

*Alexander Maddan outlines his priorities as the new chair of the Organics Recycling Group*

# UNDERSTANDING VALUE

**I am honoured to follow in Mike Orr's footsteps as the Organics Recycling Group's chairman. Mike has delivered a very strong platform from which the ORG can continue to flourish. He chaired AfOR through some challenging times, during which we saw a significant increase in sector regulatory pressure and a strategically important trade body merger that the AfOR membership strongly endorsed.**

I would like to thank Mike for his huge contribution to our sector over the last two years.

Picking up from where Mike left off, my aspiration during my time as Chairman will be to make the work of our members better understood within government, within the various bodies that regulate our industry, and within the communities in which we operate. If successful, that will lead to policy from government which is more appropriate, regulation which is consistently and proportionately applied, and improved relations with local communities. This will not be easy, and will require us to "raise our game" as an industry. This is not as it should be.

It is important, for example, that our sector should be recognised for the huge contribution it makes to our country. Not only do we account for nearly 40% of the UK's total recycling, but we also manage to deliver this difficult service at very low cost. Our gate fees are often as little as a third of those offered for processing other wastes. We take in a feedstock that varies in quality each day – and in quantity each month. It has the propensity to generate odour and is covered by a raft of detailed and evolving regulation such as ABPR, PAS 100/110, NVZs, and Health and Safety to mention just a few. The cost and challenge of compliance has risen each year that I have been in the industry. That is not going to change any time soon.



We need to get better at explaining to government, local authorities, the private sector, and the regulators what we do. We must help Government to recognise the scale of recycling the organics sector accounts for and must lobby for their support. We must help local authorities to appreciate that good composting operations cost money and that tenders that weight price over quality can lead to unintended consequences. We must help regulators to understand that we are not simply sorting and baling a product; but running highly complex biological operations with multiple challenges which require a flexible response based on an understanding of

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composting and digestion processes.

By helping all of our stakeholders to understand the value that we deliver, and the practical challenges that our industry addresses on behalf of our clients each day, we will hopefully be able to address the issue of tumbling gate fees which undermines the sector's ability to invest to deliver higher standards. Raising the profitability of our members is critical if we are to meet the changing expectations of the communities in which we operate.

Operating from within the REA, we are now much stronger as a trade body. We are able to bring our technical expertise in organic wastes. The REA brings access to knowledge, experience and expertise of 9 other REA sector groups. This is invaluable to our members who are interested in the emerging world of renewable energy, as many of you are. It is a natural merger to have taken place and will assist our sector membership into a growing market where many of our members have established synergies. We have many exciting challenges ahead of us and I look forward to working with you in respect of these. 