

1 **The Impact of Enhanced and Non-Enhanced Biochars on the Catabolism of**  
2 **<sup>14</sup>C-Phenanthrene in Soil**

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## 21 **Abstract**

22 Biochar is a by-product from the pyrolysis of biomass and has a great potential in soil  
23 amendment due to its carbon and nutrient-rich properties. The aim of this study was  
24 to investigate the impact of increasing amounts (0, 0.01, 0.1, 0.2, 0.5 and 1.0%) of  
25 two types of biochar (so-called enhanced and non-enhanced) to soil on the  
26 biodegradation of <sup>14</sup>C-phenanthrene. Enhanced biochar contains inoculants which  
27 are designed to potentially stimulate microbial activity and promote biological  
28 function in soil. After 100 d of incubation, the addition of 0.5% and 1% enhanced  
29 (EBioC) and non-enhanced biochars (NEbioC) led to longer lag phases, reduced  
30 rates and extents of <sup>14</sup>C-phenanthrene in amended soil. However, in soils amended  
31 with 0.01%, 0.1% and 0.2% amendments, extents of mineralisation of <sup>14</sup>C-  
32 phenanthrene increased and were found to be higher in the EBioC- as compared to  
33 the NEbioC-amended soils. Increasing soil-phenanthrene contact time also  
34 increased <sup>14</sup>C-phenanthrene mineralisation in soil which had received smaller  
35 amounts of EBioC. Application of both EBioC and NEbioC also enriched the soil  
36 microbial populations during the incubation. However, it was found that  
37 phenanthrene-degrading microbial populations declined as soil contact time  
38 increased; this was particularly true for soils receiving larger amounts of due to  
39 reduction in the mobile/bioaccessible fraction of the phenanthrene in soil. The  
40 findings revealed the importance of the type and amount of biochar that may be  
41 added to soil to stimulate or enhance organic contaminant biodegradation.

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43 **Keywords** — Enhanced biochar; non-enhanced biochar; phenanthrene;  
44 mineralization; soil-PAH contact time

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## 46 **1. Introduction**

47       The degree and impact of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in soil  
48 pollution resulting from oil spills, especially from production and exploration activities  
49 (Obida et al., 2018), and other anthropogenic sources (Simon and Sobieraj, 2006);  
50 pose great threats to human health and the environment. These organic  
51 contaminants are known to be carcinogenic and mutagenic in nature (Dong et al.,  
52 2012). Microbial degradation is one of the most important mechanisms for removing  
53 these contaminants from soil, but the rate and extent of removal is dependent on the  
54 chemical and physical properties of the contaminant (Semple et al., 2007; Simon and  
55 Sobieraj, 2006; Xie et al., 2015) as well the soil properties which include nutrient  
56 availability, temperature, moisture, presence and activity of the target degrading  
57 microorganisms, bioavailable fraction of the contaminant to the degrading microbes,  
58 and heterogeneity of the soils (organic matter and mineral fractions) and their  
59 associated pore structures (Okere and Semple, 2012; Riding et al., 2013; Semple et  
60 al., 2013; Umeh et al., 2017). The heterogeneous nature of organic matter and  
61 mineral fractions in soil, in part, determines the sorption-desorption mechanisms of  
62 contaminants within the soil matrix (Umeh et al., 2017). These properties have  
63 contributed to a large extent to the hydrophobicity, lipophilicity, solubility, soil-water  
64 partition coefficient ( $K_d$ ), persistence, mass transfer, mobility, bioaccessibility and  
65 biodegradation of the organic contaminants in soil (Abdel-Shafy and Mansour, 2016;  
66 Ghosal et al., 2016). In the case of PAHs, increases in the number of fused benzene  
67 rings will also increase the persistence as higher molecular weight PAHs are less  
68 biodegradable in soil (Couling et al., 2010; Abdel-Shafy and Mansour, 2016).

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70 The application of microbial degradation for the clean up contaminated soils is  
71 called bioremediation, which depends on the intrinsic role of microbes and their  
72 metabolic enzymes to metabolize chemicals down to less toxic metabolites or to  
73 CO<sub>2</sub>. However, using biodegradation as a tool to remediate contaminated soils is  
74 often too slow to reduce associated risk to acceptable levels; therefore, interventions  
75 are often required to speed up the process (Xu et al., 2018). Recent reports show  
76 that several studies have been carried out to enhance the remediation of  
77 contaminated soil but present several challenges, including low nutrients and  
78 contaminant bioavailability, a reduction in soil microbial activity and a low  
79 degradative potential by the indigenous microbes involved in the biodegradation  
80 process (Bisht et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2016; Kong et al., 2018). It is therefore  
81 imperative that the use of nutritional and biological enrichments to contaminated  
82 soils should be done through economically viable and environmentally sustainable  
83 approaches.

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85 One approach to enhancing bioremediation involves the addition of biomass-  
86 derived materials to contaminated soil. Organic materials, such as biochars, may  
87 offer a low cost, carbon- and nutrient-rich biomass amendment for stimulating and/or  
88 enhancing biodegradation of PAHs in contaminated soil. Biochars are pyrolytic  
89 products from organic feedstocks under zero or low-oxygen concentrations at  
90 different temperatures of 250°C –1000°C (Kuśmierz et al., 2016; Kumar et al., 2018).  
91 Studies have shown that these carbonaceous and sorbent materials improved soil  
92 physicochemical properties (structure, stability, pH, water holding capacity, nutrients,  
93 carbon energy (Anyika et al., 2015); adsorb and retain nitrogen form (NH<sub>4</sub><sup>+</sup>) in soil  
94 (Gai et al., 2014), while stimulating microbial activity, growth and composition

95 (Galitskaya et al., 2016), as well as changes in the microbial community structure in  
96 soil (Zhang et al., 2018). Additionally, biochar not only influences the oxygen level in  
97 soil but also supports aerobic and anaerobic biodegradation (Anyika et al., 2015),  
98 especially when used at low dose in biochar-treated soil. Apart from improving  
99 microbial activity, the sorptive properties of biochar gives an additional benefit of  
100 trapping contaminant in soil.

101

102 The sorptive properties of biochars have been widely studied, however few  
103 studies have also reported their biodegradative potential for PAHs in soils, owing to  
104 their stimulation for substrate bioavailability for microbial degradation through the  
105 formation of microhabitat (bacteria and fungi) for actively growing autochthonous soil  
106 microflora through electrostatic attraction and attachment to biochar's porous  
107 surfaces (Anyika et al., 2015; Ogbonnaya et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2018). For  
108 example, a recent study showed that microbe-biochar interaction enhanced mass  
109 transfer of PAHs (making the contaminant more bioavailable) to immobilized cells,  
110 thus resulting to higher PAH degradation when compared to un-inoculated biochar in  
111 a sorbent-amended system (Xiong et al., 2017). Although the claims of the  
112 effectiveness of using biochar to improve bioremediation, its impact on soil  
113 bioremediation, depends on the concentration of the contaminant, soil conditions,  
114 active sites, types and properties of the biochar (Jones et al., 2012; Yuan et al.,  
115 2019). Biochars have been widely studied as a soil conditioner and immobilized  
116 carriers particularly for the biodegradation and management of soil remediation.  
117 However, the effects of biochar types (enhanced biochar and non-enhanced biochar)  
118 and application rate to soil for optimum PAHs metabolism have not been studied  
119 extensively.

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121 The main objectives of this research study were (i) to investigate the impact of  
122 biochars (enhanced and non-enhanced) on the catabolic potential in soil on <sup>14</sup>C-  
123 phenanthrene mineralisation (a model PAH compound) over time; (ii) to determine  
124 the effects of increasing amounts of both biochars on the mineralisation of <sup>14</sup>C-  
125 phenanthrene in soil over time, and (iii) to estimate changes in microbial numbers in  
126 biochar-amended and phenanthrene-spiked soil.

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## 129 **2. Materials and Methods**

### 130 *2.1 Soil and Biochar*

131 The surface agricultural soil (5–20 cm depth) used for this study was collected  
132 from Myerscough Agricultural College, Preston, United Kingdom. After transferring to  
133 the laboratory, soil samples were air-dried, homogenized, sieved through a 2mm  
134 mesh and thereafter, stored in the dark until use. Information on the soil  
135 characteristics are presented in Table S1 (Couling et al., 2010). Processed biochars,  
136 microbially enhanced (EbioC) and non-enhanced (NEbioC), were collected from a  
137 biochar processing plant, Lancaster, UK. Biochars were produced from combined  
138 lignocellulosic feedstocks (virgin wood and agricultural residues) by slow pyrolysis at  
139 a high temperature of 500°C for 4 h under a low oxygen atmosphere in a muffle  
140 furnace. Some information on the physical and chemical properties of the biochars  
141 are presented in Table 1. After production, some pyrolyzed biochars were cultured  
142 (enriched) with mixed microbial inoculants: the arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi *such as*  
143 *Glomus* spp (> 450 propagules/g), *Ascophyllum nodosum* and *Trichoderma* spp  
144 (>1x10<sup>9</sup> CFU/g), as well as wormcasts. Biological amendments were prepared and

145 immobilized (physically attached) onto the biochar surface by spraying onto the  
146 material, thereby producing the enhanced biochar. Both biochars were specifically  
147 produced for agricultural purposes as soil conditioners to provide required nutrients  
148 and to improve soil biological function for plant growth.

149

### 150 *2.1. Biochar doses and soil amendment conditions*

151 EbioC and NEbioC were amended to soil at different amounts: 0.0%, 0.01%,  
152 0.1%, 0.2%, 0.5% and 1% (dry weight basis) per total mass of soil. The above doses  
153 were amended into the soil to evaluate the potential of each rate to stimulate  
154 microbial activities and optimal phenanthrene biodegradation. Soil moisture content  
155 (25% on dry matter basis) and pH (7.4 – 7.5) after soil-biochar amendments were  
156 monitored and maintained throughout the study period.

157

### 158 *2.2. Soil spiking and Incubation conditions*

159 Sieved and homogenized soil was spiked with <sup>12</sup>C-phenanthrene (100 mg/kg) to  
160 give a final concentration of 240 mg/kg; and soil spiking was done according to  
161 'Bolus methodology' (Doick et al., 2003). Briefly, the whole soil sample was divided  
162 into four portions; one proportion (approx. 525 g) was spiked with <sup>12</sup>C-phenanthrene  
163 using acetone as the carrier solvent. This was closely followed by blending the  
164 remaining three equal parts of the soil, and afterward, allow to vent for 4hrs (in a  
165 fume cupboard) to evaporate acetone (Lee et al., 2003). This was done after  
166 rehydration with sterile water based on the water holding capacity (WHC) of soil (55  
167 wt%), while maintaining 25% MC, however. The soil was then amended with  
168 different amounts of EbioC and NEbioC: 0.0%, 0.01%, 0.1%, 0.2%, 0.5% and 1%  
169 (w/w). All biochar-amended soil samples were prevented from photo-oxidation by

170 storage in air-tight separate amber glass bottles and further incubated in the dark at  
171  $21 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$  for 0, 25, 50, 75 and 100 days. Triplicate mixtures were placed in an air-  
172 tight amber glass bottle for each condition and allowed to weather in the dark at  $21 \pm$   
173  $2^\circ\text{C}$  for 1, 25, 50, 75 and 100 days. Control (non-amended) soils were also incubated  
174 alongside with amended soils.

175

### 176 *2.3. Mineralisation assay in biochar-amended soils*

177       Respirometry assay was carried out to determine the catabolic evolution ( $^{14}\text{C}$ -  
178 phenanthrene to  $^{14}\text{CO}_2$ ) from both biochars-amended soil according to standard  
179 methods (Reid et al., 2001; Semple et al., 2006). Briefly, the mineralisation of  $^{14}\text{C}$ -  
180 phenanthrene was monitored in soil microcosms by weighing  $10 \pm 0.1$  g (dry weight)  
181 from soil-biochar mixtures into 30 ml of sterile distilled water in 250 ml Scott bottles  
182 (Teflon-lined screw cap). Thereafter, the slurry was spiked with  $^{14}\text{C}$ -radiolabelled  
183 phenanthrene standard (0.5 kBq per respirometer bottle) and incubated at 100 rpm  
184 on a flat-bed orbital shaker at  $21 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ . Additionally, each bottle contained a  $\text{CO}_2$   
185 trap (7 ml vial) with 1 M NaOH and monitored bihourly for 1 d and then regularly for  
186 24 hrs during an 18 d incubation period. Sampling was done at every time point (1,  
187 25, 50, 75 and 100 d) for biochar-amended soils. Catabolic response in biochar-  
188 treated soils were assessed at each sampling period through the lag phases (when  
189 mineralisation reached 5%), the fastest rates of  $^{14}\text{CO}_2$  evolved (expressed also as  
190 the maximum rate of  $^{14}\text{CO}_2$  production) within 1 d in amended soils, and the total  
191 extents of  $^{14}\text{C}$ -phenanthrene mineralisation after 18 d (Macleod and Semple, 2006).

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### 194 *2.4. Microbial enumeration analyses*



195 Spread plate method was used to enumerate the total heterotrophs and  
196 phenanthrene degraders in biochar-amended soil (Okere and Semple, 2012;  
197 (Anyanwu and Semple, 2016). A 10-fold serial dilution was done by weighing  $1 \pm$   
198 0.01 g of biochar-amended soil in 9 ml of Ringer's solution ( $\frac{1}{4}$  strength). An aliquot  
199 was further transferred into appropriate plates. The plate count agar (PCA)  
200 supplemented with an antimicrobial agent (streptomycin-penicillin-glutamic, 8  $\mu$ l/ml)  
201 and, amphotericin-B (5  $\mu$ l/ml) added to potato dextrose agar (PDA) were used for  
202 enumeration of heterotrophic bacteria and fungi, respectively. Phenanthrene  
203 degraders (bacteria and fungi) were counted in minimal basal salt (MBS) media  
204 (Vázquez-Cuevas et al., 2018) incorporated with 0.05 mg/ml of  $^{14}$ C-phenanthrene  
205 (as sole carbon source) and supplemented with appropriate antimicrobials (bacteria  
206 and fungi). Microbial numbers were quantified and presented in CFUs/g<sub>dw</sub> soil.

207

## 208 *2.5. Statistical analysis*

209 The biochar-amended experiments in this study were carried out in triplicates.  
210 The data were analysed on Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS  
211 Version 23.0). All amended soils were analysed using one-way analysis of variance  
212 (ANOVA) at 95% confidence level ( $p < 0.05$ ) to determine the least significant  
213 difference (LSD). To test for the effects of both biochars and amounts in  
214 phenanthrene-spiked soils, comparison of means within and across time points were  
215 analysed using Tukey's Post-Hoc and Games-Howell test to ascertain differences in  
216 biochar-treated soils. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was  
217 performed to describe the relationship between microbial numbers with the rate and  
218 extent of  $^{14}$ C-phenanthrene mineralised in biochar-treated soils. The value of  $r$  is

219 ranked on a scale between +1 and –1 as clearly described elsewhere (Omoni et al.,  
220 2020).

221

222

### 223 **3. Results**

#### 224 *3.1. Mineralisation of <sup>14</sup>C-phenanthrene in biochar-amended soils*

225 The impacts of both biochars (EbioC and NEbioC) on the mineralisation of <sup>14</sup>C-  
226 phenanthrene in soil were studied with varied amounts of biochar (0.0%, 0.01%,  
227 0.1%, 0.2%, 0.5% and 1%) during 18 d soil respirometry after 1, 25, 50, 75 and 100  
228 d of soil-PAH contact time (Fig. 1 and 2; Table 2 and 3). The lag phase represents  
229 the time taken to reach 5% mineralisation. The lag phases behaviour in the two  
230 treatment soils, EbioC and NEbioC were not obviously different from the non-treated  
231 soils in most time points throughout the study. Soil amended with EbioC produced  
232 shorter lag periods when compared to their counterpart soil (NEbioC). The shortest  
233 lag phase of  $0.46 \pm 0.00$  d and  $0.63 \pm 0.00$  d were achieved in the 0.1% EbioC and  
234 NEbioC-amended soils, respectively. On the other hand, the longest lag phase of  
235  $8.37 \pm 0.01$  d and  $8.86 \pm 0.03$  d were achieved in the 0.01% EbioC and NEbioC-  
236 amended soils, respectively. However, after 1 d soil-PAH contact time, the biochar  
237 types showed significantly longer lag phases in all amended soils. The larger  
238 application doses (0.5 and 1.0%) displayed shorter lag phases compared to other  
239 treatments and control (0%). This trend was not consistent following further soil  
240 ageing, for example, the application doses (0.5 and 1.0%) for both EbioC and  
241 NEbioC greatly extended the length of the lag phase (50 > 75 > 100 d) ( $p < 0.01$ ).  
242 However, in comparison to 1 d soil-PAH contact time, biochar application doses  
243 (0.01, 0.1, 0.2, 0.1 & 1.0%) after 25 d ageing period, displayed reductions in lag

244 phases with these orders of magnitude starting from the lowest to highest amount of  
245 EbioC (16 > 15 > 14 > 13 > 7-fold) and NEbioC (12 > 11 > 10 > 9 > 8-fold) (Table 2  
246 and 3). Generally, EbioC (0.1 & 0.2%) consistently reduced the lag phases ( $p <$   
247 0.001) compared to other biochar dosages and unamended soil (control) throughout  
248 the study period; while soil amended with the NEbioC did not display any similar  
249 trend in amended soils (Table 2). Noticeably, the lag phases in the non-amended  
250 (control) soil were significantly shorter ( $p < 0.05$ ) than those soils receiving 0.5 and  
251 1.0% amendments for the NEbioC.

252

253 As observed for the lag phases, the addition of EbioC resulted in faster rates of  
254  $^{14}\text{C}$ -phenanthrene mineralisation than those observed in the NEbioC incubations  
255 (Tables 2 and 3). In addition, the fastest rates of mineralisation in both EbioC and  
256 NEbioC-amended soils were generally higher in the soils that had received the  
257 smaller amounts of biochar (0.1, 0.2 & 0.01%) and in more aged soils (1 d to 100 d).  
258 However, in 1 d aged soils containing 1% EbioC biochar, there was a significantly  
259 increase in the fastest rates of mineralisation compared to other soil amendments  
260 and control (Table 2). However, there were no significant changes ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the  
261 1% EbioC biochar from this point onward throughout the incubation. There were  
262 significantly faster rates of mineralisation ( $p < 0.001$ ) observed in 0.1% EbioC-  
263 (2.29%/d) and NEbioC- (1.24%/d) amended soils compared to the other soil  
264 conditions (Table 2 and 3). Further, in soils with no biochar amendment, significantly  
265 faster rates of mineralisation were found at most time points compared to the  
266 NEbioC-amended soils.

267

268 As soil contact time increased in the biochar-amended soils, there were  
269 commensurate increases in the fastest rates of  $^{14}\text{C}$ -phenanthrene mineralisation,  
270 especially in soils receiving smaller amounts (0.01, 0.1 & 0.2%) of biochar.  
271 Interestingly, the results for EbioC-amended soils showed that the lower amounts of  
272 biochar (0.01, 0.1 & 0.2%) resulted in increases the fastest rates of  $^{14}\text{CO}_2$   
273 mineralised by 80.7%, 83.4% and 79.4%, after 25 d, respectively, compared to 1-day  
274 soil-PAH contact time ( $p < 0.001$ ). Similarly, the results also showed significant  
275 increases in fastest rates for 0.01, 0.1 and 0.2% biochar after 75-d (64.2, 21.1 and  
276 38.8%) and 100 d (76.1, 68.1 and 82.2%) incubations when compared to 1-d soil  
277 incubation. Correspondingly, the fastest rates of mineralisation were found at 75 d  
278 for all NEbioC-amended soils; showing higher rates of 75.6% and 58.1% increases  
279 for 0.01 and 0.1% amendments, respectively, compared to 1-d incubation. However,  
280 in this investigation, when compared to both biochar-treated soils, the non-amended  
281 (0%) soil consistently showed increases in the fastest rates of mineralisation ( $p <$   
282  $0.001$ ) as soil-phenanthrene contact time increased: 51.8%, 67.1%, 82.1% and  
283 71.3% after 1, 25, 50 and 100 d, respectively.

284

285 The effects of the catabolic potential of both EbioC and NEbioC and their  
286 respective dosage application to phenanthrene-spiked soil on the total extent of  $^{14}\text{C}$ -  
287 phenanthrene mineralisation were also monitored (Figs. 1 and 2; Tables 2 and 3).  
288 Results indicate that soils amended with 0.1% and 0.2% amounts of biochar showed  
289 the highest extent of  $^{14}\text{C}$ -phenanthrene mineralisation (45.6% and 32.57%), while the  
290 lowest were recorded for 1.0% (24.71% and 23.01%) with EbioC and NEbioC ( $p <$   
291  $0.001$ ), respectively. At the first time point (1 d), EbioC (0.1%) generally showed  
292 considerably higher extents of mineralisation within and across treatments and

293 control ( $p < 0.001$ ) and over the rest of the incubation period. A similar trend was  
294 observed for soils with NEbioC amendments, but these were not significantly  
295 different from 0.01% biochar amendment ( $p > 0.05$ ). Furthermore, after 75 and 100 d  
296 soil-PAH contact time, the total extents of mineralisation significantly increased in the  
297 0.1% (29.3 and 20.5%) and 0.2% (27.9 and 32.26%) EbioC-amended to soils  
298 respectively, when compared to 1 d aging period. Greater amounts of biochar  
299 amendment (0.5 and 1.0%) did not significantly increase ( $p < 0.05$ ) the total extents  
300 of  $^{14}\text{C}$ -phenanthrene mineralisation throughout the study for either the EbioC or the  
301 NEbioC soil amendments. In general, the presence of the NEbioC-biochar in PAH-  
302 spiked soil did not influence the total extents of mineralisation positively compared to  
303 EbioC; the exception being in the soils receiving smaller biochar amendments (0.01  
304 and 0.1%).

305

### 306 *3.2. Microbial enumeration in biochar-amended soil*

#### 307 *3.2.1 Bacterial numbers*

308 Soil amendment with biochar (EbioC and NEbioC) significantly increased the  
309 total heterotrophic bacterial number at all time points ( $p < 0.05$  and  $0.001$ ), as  
310 compared to control (Tables 2 and 3). Further, EbioC-amended soils consistently  
311 displayed similar patterns that could be represented in the order of increasing  
312 heterotrophic bacterial number (50 > 75 > 100 > 25 > 1) ( $p < 0.001$ ) compared to  
313 NEbioC-amended soil. The heterotrophic bacterial numbers were also significantly  
314 influenced by 0.1% biochar addition than all other soil amendment conditions (EbioC  
315 and NEbioC), including the unamended soil ( $p < 0.05$ ).

316

317 Similarly, the addition of both biochars to phenanthrene-spiked soil statistically  
318 increased the number of phenanthrene degrading bacteria (CFUs g<sup>-1</sup> soil) in all soil  
319 conditions compared to control (unamended) throughout the study (Tables 2 and 3).  
320 Increasing the soil contact time with PAH also significantly influenced ( $p < 0.05$ ) the  
321 CFUs in EbioC and NEbioC-amended soils; although these numbers were not  
322 consistent in NEbioC-amended soil. The number of phenanthrene-degrading  
323 bacteria for both biochar types in amended soils with lower amounts (0.01, 0.1 and  
324 0.2%) presented much higher CFUs as compared to the higher biochar amended  
325 soils (0.5 and 1.0%) and control soil ( $p > 0.05$ ). Comparatively, after 1 day, EbioC  
326 (0.1 and 0.2%) behaved differently in soil with 32 and 26-fold and 32, 16 and 19-fold  
327 increase in phenanthrene-degrading bacterial numbers at 50-day, respectively, when  
328 compared to other amendment conditions and incubation period. Similarly, the  
329 numbers of phenanthrene degraders in the NEbioC-amended soils resulted in 32, 16  
330 and 19-fold increase in amended soil (0.01, 0.1 and 0.2%), respectively.  
331 Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, most contact points did not significantly stimulate  
332 increases in the numbers of phenanthrene degraders ( $p > 0.05$ ) when amended with  
333 higher amounts of biochar (0.5 and 1.0%) in both soil amendments (EbioC and  
334 NEbioC).

335

336 From the data, the number of phenanthrene degraders showed a moderately  
337 positive linear correlation ( $r = 0.55$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and moderately negative correlation ( $r =$   
338  $-0.63$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) with total extent of <sup>14</sup>C-phenanthrene mineralisation for 0.2% and  
339 1.0% of EbioC-amended soils, respectively. Also, a negative correlation for 0.1% ( $r =$   
340  $-0.54$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and 0.2% ( $r = -0.64$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) between phenanthrene-degraders and  
341 total extent of mineralisation for NEbioC were observed, for the respective

342 application doses (Fig. S1). Phenanthrene-degraders displayed a significantly strong  
343 but negative correlation ( $r = -0.72, p < 0.01$ ) with fastest rates of  $^{14}\text{C}$ -phenanthrene  
344 mineralised in 1.0% NEbioC-amended soil; whilst the number of  $^{14}\text{C}$ -phenanthrene  
345 degraders observed in 0.1% and 0.5% showed a significant, but negative  
346 correlations ( $r = -0.52, p < 0.05$  and  $r = -0.66, p < 0.05$ ) with fastest rates of  
347 mineralisation, respectively (Fig. S3).

348

### 349 3.2.2 Fungal numbers

350 Overall, the numbers of phenanthrene-degrading fungi were inconsistent within  
351 and across biochar-amended soils over time (Tables 2 and 3). The total fungal  
352 numbers (TFCs) were significantly higher in the control soils compared to soils  
353 amended with biochar at 50 d of exposure. However, this trend changed as both  
354 biochar types added to soils significantly resulted in higher TFC after a longer  
355 contact (75 to 100 days), resulting in a significant decreasing order of magnitude  
356 ( $1.0\% < 0.5\% < 0.2\% < 0.1\% < 0.01\%$ ). Phenanthrene-degrading fungi recorded the  
357 highest CFUs ( $7.97 \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1} \text{ soil dw}$ ) in 0.2% NEbioC-amendment after 25 d of  
358 incubation. However, significant numbers of phenanthrene degrading fungi were also  
359 recorded in soils amended with biochar (0.01% and 0.1%) compared to other  
360 amendment conditions. A significant positive correlation was recorded between the  
361 phenanthrene degraders with both fastest rates ( $r = 0.80, p < 0.000$ ) and total  
362 extents ( $r = 0.52, p < 0.05$ ) of  $^{14}\text{C}$ -phenanthrene mineralised in 0.2% EbioC-  
363 amended soil, while 0.1% negatively correlated with both fastest rates ( $r = 0.82, p <$   
364  $0.000$ ) and total extents ( $r = 0.60, p < 0.05$ ) of mineralisation in amended soils (Fig.  
365 S2). Finally, NEbioC-amended soils with 0.01% and 1.0% amounts of biochar  
366 showed strong positive correlations ( $r = 0.72, p < 0.01$  and  $r = 0.83, p < 0.01$ )

367 between  $^{14}\text{C}$ -phenanthrene-degraders and total extents of  $^{14}\text{C}$ -phenanthrene  
368 mineralisation, respectively (Fig. S4).

369

370

## 371 **4. Discussion**

### 372 *4.1. Effects of enhanced and non-enhanced biochar on $^{14}\text{C}$ -phenanthrene*

#### 373 *mineralisation*

374

375 Addition of EbioC to PAH contaminated soil increased microbial activity and  
376 greatly impacted on  $^{14}\text{C}$ -phenanthrene mineralisation when compared to NEbioC-  
377 amended soils, which was even more evident following increases in soil-  
378 phenanthrene contact time. This may be due to more bioaccessible fractions of the  
379 sorbed-PAH substrate on the immobilised biochar surface for biodegradation  
380 (Uyttebroek et al., 2006; Zhang et al., 2018), thus resulting in an increase in soil  
381 metabolic activity. Further, Xiong et al. (2017) showed that biochar incorporated into  
382 soil provided a protective niche allowing for higher metabolic activities and increases  
383 in the concentration gradients between sorbed-PAH on biochar surfaces and contact  
384 with microbial cell surfaces over shorter distances. Similarly, Galitskaya et al. (2016)  
385 also observed higher PAH fluxes and stimulated biodegradation in amended soil with  
386 biochar. Mass transfer of PAHs to degrading cells in a biochar-amended soil could  
387 be facilitated by dissolved and solid sorbing matrices for PAH degradation (Xiong et  
388 al., 2017).

389

390 The addition of external nutrient supplies and organic materials to soil would  
391 influence the indices of quantifying biodegradation, such as lag phases, fastest rates



392 and overall extents of organic contaminant biodegradation (Jablonowski et al., 2013;  
393 Oyelami et al., 2013; Ogbonnaya et al., 2016). In this current study, the immobilised  
394 inoculum on the EbioC could have provided an additional support for the indigenous  
395 microbial population than NEbioC which led to shorter lag phases, increases in  
396 fastest rates and extents of <sup>14</sup>C-phenanthrene mineralisation in amended soil. The  
397 biological carrier materials (EbioC) can accelerate nutrient uptake and release,  
398 improved oxygen and water holding capacity and support metabolic activities and  
399 processes in soil rhizosphere (Yakhin et al., 2017; Drobek et al., 2019), thereby  
400 indicating their efficacies in nutrient stimulatory action in a poor contaminated or  
401 polluted agricultural soil.

402

403 Analysis of our results showed shorter lag phases, faster rates and greater  
404 extents of mineralisation in the lower biochar doses (0.1% > 0.2% > 0.01%) of both  
405 biochar type in amended soils; however, this was more pronounced in EbioC -  
406 amended soils. Although, both biochar-amended soils showed significantly extended  
407 lag phases after 1 d soil incubation, increasing soil-PAH contact time (25 d onward),  
408 the lower biochar amendments (0.1% > 0.2% > 0.01%) impacted on the lag phases,  
409 rates and extents of phenanthrene biodegradation in soil. This can be attributed to  
410 the fraction of the phenanthrene that is rapidly desorbable or present in the aqueous  
411 biochar amended soil phase, which is accessible to microbial cells and their  
412 catabolic apparatus (Ogbonnaya et al., 2014; Rhodes et al., 2010).

413

414 The fastest rates of <sup>14</sup>C-phenanthrene mineralisation depended on the amounts  
415 of biochar-amended to soil. Smaller amounts of biochar increased the rates of  
416 mineralisation in comparison to the larger amendments over time in both biochar

417 types. Similarly, Ogbonnaya et al. (2014) also reported reductions in rates of  
418 phenanthrene catabolism in soils which had received large amounts (1%) of wood-  
419 derived biochar. It has been reported that properties such as porosity, contaminant  
420 concentration and physico-chemical properties, organic matter content, cation  
421 exchange capacity, soil contact time, soil properties, microbial activity, diversity and  
422 dynamics may all influence rates of mineralisation of organic contaminants in soil  
423 (Semple et al., 2003; Ogbonnaya et al., 2013). It is worthy of note that faster rates of  
424 mineralisation were measured in soils receiving the EbioC-amendment compared to  
425 the NEbioC-amended soils. This clearly indicates the potential of the inoculants in  
426 stimulating microbial activity and contaminant catabolism in soil, in particular.

427

428       The application of larger amounts (1.0% > 0.5%) of both biochar types reduced  
429 <sup>14</sup>C-mineralisation in soil. Even though biochar has been reported to have intrinsic  
430 ability to biodegrade organic contaminants (Anyika et al., 2015), the sorptive  
431 properties of black carbon, including biochars, can reduce mass transfer and  
432 bioaccessibility of PAHs to soil microorganisms (Rhodes et al., 2008; 2012; Anyika et  
433 al., 2015; Ogbonnaya et al., 2016). This further suggests the likely effect that is seen  
434 in this investigation occurs in soils with higher biochar amendments. Biochar type  
435 (quantity and quality), dose, and application conditions have also been reported  
436 previously as some determining factors which govern the degree of sequestration of  
437 PAHs in biochar-amended soil (Sopeña, et al., 2012; Galitskaya et al., 2016; Xiong  
438 et al., 2017). For example, in this current study, biochar was prepared at a higher  
439 temperature (~500 °C), which could have increase aromaticity, owing to associated  
440 higher surface area and lower cation-exchange capacity (Anyika et al., 2015),

441 suggesting a greater sorptive effect of PAHs to surfaces as observed for larger  
442 biochar amendments reported here (0.5 and 1.0%).

443

444 *4.2. Influence of microbial numbers on the mineralisation of <sup>14</sup>C-phenanthrene in*  
445 *biochar-amended soil*

446

447 Soil amended with biochar can influence the abundance, diversity, and  
448 distribution of soil microbial communities, owing to changes in their biological,  
449 physical and chemical properties which might also lead to an increase/decrease in  
450 soil microbial biomass, the minerals content and organics in soil (Awad et al., 2018).  
451 The data obtained in this study revealed stimulated microbial numbers (both bacteria  
452 and fungi) in EbioC-amended soils over time. Particularly, it was also found that the  
453 lower amendments (0.01, 0.1 & 0.2%) of EbioC added to soil increase the bacterial  
454 and fungal CFUs (heterotrophs and phenanthrene-degraders); whereas the 0.5%  
455 and 1.0% biochar amendments resulted in lower CFUs especially from 50 d to 100 d  
456 in NEbioC-amended soils. The numbers measured in the lower amendments are  
457 likely be due to increasing metabolic rates, as seen in the fastest rates of <sup>14</sup>C-  
458 phenanthrene mineralisation, bioavailable nutrients, lower microbial community  
459 disruption and lower water vapour isotherms as a result of reduced soil organic  
460 matter (Peake et al., 2014). Soil minerals and organic matter can sorb and bind to  
461 biochar surfaces, thus creating more and potentially stronger sorption sites in the  
462 biochar for organic contaminants (Semple et al., 2007; Ogbonnaya and Semple,  
463 2013). It may be hypothesised that the phenanthrene may have been more strongly  
464 sorbed to the soil-biochar complex in the soils which received larger amendments of  
465 0.5 and 1.0%. This may have caused a slower or irreversible desorption of the PAH

466 or rapidly depleted desorbable fractions of the contaminant over time (50 -100 d) for  
467 microbial uptake and biodegradation (Rhodes et al., 2008; 2012). For example,  
468 Rhodes et al. (2012) noticed a 7.8-fold decrease in rapidly ( $\%F_{rap}$ ) and a  
469 corresponding increase in slowly ( $\%F_{slow}$ ) desorbing fractions of phenanthrene in  
470 soils receiving larger amount of black carbon (a form of pyrolyzed carbon) and with  
471 increase soil contact time (1 d to 100 d). Further, Rhodes et al. (2012) found that  
472 there were 50% reductions in the rates of  $^{14}C$ -phenanthrene mineralised with  
473 increasing amount of black carbon from 0 to 5% after 20 d soil-PAH contact time.  
474 Therefore, it can be suggested that the greater amounts of biochar increased the  
475 number of microporous sites for contaminant sorption in biochar-amended soils.  
476 Generally, the biochar increased the total numbers of heterotrophs (bacteria and  
477 fungi) but caused a decrease in phenanthrene degraders, suggesting reduced  
478 bioaccessibility/desorbable (biodegradable) fractions of the PAH studied, which is  
479 important for the growth, proliferation and contaminant uptake and metabolism by  
480 the PAH-degraders in soil.

481

482 It has been concluded that the biodegradation of PAHs in contaminated soil  
483 occurs through the actions of microbial consortia rather than by a single microbial  
484 population, although this depends on their catabolic potential and enzymes for  
485 substrates sequestration (Oyelami et al., 2013; Gupta et al., 2016). In this present  
486 study, significant negative correlations were observed between phenanthrene  
487 degraders and mineralisation (rates and extents) for most biochar amendments to  
488 the soil. This may be as a result of either the microbes are not synthesizing the  
489 required enzymes for the target contaminant (however, this was not measured) or  
490 they were partially or fortuitously metabolizing the phenanthrene in the presence of

491 non-target carbon substrate (in this case, the biochar) (Namkoong et al., 2002; Das  
492 et al., 2011). However, phenanthrene-degrading microorganisms quantified in 0.2%  
493 of EbioC and NEbioC positively correlated with rates and extents of mineralisation,  
494 respectively; while 0.01% and 1.0% doses also showed a positive correlation  
495 between phenanthrene-degrading fungi and rates of mineralisation for NEbioC-  
496 amended soils only. Such correlations could explain the effects and behaviour of  
497 different amounts of biochar in the amended soils (Khorram et al., 2016). Therefore,  
498 the presence of PAH degrading populations may not be too adequate to indicate the  
499 degradation of a contaminant in soil but their high CFUs could contribute to the  
500 extent of PAH degradation and provide also useful information on the degradability  
501 of the contaminant by indigenous microorganisms in soils.

502

#### 503 **4. Conclusions**

504 The overall findings in this study show that EbioC amendments stimulated the  
505 mineralisation of <sup>14</sup>C-phenanthrene in soils to greater levels than the NEbioC  
506 amendments. Biochar application and soil-contaminant contact time influenced the  
507 lag phase, rates and extents of <sup>14</sup>C-phenanthrene mineralised, which were  
508 particularly evident in the lower amendments (0.1%, 0.2%, 0.01%) in both types of  
509 biochar. Enhanced and non-enhanced wood-derived biochars influenced the  
510 microbial numbers and catabolic activity in phenanthrene contaminated soil.  
511 Phenanthrene-degrading microbial populations markedly reduce with increased  
512 biochar-soil contact time and in soils receiving higher amounts of biochar. The  
513 findings reported here show that smaller amounts of biochar caused increases in  
514 fastest rates and extents of <sup>14</sup>C-phenanthrene mineralisation, especially with the  
515 enhanced biochar. The reduced rates and extents of <sup>14</sup>C-phenanthrene

516 mineralisation found in the soil receiving larger amounts (0.5 and 1.0%) of biochar  
517 are likely to be attributed to increase in the number of sites for contaminant sorption  
518 in soil-biochar complexes, thus reducing the bioavailability/bioaccessibility of the  
519 target contaminant. Therefore, larger amounts of biochar may well inhibit the  
520 removal of organic contaminants from the soil. However, both situations have the  
521 potential to reduce the risk associated with PAHs, either through loss by stimulating  
522 biodegradation or by reducing the PAH mobility and/or bioaccessibility in soil.

523

524

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528

529

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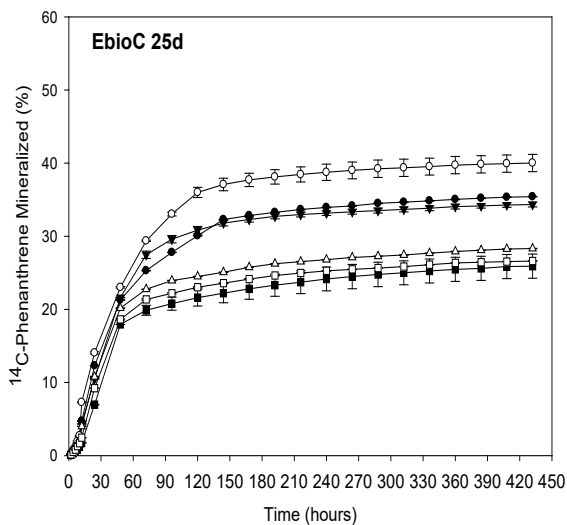
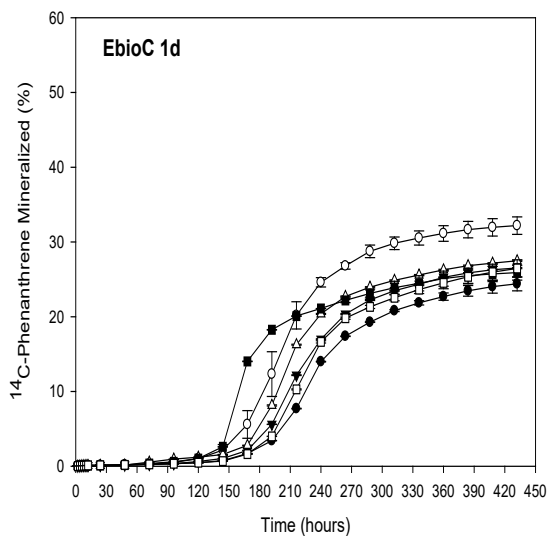
724 **Figure Legends**

725 **Figure 1.** Evolution of  $^{14}\text{CO}_2$  from the catabolism of  $^{14}\text{C}$ -phenanthrene in soil  
726 (100mg/kg) amended with enhanced biochar at 0.01% (●), 0.10% (○), 0.20% (▼),  
727 0.50% (Δ), 1% (■) and Control (□) after 1, 25, 50d soil-phenanthrene contact time.  
728 Standard error of mineralisation (SEM) are represented as triplicate samples (n = 3).

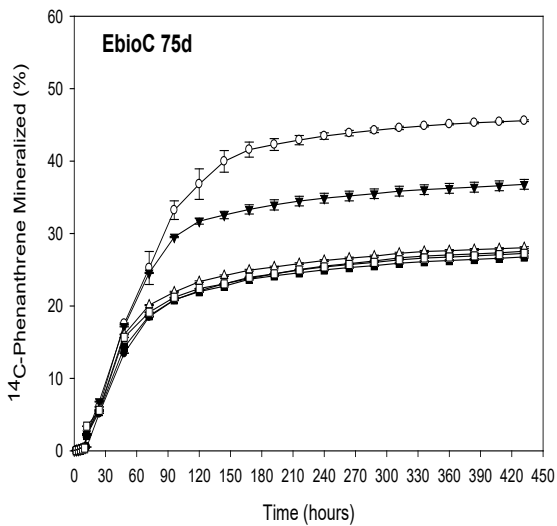
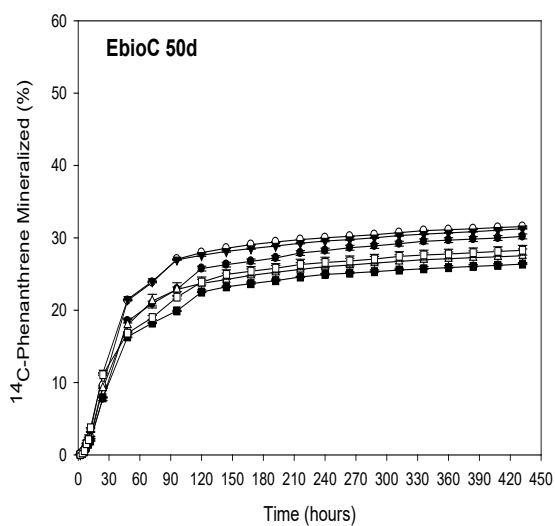
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730 **Figure 2.** Evolution of  $^{14}\text{CO}_2$  from the catabolism of  $^{14}\text{C}$ -phenanthrene in soil  
731 (100mg/kg) amended with non-enhanced biochar at 0.01% (●), 0.10% (○), 0.20%  
732 (▼), 0.50% (Δ), 1% (■) and Control (□) after 1, 25, 50d soil-phenanthrene contact  
733 time. Standard error of mineralisation (SEM) are represented as triplicate samples (n  
734 = 3).

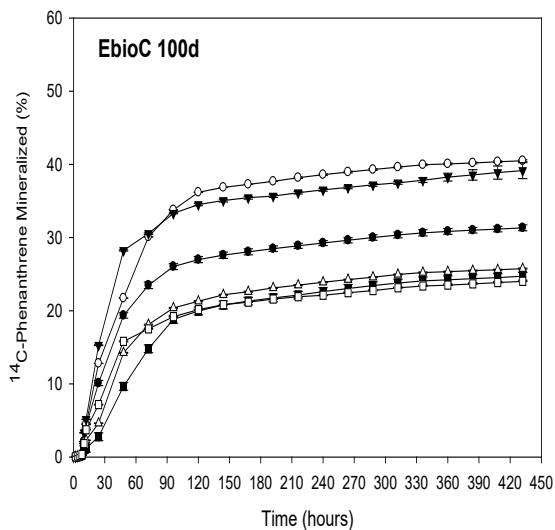
735 **Figure 1**



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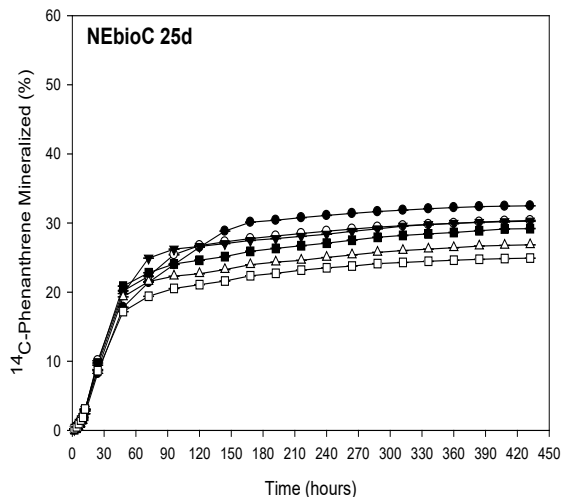
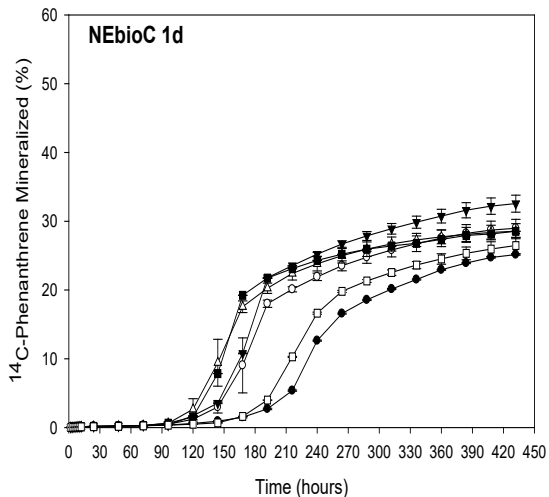
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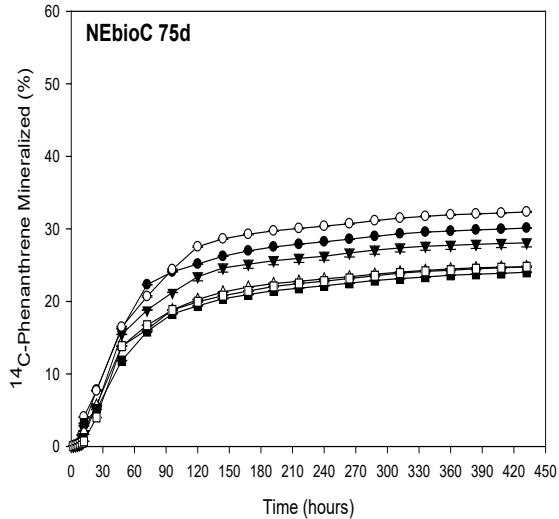
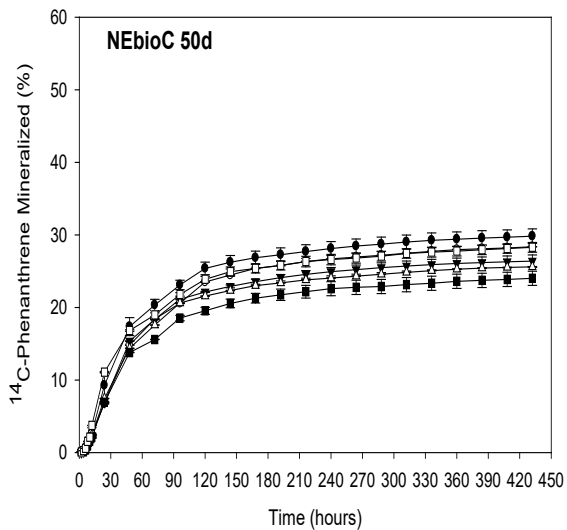
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**Figure 2**

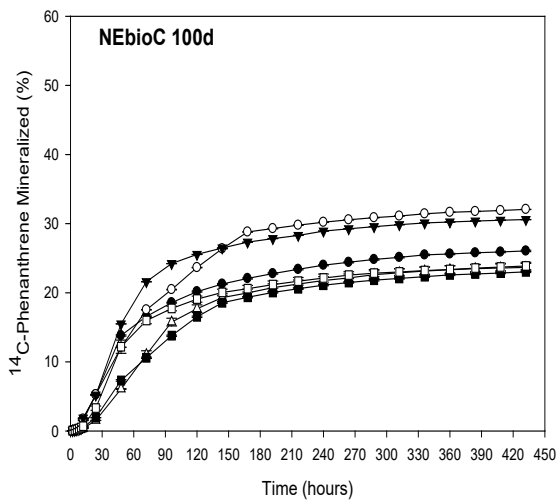




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743 **Table Legends**

744

745 **Table 1.** Physical and chemical properties of biochars used in the experiment

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747 **Table 2.** Catabolic and autochthonous microbial number profile (CFU/g) of <sup>14</sup>C-  
748 phenanthrene mineralisation in soil amended with varying amounts of **enhanced**  
749 biochar. Values are mean ± standard error (n = 3).

750

751 **Table 3.** Catabolic and autochthonous microbial number profile (CFU/g) of <sup>14</sup>C-  
752 phenanthrene mineralisation in soil amended with varying amounts of **non-**  
753 **enhanced** biochar. Values are mean ± standard error (n = 3).

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769 Table 1. Physical and chemical properties of the biochars used in the experiment

Parameters analyzed	Enhanced Biochar	Non-enhanced biochar	Instruments used and methodologies described
pH	8.6	9.0	pH meter (Jenway model 3504 Bench combined) ( <b>Li et al., 2013</b> )
EC ( $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ )	1136	498	Conductivity meter (Jenway model 3504 Bench combined), ( <b>Li et al., 2013</b> )
TC (%)	50.4	78.2	Schimadzu TOC-L analyser ( <b>Siudek et al., 2015</b> )
Total N (dry wt) (% dry)	1.15	1.55	Elemental analyser (Vario EL III CHNOS, Hanau, Germany), ( <b>Wilke, 2010</b> )
NH <sub>4</sub> -N (%)	0.12	0.032	Autoanalyzer model 3HR (AAR 3HR), ( <b>Haney et al., 2008</b> ).
Ash (%)	35.6	14	Fisher Isotemp 650 Model 58 Programmable Muffle Furnace ( <b>Domingues et al., 2017</b> ).
Total solids (%)	85.1	66.6	Thermophilic oven (Genlab, UK), ( <b>Marmioli et al., 2018</b> )
Total P (%)	0.10	0.045	Spectrophotometer ( <b>Limwikran et al., 2019</b> )
Mineral components (wt %)			Inductively coupled plasma spectrometry (ICS-MS, PerkinElmer NexION 2000 ( <b>Limwikran et al., 2019</b> ))
Total Ca	5.85	5.17	
Total Mg	0.23	0.17	
Total K	0.72	0.56	
Total Na	0.12	0.015	
Total B	0.002	0.002	
Total Fe	0.27	0.012	
Total Mn	0.009	0.002	
Total Al	0.19	0.015	
Total S	0.14	0.041	
Total Mo	-	-	
Total Cl	0.084	0.019	
Total Cu	-	-	
Total Zn	0.002	-	

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771 \* EC = electrical conductivity, TC = Total carbon, NH<sub>4</sub>-N (ammonium-nitrogen), P = phosphorus, Ca =calcium, Mg = magnesium, K = potassium, Na =

772 sodium, B = boron, Fe = iron, Mn = manganese, Al = aluminium, S = sulphur, Mo = molybdenum, Cl = chlorine, Cu = copper, Zn = zinc

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775Table 2. Catabolic and autochthonous microbial number profile (CFU/g) of <sup>14</sup>C-phenanthrene mineralisation in soil amended with varying amounts of enhanced biochar. Values are mean ± standard error (n = 3).

Soil-PAH aging (d)	Amended amounts	Lag phase (d)	Fastest rates (/d)	Total Extent (%)	Bacteria		Fungi	
					Total Heterotrophs CFU x 10 <sup>7</sup> g <sup>-1</sup> soil dw	PAH degraders	Total Heterotrophs CFU x 10 <sup>4</sup> g <sup>-1</sup> soil dw	PAH degraders
1	0	8.16 ± 0.00	0.27 ± 0.00	26.47 ± 0.16	1.66 ± 0.03	0.93 ± 0.02	4.33 ± 0.12	2.13 ± 0.09
	0.01	8.37 ± 0.01	0.26 ± 0.00	24.40 ± 0.94	0.97 ± 0.02	0.83 ± 0.01	2.30 ± 0.12	3.07 ± 0.03
	0.1	7.22 ± 0.01	0.38 ± 0.00	32.20 ± 1.17	1.72 ± 0.03	0.94 ± 0.02	1.87 ± 0.09	3.23 ± 0.12
	0.2	7.82 ± 0.00	0.27 ± 0.00	26.52 ± 0.08	1.43 ± 0.02	0.87 ± 0.02	1.97 ± 0.09	2.23 ± 0.03
	0.5	7.41 ± 0.01	0.34 ± 0.00	27.50 ± 0.08	1.23 ± 0.03	0.59 ± 0.01	2.67 ± 0.12	2.27 ± 0.03
	1	6.21 ± 0.00	0.48 ± 0.00	25.91 ± 0.99	1.17 ± 0.02	1.09 ± 0.01	3.27 ± 0.15	2.93 ± 0.03
25	0	0.69 ± 0.00	0.56 ± 0.00	26.61 ± 0.03	7.17 ± 0.15	0.98 ± 0.01	4.77 ± 0.07	7.40 ± 0.10
	0.01	0.52 ± 0.00	1.35 ± 0.00	35.42 ± 0.05	12.4 ± 0.27	1.20 ± 0.01	2.40 ± 0.06	3.33 ± 0.12
	0.1	0.46 ± 0.00	2.29 ± 0.00	40.20 ± 1.18	19.0 ± 0.35	1.47 ± 0.02	2.40 ± 0.10	2.33 ± 0.07
	0.2	0.55 ± 0.00	1.31 ± 0.00	34.34 ± 0.50	14.3 ± 0.21	1.23 ± 0.01	2.37 ± 0.03	3.47 ± 0.09
	0.5	0.57 ± 0.00	1.15 ± 0.00	28.33 ± 0.02	14.9 ± 0.31	0.77 ± 0.01	5.17 ± 0.09	4.17 ± 0.09
	1	0.81 ± 0.00	0.46 ± 0.00	25.91 ± 1.65	14.6 ± 0.35	1.29 ± 0.02	4.07 ± 0.03	6.10 ± 0.06
50	0	0.59 ± 0.00	0.82 ± 0.00	28.29 ± 0.09	18.1 ± 0.15	2.95 ± 0.03	10.3 ± 0.22	6.12 ± 0.26
	0.01	0.75 ± 0.01	0.47 ± 0.01	30.20 ± 0.34	75.1 ± 0.42	28.2 ± 0.93	3.54 ± 0.19	4.09 ± 0.17
	0.1	0.67 ± 0.00	0.58 ± 0.00	31.56 ± 0.08	38.8 ± 0.42	31.0 ± 0.44	4.22 ± 0.26	3.80 ± 0.15
	0.2	0.61 ± 0.00	0.68 ± 0.02	31.26 ± 0.05	83.1 ± 1.12	23.4 ± 0.42	3.16 ± 0.15	3.04 ± 0.13
	0.5	0.70 ± 0.00	0.58 ± 0.00	27.53 ± 0.94	73.0 ± 0.84	3.44 ± 0.02	5.15 ± 0.30	4.39 ± 0.11
	1	0.76 ± 0.00	0.50 ± 0.00	26.38 ± 0.67	61.6 ± 1.12	3.64 ± 0.02	4.47 ± 0.33	3.63 ± 0.04
75	0	0.87 ± 0.00	1.51 ± 0.00	27.26 ± 0.06	15.4 ± 0.08	2.34 ± 0.02	3.38 ± 0.04	2.93 ± 0.07
	0.01	0.98 ± 0.00	0.39 ± 0.00	27.55 ± 0.04	56.1 ± 1.52	3.61 ± 0.01	5.06 ± 0.07	3.37 ± 0.07
	0.1	0.86 ± 0.00	0.94 ± 0.02	45.56 ± 0.16	88.2 ± 1.84	15.5 ± 0.22	6.14 ± 0.11	3.10 ± 0.12
	0.2	0.80 ± 0.00	0.93 ± 0.03	36.79 ± 0.67	53.2 ± 1.93	11.5 ± 0.23	5.27 ± 0.15	2.33 ± 0.07
	0.5	0.90 ± 0.01	0.90 ± 0.00	28.05 ± 0.05	42.2 ± 1.52	3.33 ± 0.02	4.18 ± 0.15	1.97 ± 0.09
	1	0.93 ± 0.01	0.92 ± 0.03	26.76 ± 0.03	43.9 ± 2.95	2.35 ± 0.01	4.09 ± 0.15	2.57 ± 0.12
100	0	0.69 ± 0.04	0.94 ± 0.00	24.02 ± 0.04	1.57 ± 0.02	2.94 ± 0.03	0.35 ± 0.00	2.91 ± 0.15
	0.01	0.53 ± 0.01	1.09 ± 0.04	31.30 ± 0.42	28.7 ± 0.19	20.8 ± 0.30	8.23 ± 0.15	3.21 ± 0.21
	0.1	0.52 ± 0.00	1.19 ± 0.04	40.50 ± 1.09	29.7 ± 0.37	22.8 ± 0.34	14.1 ± 0.13	2.74 ± 0.04
	0.2	0.49 ± 0.00	1.52 ± 0.02	39.15 ± 0.11	18.8 ± 0.15	29.4 ± 0.32	9.37 ± 0.26	3.54 ± 0.13
	0.5	1.08 ± 0.01	0.93 ± 0.00	25.75 ± 0.07	17.7 ± 0.11	3.16 ± 0.01	3.00 ± 0.21	2.83 ± 0.15
	1	1.27 ± 0.01	0.49 ± 0.00	24.71 ± 0.53	17.2 ± 0.38	18.9 ± 0.11	3.42 ± 0.26	1.94 ± 0.04

776

777 Table 3. Catabolic and autochthonous microbial number profile (CFU/g) of <sup>14</sup>C-phenanthrene mineralisation in soil amended with varying amounts of non-  
 778 enhanced biochar. Values are mean ± standard error (n = 3).

Soil-PAH aging (d)	Amended amounts	Lag phase (d)	Fastest rates (/d)	Total Extent (%)	Bacteria		Fungi	
					Total Heterotrophs CFU x 10 <sup>7</sup> g <sup>-1</sup> soil dw	PAH degraders	Total Heterotrophs CFU x 10 <sup>4</sup> g <sup>-1</sup> soil dw	PAH degraders
1	0	8.16 ± 0.00	0.27 ± 0.00	26.47 ± 0.13	0.66 ± 0.01	0.93 ± 0.01	4.33 ± 0.12	2.13 ± 0.09
	0.01	8.86 ± 0.04	0.30 ± 0.00	25.15 ± 0.09	1.10 ± 0.01	0.92 ± 0.01	2.30 ± 0.11	3.30 ± 0.11
	0.1	7.02 ± 0.06	0.52 ± 0.01	28.98 ± 1.31	1.86 ± 0.02	1.01 ± 0.00	1.93 ± 0.03	3.10 ± 0.06
	0.2	6.20 ± 0.01	0.46 ± 0.00	32.57 ± 1.24	1.43 ± 0.00	0.88 ± 0.03	2.10 ± 0.06	2.53 ± 0.03
	0.5	5.80 ± 0.00	0.44 ± 0.00	28.57 ± 1.10	1.29 ± 0.02	0.56 ± 0.00	2.67 ± 0.12	2.03 ± 0.03
	1	5.55 ± 0.01	0.47 ± 0.00	28.54 ± 0.02	2.06 ± 0.03	1.15 ± 0.02	3.37 ± 0.09	4.17 ± 0.09
25	0	0.69 ± 0.00	0.56 ± 0.00	26.61 ± 0.03	7.17 ± 0.09	0.98 ± 0.01	4.77 ± 0.07	7.40 ± 0.10
	0.01	0.72 ± 0.00	0.49 ± 0.00	32.49 ± 0.02	9.47 ± 0.09	1.19 ± 0.01	2.40 ± 0.06	5.23 ± 0.09
	0.1	0.65 ± 0.00	0.60 ± 0.01	30.36 ± 0.06	12.0 ± 0.03	1.33 ± 0.02	2.33 ± 0.03	7.00 ± 0.06
	0.2	0.65 ± 0.00	0.54 ± 0.00	30.27 ± 0.05	6.53 ± 0.09	1.07 ± 0.01	2.23 ± 0.07	7.94 ± 0.03
	0.5	0.68 ± 0.00	0.57 ± 0.00	26.84 ± 0.01	9.87 ± 0.07	1.06 ± 0.01	4.70 ± 0.06	5.47 ± 0.03
	1	0.65 ± 0.00	0.71 ± 0.02	29.19 ± 0.04	8.84 ± 0.07	1.28 ± 0.01	4.83 ± 0.09	7.30 ± 0.12
50	0	0.59 ± 0.00	0.82 ± 0.00	28.29 ± 0.67	18.1 ± 0.17	2.95 ± 0.03	10.3 ± 0.22	6.12 ± 0.26
	0.01	0.78 ± 0.00	0.46 ± 0.02	29.83 ± 1.00	37.4 ± 0.26	20.9 ± 0.28	5.06 ± 0.13	3.88 ± 0.18
	0.1	0.79 ± 0.00	0.39 ± 0.00	28.37 ± 0.04	33.3 ± 0.26	17.0 ± 0.50	4.26 ± 0.15	4.01 ± 0.11
	0.2	0.79 ± 0.00	0.39 ± 0.00	26.38 ± 0.85	45.0 ± 0.11	16.9 ± 0.38	7.22 ± 0.34	4.85 ± 0.11
	0.5	0.76 ± 0.00	0.42 ± 0.00	25.60 ± 0.04	41.2 ± 0.11	3.12 ± 0.11	3.97 ± 0.11	4.77 ± 0.04
	1	0.80 ± 0.00	0.40 ± 0.00	24.12 ± 0.98	25.9 ± 0.30	3.38 ± 0.11	3.97 ± 0.08	3.12 ± 0.18
75	0	0.87 ± 0.00	1.51 ± 0.03	27.26 ± 0.06	15.4 ± 0.08	2.34 ± 0.02	3.38 ± 0.04	2.93 ± 0.07
	0.01	0.72 ± 0.00	1.23 ± 0.03	30.11 ± 0.02	46.0 ± 2.57	0.34 ± 0.02	2.95 ± 0.04	3.00 ± 0.06
	0.1	0.63 ± 0.00	1.24 ± 0.00	32.35 ± 0.07	66.7 ± 1.84	1.11 ± 0.02	4.73 ± 0.11	3.43 ± 0.09
	0.2	0.94 ± 0.00	0.66 ± 0.00	27.51 ± 0.03	43.5 ± 0.42	0.37 ± 0.03	2.83 ± 0.04	2.83 ± 0.07
	0.5	0.90 ± 0.01	0.90 ± 0.00	24.79 ± 0.05	47.3 ± 1.84	0.22 ± 0.03	2.70 ± 0.11	2.67 ± 0.12
	1	0.97 ± 0.01	1.05 ± 0.03	24.02 ± 0.03	38.8 ± 0.42	0.22 ± 0.04	2.78 ± 0.15	2.27 ± 0.03
100	0	0.69 ± 0.04	0.94 ± 0.02	24.02 ± 0.04	1.57 ± 0.02	2.94 ± 0.03	0.35 ± 0.00	2.91 ± 0.15
	0.01	0.97 ± 0.01	0.59 ± 0.00	26.05 ± 0.10	12.4 ± 0.15	2.65 ± 0.35	9.32 ± 0.24	2.70 ± 0.17
	0.1	0.96 ± 0.00	0.69 ± 0.03	32.06 ± 0.03	10.4 ± 0.19	4.73 ± 0.32	11.9 ± 0.28	3.71 ± 0.11
	0.2	0.97 ± 0.00	0.79 ± 0.00	30.59 ± 0.01	10.7 ± 0.37	7.34 ± 0.15	17.5 ± 0.22	2.36 ± 0.08
	0.5	1.76 ± 0.01	0.22 ± 0.01	23.67 ± 0.57	14.6 ± 0.38	2.04 ± 0.06	16.6 ± 0.26	2.24 ± 0.15
	1	1.57 ± 0.01	0.22 ± 0.00	23.01 ± 0.10	13.7 ± 0.15	1.96 ± 0.06	28.4 ± 0.26	3.08 ± 0.08

