



Compost  
Certification Scheme



# Minutes for the CCS & BCS Spring 2025 TAC

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2025, Online

## Attendees

Stephen Nortcliff (SN), Chair

Colin Millar (CM), NIEA

Georgia Phetmanh (GP), REAL

Jo Chapman (JC), BCS Operators'  
Representative

Thomas Aspray (TA), REAL

Roy Lawford (RL), OF&G

Oliver Dunn (OD), REAL

David Roberts (DR), NSF

Duncan Craig (DC), REAL

Nicholas John (NJ), ACL

Justyna Staff (JS), REAL

Fiona Donaldson (FD), SEPA

Gregor Keenan (GK), CCS Producers'  
Representative

Charlotte Nott (CN), NFU

Simon Thorpe (ST), Red Tractor

Sarah Pitcher (SP), Laboratories Representative

## Welcome and apologies

SN welcomed all attendees and noted apologies from Dan Pursglove (Environment Agency) who was unable to attend due to illness, and Alison McKinnie, who joined 15 minutes later. SN introduced Charlotte Nott from NFU, covering for Philipa Arnold during maternity leave, and attendees introduced themselves. DR mentioned that Robert Evans was leaving full-time employment for NSF but would remain involved as an independent consultant.

## Update from REAL

### CCS/BCS Updates

OD provided an update on scheme status:

BCS – There were 108 certified AD processes, processing 5.8 million tonnes of input material, and producing over 5 million tonnes of digestate annually. 79 based in England, 12 in Scotland, 9 in Wales, and 8 in Northern Ireland. New participants included two new certificates: one in Scotland and one in England. One applicant from England was awaiting certification. There were no current suspensions. Two sites had withdrawn, one due to prolonged maintenance and the other due to permanent closure.

CCS – There were 173 certified composting processes, processing 4.1 million tonnes of input material, and producing over 2 million tonnes of compost annually. 133 based in England, 20 in Scotland, 13 in Wales, 6 in Northern Ireland, and 1 in the Republic of Ireland. Since the last TAC meeting, there were no new applicants or withdrawals, and no suspensions.

### Annual Report 2024

OD announced the completion of the CCS, BCS, and Research Hub Annual Report 2024, noting that the report was finalised earlier than in previous years, allowing for its publication prior to the REA's ORG

Conference. OD acknowledged contributions from the Certification Bodies, GP, Virginia Graham, SN, and DC, whose efforts resulted in a detailed and insightful report.

#### Lab Appointment and D&F Withdrawal

OD confirmed the reappointment of NRM and Eurofins, both of whom successfully passed their Laboratory Audits and will continue to work as the approved labs for both the BCS and CCS in 2025. OD also notified the group that D&F have withdrawn from the scheme as of 14th March, concluding their testing work. OD noted that the final two tests conducted by D&F were being concluded and results would be available shortly; with the completion of these tests and reporting of the results, D&F will have concluded their approval under the Compost Certification Scheme.

#### Lab Applicants

GP reported that a BCS lab application was progressing, and a second lab had expressed interest in applying for BCS and possibly CCS. Initial discussions with these labs indicated likely approval by the end of the year, pending successful initial assessments.

#### Laboratory T&Cs Revision

TA summarised the revisions to the Laboratory T&Cs, noting a tightening of language referring to requirements around laboratory staff awareness of the schemes, internal audits, and proficiency testing. The changes ensure a level playing field for UKAS and non-UKAS labs, with non-UKAS labs now required to participate in PTE proficiency testing.

#### RBP Project Proposal

TA provided an update on a new RBP project proposal submitted to the Research Hub, focusing on reviewing the suitability of the 5-day gas production period and exploring the possibility of reducing the test duration below 28 days. Referencing the Research Hub RBP test method report, SN highlighted that previous work had raised further questions, which justified revisiting the project.

#### **Research Hub Updates**

JS reported on Research Hub updates, noting that Megan Muller-Girard had left in January, and a new appointee was expected to start in April. The role had been redefined to focus more on stakeholder engagement and less on the project management of Research Hub projects.

JS summarised four project proposals received: 1) Biochar as an additive for compost and AD processes, 2) Contamination in biowaste streams, 3) Pre-fermentation (Bokashi) for process stability and reduced process time, and 4) Residual biogas potential test duration and quality criteria review.

SN commented that in some earlier rounds, proposals had been numerous but lacked the detail and quality seen in recent submissions and so saw this as a change for the better.

JS highlighted that, in 2024, there was a very dynamic discussion to decide which projects to take forward. Although the usual practice was to approve one per year, three were selected in 2024:

- The PRT project, which involves three phases: sampling, testing, and analysis/interpretation.
- The risk assessment project, originally selected in 2023, took more time to align with the QP revision. A company had been appointed, and work was expected to begin the following week.

- The End of Waste for digestate project, stemming from QP revision discussions, was nearing the appointment of a contractor after an evaluation meeting held two weeks prior.
- The alternative growing media project was in the final stages of the tender process.

JS noted that a project to assess the impact of reduced screen size on digestate quality had not received any tenders, and REAL was considering whether to retender or reassess the need for the project.

### Resource Framework Update

In the absence of the EA, DC provided an update on discussions with the EA regarding the Resource Frameworks. While the final drafts were not yet available, discussions on the publication processes and timelines were ongoing. A webinar for scheme participants was being planned, and internal stakeholder engagement was also under consideration.

GK queried the status of a particular waste code, covering fleshings and other tannery waste, as they had been approached regarding this waste stream. DC clarified that while it was not included, the reasoning would need to be addressed by Kathy or Dan. FD added that this waste code validity would be decided by SEPA and that it was likely removed due to a lack of use of this code, and that GK could continue this conversation with FD, and they could discuss adding the waste code back.

GP confirmed that discussions with UKAS, CBs, and the EA were ongoing to ensure scheme rules and audit checklists were updated in preparation for RF implementation. The EA had confirmed that no transition period would be granted following publication, although there was an agreement to provide at least 6 weeks' notice prior to publication.

### Update from the Certification Bodies

RL reported that OF&G had no complaints or major updates.

DR noted that NSF had no significant changes, apart from Rob Evans stepping down.

NJ reported that ACL had no complaints or major updates.

### Update from the Approved Laboratories

SP highlighted that both NRM and Eurofins were continuing mercury testing with no subcontracting arrangements. NRM's original ICP instrument was operational, and validation of a new instrument was underway. Eurofins' voluntary accreditation status reinstatement timeline remained uncertain.

### AOB

SN invited final comments.

CM highlighted the importance of robust documentation regarding land application complaints and independent sampling. Concerns about over-application and regulatory inconsistencies between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland were noted.

SN closed the meeting at 12:30 pm.

### Actions

- CCS/BCS to send 2024 annual report to TAC when finalised and published

- CCS/BCS to check back on notes from previous QP webinars held with the REA to identify if reasons for removing certain waste inputs from the RFs were shared, and send to GK if so
- CCS/BCS to ensure that NRW and NIEA positions on the RFs are included in the comms for producers around the RFs, and the updated scheme rules
- CCS/BCS to share final RFs and RPS' with producers when provided by the EA prior to publication
- GP to check back on discussions with GK and one of the approved labs regarding concerns over the services provided by that lab
- TAC members to consider volunteering to join project management teams assembled for specific Research Hub projects
- JC to raise any NI-specific queries with CM at NIEA directly by email if not yet answered