EQual - Ensuring Quality of waste-derived products to achieve resource efficiency

About EQual
EQual is an innovative demonstration programme, supported by LIFE+ and seven key partner organisations, which will encourage the appropriate use of waste-derived products. It will achieve this by providing tools, techniques and information to improve decision-making, and increase confidence in waste-derived products that meet end of waste status.

The Environment Agency are leading the programme with six partners who are, Rijkswaterstaat- the Netherlands’ Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, The Chartered Institution of Wastes Management, Organics Recycling Group, Environmental Services Association, Northern Ireland Environment Agency and Energy UK.

Understanding the importance of end of waste
Using waste appropriately in new products is beneficial for using resources more efficiently and reducing the burden on landfill. There are often barriers to this through poor perception of the potential value of waste, so we need to make good end of waste decisions.

End of waste status is where a material made from waste has reached a stage where it is no longer considered to be waste. This is important to businesses and other organisations as they may need to hold environmental permits and follow other waste controls if they are dealing with waste. If the material is not a waste, it may be easier for them to use it in their own business or market it as a product to their customers. This can also help use resources more efficiently, reducing costs and the demand for raw materials.

All assessments to consider end of waste status are based on Article 6 of the revised Waste Framework Directive (Directive 2008/98/EC) – this includes product specification as appropriate, environmental and human health impacts and whether there is a market for the waste derived product. There are two ways through which a waste can be shown to have achieved end of waste status:

1. **End of waste test** – requirements that waste producers must satisfy in order to demonstrate their product has ceased to be waste. These include: assessing the environmental impact of the waste derived product; whether it meets a recognised standard; and is a marketable product. Quality Protocols are available in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and provide businesses with a voluntary framework they can use to demonstrate that these requirements have been met. Quality Protocols are available for a number of common waste streams. Businesses can also ask their waste regulator for a view on whether their product has met the end of waste requirements.

2. **End of waste regulations** (currently only available for iron, steel and aluminium scrap metal) - published by the European Commission under the Waste Framework Directive, sets out certain specific technical criteria and standards that must be met in order for the scrap to achieve end of waste.
How EQual will help
There are three main deliverables from the EQual programme:

- A web tool for the end of waste test
- A separate web tool for assessing compliance with existing Quality Protocols and European end of waste regulations
- Field trials to assess the environmental risks of using four waste derived products

Through the programme we aim to build confidence in waste derived products; make the process of assessing the status of the material more efficient, and ultimately support waste producers to use resources more wisely.

Over the next three years we will work with a wide range of stakeholders including trade associations, waste producers, waste management companies and regulators in Europe to deliver these benefits.

For further information about the EQual Programme please contact: equal@environment-agency.gov.uk
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