prepared for this transition.

The CCS has started the initial steps to setting up the process to revise PAS 100. This work is

months to 2 years. PAS 100 was last reviewed in 2018, so the changes will be significant.

There have been several reviews of the standard since then, including the 2020 review.

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