A decanter centrifuge and a screw conveyor

Field of the invention

The present invention generally relates to a decanter centrifuge for separating a supplied material in a light phase and a heavy phase, comprising an elongate bowl arranged for rotation about its longitudinal axis, said bowl having a separation chamber with a circumferential wall, a screw conveyor being provided in the separation chamber and being coaxial with the bowl, said screw conveyor further comprising a conveyor hub, said conveyor hub comprising a longitudinal tubular steel body part and a helical steel conveyor flight attached to said longitudinal tubular steel body part.

Background of the invention

A decanter centrifuge of this kind is known from US-A-5 354 255, which discloses a decanter centrifuge with a hollow bowl surrounding a rotating screw conveyor having a substantially cylindrical conveyor hub, which carries a screw comprising one or more flights. In order to resist the harsh environment encountered in many applications, the body as well as the screw of the screw conveyor of the type disclosed in US-A-5 354 255 are typically manufactured in a resistant material such as steel.

A series of longitudinally extending and radially projecting supporting ribs is attached to the conveyor hub. Their cross-sectional area increases with the distance from the hub. Their purpose is to render possible reduction of the diameter of the conveyor hub, without detrimental impact on the capability of withstanding high speed operating conditions of thus formed structural unit comprising said hub and ribs. Such reduction of the hub diameter provides for reducing the diameter of the inner surface of a pond of supplied material in the separation chamber, which results in a reduced power demand of the decanter centrifuge.

However, the complex centrifuge design, as disclosed in US-A-5 354 255, comprising radially projecting ribs renders its manufacturing

rather difficult. In addition, ribs take up space in the bowl, thus reducing its useful volume.

WO-A-96/14935 discloses a very special decanter centrifuge mainly made of polyurethane. Thus WO-A-96/14935 discloses a decanter centrifuge having a drum and a conveyor with a hub and helical flights wherein the helical flights are made of polyurethane and are resting against the inner surface of the drum, which will stabilise the conveyor and provides a scraping effect on sedimented material. The material of the flights provides for a density of the flights in the same order as the density of the liquid phase of a material to be treated in the centrifuge, thus increasing the first critical vibration frequency of the conveyor, which provides for increasing the length or the rotational speed of the centrifuge thereby increasing its separation capacity. The hub of the conveyor is made of the same material as the flights i.e. the elastomeric material: polyurethane, whereby the conveyor is castable in a simple mould. To provide stiffness to the conveyor a pipe of carbon fibre reinforced resin is cast-in reaching from one end of the conveyor to the other between the bearings supporting the conveyor.

Summary of the invention

The present invention aims at providing a decanter centrifuge, which provides for a reduced diameter of the conveyor hub, said conveyor hub being capable of withstanding high speed operating conditions, while avoiding the above mentioned drawbacks of the prior art.

This object is achieved according to the present invention by providing a decanter centrifuge for separating a supplied material in a light phase and a heavy phase comprising:

an elongate bowl arranged for rotation about its longitudinal axis, said bowl having a separation chamber with a circumferential wall, a screw conveyor being provided in the separation chamber and being coaxial with the bowl,

said screw conveyor comprising a conveyor hub, said conveyor hub comprising a longitudinal tubular steel body part, and a helical steel conveyor flight attached to said longitudinal tubular steel body part,

wherein said conveyor hub further comprises an inner longitudinal body extending coaxially relative said longitudinal tubular steel body part, said inner longitudinal body extending through at least a part of the longitudinal tubular steel body part and being made of a first material whose specific modulus is larger than specific modulus of the steel material of the longitudinal tubular steel body part.

By providing said inner longitudinal body in a different material, thus effectively separating the conveyor hub in two coaxially extending, cylindrically shaped components, it may be achieved that the diameter of the conveyor hub is reduced. To that purpose, the above-mentioned inner longitudinal body is made of material whose specific modulus is larger than specific modulus of the steel material of the tubular steel body part. The specific modulus or stiffness-to-weight ratio is defined as the ratio of elastic modulus and mass density of a material. Such a material is at the same time rigid and lightweight. Consequently, relevant material properties may be improved. Thus, the wall thickness of the original tubular steel body part may be reduced or so-to-speak replaced by said inner longitudinal body reducing the overall diameter of the hub. Such a conveyor hub and, inferentially, decanter centrifuge are capable of withstanding high speed operating conditions.

In an embodiment, a play is provided between the helical flight and the circumferential wall of the bowl. In this way, it may be ensured that contact between the flights and the circumferential wall of the bowl and consequent wear on the flights as well as the circumferential wall of the bowl is avoided.

In a further embodiment, an adhesive layer may be applied between at least a portion of an inner surface of the longitudinal tubular steel body part and an outer surface of the inner longitudinal body. In this way, said body part and said inner body are fixedly engaged to each other.

Said first material may be a fibre reinforced polymer. Fibre reinforced polymers are composite materials made of a polymer matrix reinforced with fibres.

Said polymer may be epoxy. Epoxy is a thermosetting polymer

that cures when mixed with a hardener. By using a rigid and lightweight material such as epoxy, an improved decanter centrifuge may be obtained.

Said fibres may comprise carbon fibres. These are known to have a high strength to weight ratio. By reinforcing epoxy with carbon fibres, an additional strengthening of the polymer may be achieved.

In an embodiment, the angle between substantially longitudinally running fibre strands of said fibre reinforced polymer and a longitudinal axis is preferably below 20°, more preferred below 15° and most preferred below 10°. In this way, an increased structural strength of the inner longitudinal body may be achieved. As an advantage, the risk of crack formation in the body may be greatly reduced.

Preferably at least one winding of fibre strands is arranged circumferentially relative said longitudinal axis for every 5-20 substantially longitudinal windings.

In an embodiment, said inner longitudinal body is tubular and may have a wall thickness that is at least equal to wall thickness of said longitudinal tubular steel body part.

In a different embodiment, said inner longitudinal body may, over at least a part of its length, radially extend to the centre of the conveyor hub. In this way, given the superior properties of the first material, it may be achieved that the weight and the diameter of the conveyor hub may be significantly reduced, while its other properties at any rate are maintained.

Other objectives, features and advantages of the present invention will appear from the following detailed disclosure, from the attached claims as well as from the drawings.

Generally, all terms used in the claims are to be interpreted according to their ordinary meaning in the technical field, unless explicitly defined otherwise herein. All references to "a/an/the [element, device, component, means, step, etc]" are to be interpreted openly as referring to at least one instance of said element, device, component, means, step, etc., unless explicitly stated otherwise. The steps of any method disclosed herein do not have to be performed in the exact order dis-

closed, unless explicitly stated.

The invention also relates to a screw conveyor as described above.

Brief description of the drawings

The above, as well as additional objects, features and advantages of the present invention, will be better understood through the following illustrative and non-limiting detailed description of preferred embodiments of the present invention, with reference to the appended drawings, where the same reference numerals will be used for similar elements, wherein:

Fig. 1 shows schematically a decanter centrifuge 1;

Fig. 2a is a front view of a conveyor hub according to a first embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2b is a cross-sectional view of the conveyor hub along the line b - b of Fig. 2a;

Fig. 3 shows an inner longitudinal body with fibre strands according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Detailed description of preferred embodiments

The decanter centrifuge 1 shown in Fig. 1 comprises a bowl 2 and a screw conveyor 3 which are mounted on a shaft 4 such that they in use can be brought to rotate around an axis 5 of rotation, the axis 5 of rotation extending in a longitudinal direction of the bowl 2. Further, the decanter centrifuge 1 has a radial direction 5a extending perpendicularly to the longitudinal direction.

For the sake of simplicity directions "up" and "down" are used herein as referring to a radial direction towards the axis 5 of rotation and away from the axis 5 of rotation, respectively.

The bowl 2 comprises a base plate 6 provided at one longitudinal end of the bowl 2, which base plate 6 has an internal side 7 and an external side 8. The base plate 6 is provided with a number of liquid phase outlet openings 9. Furthermore the bowl 2 is at an end opposite to

the base plate 6 provided with solid phase discharge openings 10.

In addition, the screw conveyor 3 comprises inlet openings 11 for supplying a material e.g. a slurry to the decanter centrifuge 1, the slurry comprising a light or liquid phase 12 and a heavy or solid phase 13. During rotation of the decanter centrifuge 1 as previously described, separation of the liquid 12 and solid 13 phases is obtained in a separation chamber 26 delimited by a circumferential wall of the bowl 2. The liquid phase 12 is discharged through the liquid phase outlet openings 9 in the base plate 6, while the screw conveyor 3 transports the solid phase 13 towards the solid phase discharge openings 10 through which the solid phase 13 eventually is discharged. As it may be seen, a play 21, which is typically 1-2 mm, is provided between the screw conveyor 3 and the circumferential wall of the bowl 2. The play 21 ensures that contact between the flights and the circumferential wall of the bowl 2 is avoided, thus preventing wear on the flights as well as on the circumferential wall of the bowl 2.

Fig. 2a is a front view of a screw conveyor 3 in another embodiment while Fig. 2b is a cross-sectional view of said screw conveyor 3 along the line b - b of Fig. 2a. The screw conveyor 3 comprises the conveyor hub 14 and a helical conveyor flight 15 attached to its outer surface, both provided in steel material. The conveyor hub 14 comprises a cylindrical section 16 having an outer radius (R), a substantially frusto-conical section 17 and a feed inlet section 25 positioned between the cylindrical section 16 and the frusto-conical section 17. A longitudinal tubular steel body part 18 constitutes the outermost portion of said cylindrical section 16. By providing the outermost portion of said cylindrical section 16 in steel material it is ensured that the conveyor hub 14 may withstand the potentially damaging effect of the supplied material. The feed inlet section 25 is provided with inlet openings 11 for supplying the slurry into the interior of the bowl 2, i.e. the separation chamber 26.

The cylindrical section 16 further comprises an inner longitudinal body 19 that may be tubular and that extends coaxially relative said longitudinal tubular steel body part 18 and through the cavity defined by the longitudinal tubular steel body part 18. The inner longitudinal body

19 may, over at least a part of its length, radially extend to the centre of the conveyor hub 14. The inner longitudinal body 19 is made of a material whose specific modulus is larger than specific modulus of the steel material of the longitudinal tubular steel body part 18. The specific modulus or stiffness-to-weight ratio is defined as the ratio of elastic modulus and mass density of a material. The material of the inner longitudinal body 19 is, thus, rigid and lightweight. In the preferred embodiment, an epoxy matrix reinforced with carbon fibres, more thoroughly described in conjunction with Fig. 3, is used. A plurality of other materials may be envisaged, provided that their specific modulus is larger than specific modulus of the steel material of the longitudinal tubular steel body part 18. Other polymers as well as non-polymer materials, are equally conceivable. By way of example, carbon fibres may be substituted with kevlar or glass fibres. By combining the longitudinal tubular steel body part 18 and the therein enclosed, inner longitudinal body 19 in rigid and lightweight material, it is achieved that the conveyor hub 14 and, inferentially, decanter centrifuge 1 are capable of withstanding high speed operating conditions while the diameter of the conveyor hub 14 is reduced. The longitudinal tubular steel body part 18 may be constructed with a decreased wall thickness compared to conventional decanter centrifuges. However the wall thickness should be sufficient to provide the necessary strength for carrying the helical conveyor flight 15, which is usually welded onto the hub 14.

As it may be seen in Fig. 2b, an adhesive layer 20 is applied at the interface between the longitudinal tubular steel body part 18 and the inner longitudinal body 19. By applying said adhesive layer 20, said longitudinal tubular steel body part 18 and said inner longitudinal body 19 are fixedly engaged to each other. A suitable adhesive is, for instance, epoxy.

Fig. 3 shows an inner longitudinal body 19 with fibre strands 22 according to an embodiment of the present invention. The fibre strands 22 are wound into a tube and worked into the polymer matrix in a manner well known to the person skilled in the art. In order to achieve a strong and rigid material, carbon fibres are used. The substantially longi-

tudinally running fibre strands 22 belonging to the fibre reinforced polymer are arranged at an angle (α) relative a longitudinal axis 23. Said angle (α) is preferably inferior to 20° corresponding to a single winding extending from one end to the other of the tube. This provides for maximum bending strength of the tube. In addition, at least one winding or layer of fibre strands 24 is arranged substantially circumferentially relative said longitudinal axis for every 5-20 substantially longitudinal windings 22. In this way, an increased structural strength of the inner longitudinal body 19 may be achieved. As an advantage, the risk of crack formation in the inner longitudinal body 19 may be greatly reduced.

The invention has mainly been described above with reference to a few embodiments. However, as is readily appreciated by a person skilled in the art, other embodiments than the ones disclosed above are equally possible within the scope of the invention, as defined by the appended patent claims.

CLAIMS

1. A decanter centrifuge (1) for separating a supplied material in a light phase and a heavy phase, comprising:

an elongate bowl (2) arranged for rotation about its longitudinal axis (5), said bowl having a separation chamber (26) with a circumferential wall, a screw conveyor (3) being provided in the separation chamber and being coaxial with the bowl (2),

said screw conveyor (3) comprising a conveyor hub (14), said conveyor hub (14) comprising a longitudinal tubular steel body part (18), and a helical steel conveyor flight (15) attached to said longitudinal tubular steel body part (18),

characterized in that said conveyor hub (14) further comprises an inner longitudinal body (19) extending coaxially relative said longitudinal tubular steel body part (18), said inner longitudinal body (19) extending through at least a part of the longitudinal tubular steel body part (18) and being made of a first material whose specific modulus is larger than specific modulus of the steel material of the longitudinal tubular steel body part(18).

2. A decanter centrifuge (1) according to claim 1, wherein a play (21) is provided between the helical flight (15) and the circumferential wall of the bowl (2).

3. A decanter centrifuge (1) according to claim 1, wherein an adhesive layer (20) is applied between at least a portion of an inner surface of the longitudinal tubular steel body part (18) and an outer surface of the inner longitudinal body (19).

4. A decanter centrifuge (1) according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said first material is a fibre reinforced polymer.

5. A decanter centrifuge (1) according to claim 4, wherein said polymer is epoxy.

6. A decanter centrifuge (1) according to claim 4, wherein said fibres comprise carbon fibres.

7. A decanter centrifuge (1) according to claim 6, wherein the angle (α) between substantially longitudinally running fibre strands (22)

of said fibre reinforced polymer and a longitudinal axis (23) is preferably below 20°, more preferred below 15° and most preferred below 10°.

8. A decanter centrifuge (1) according to claim 7, wherein at least one winding of fibre strands (24) is arranged circumferentially relative said longitudinal axis (23) for every 5-20 substantially longitudinal windings (22).

9. A decanter centrifuge (1) according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said inner longitudinal body (19) is tubular and has a wall thickness that is at least equal to wall thickness of said longitudinal tubular steel body part (18).

10. A decanter centrifuge (1) according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said inner longitudinal body (19), over at least a part of its length, radially extends to the centre of the conveyor hub (14).

11. A screw conveyor for a decanter centrifuge (1), comprising:

a conveyor hub (14), said conveyor hub (14) comprising a longitudinal tubular steel body part (18), and a helical steel conveyor flight (15) attached to said longitudinal tubular steel body part (18),

characterized in that said conveyor hub (14) further comprises an inner longitudinal body (19) extending coaxially relative said longitudinal tubular steel body part (18), said inner longitudinal body (19) extending through at least a part of the longitudinal tubular steel body part (18) and being made of a first material whose specific modulus is larger than specific modulus of the steel material of the longitudinal tubular steel body part(18).

A decanter centrifuge and a screw conveyor

Field of the invention

The present invention generally relates to a screw conveyor comprising a conveyor hub, said conveyor hub comprising a longitudinal tubular steel body part and a helical steel conveyor flight attached to said longitudinal tubular steel body part, and to a decanter centrifuge for separating a supplied material in a light phase and a heavy phase, comprising an elongate bowl arranged for rotation about its longitudinal axis, said bowl having a separation chamber with a circumferential wall, a screw conveyor being provided in the separation chamber and being coaxial with the bowl, said screw conveyor further comprising a conveyor hub, said conveyor hub comprising a longitudinal tubular steel body part and a helical steel conveyor flight attached to said longitudinal tubular steel body part.

Background of the invention

A decanter centrifuge of this kind is known from US-A-5 354 255, which discloses a decanter centrifuge with a hollow bowl surrounding a rotating screw conveyor having a substantially cylindrical conveyor hub, which carries a screw comprising one or more flights. In order to resist the harsh environment encountered in many applications, the body as well as the screw of the screw conveyor of the type disclosed in US-A-5 354 255 are typically manufactured in a resistant material such as steel.

A series of longitudinally extending and radially projecting supporting ribs is attached to the conveyor hub. Their cross-sectional area increases with the distance from the hub. Their purpose is to render possible reduction of the diameter of the conveyor hub, without detrimental impact on the capability of withstanding high speed operating conditions of thus formed structural unit comprising said hub and ribs. Such reduction of the hub diameter provides for reducing the diameter of the inner surface of a pond of supplied material in the separation chamber, which results in a reduced power demand of the decanter cen-

trifuge.

However, the complex centrifuge design, as disclosed in US-A-5 354 255, comprising radially projecting ribs renders its manufacturing rather difficult. In addition, ribs take up space in the bowl, thus reducing its useful volume.

WO-A-96/14935 discloses a very special decanter centrifuge mainly made of polyurethane. Thus WO-A-96/14935 discloses a decanter centrifuge having a drum and a conveyor with a hub and helical flights wherein the helical flights are made of polyurethane and are resting against the inner surface of the drum, which will stabilise the conveyor and provides a scraping effect on sedimented material. The material of the flights provides for a density of the flights in the same order as the density of the liquid phase of a material to be treated in the centrifuge, thus increasing the first critical vibration frequency of the conveyor, which provides for increasing the length or the rotational speed of the centrifuge thereby increasing its separation capacity. The hub of the conveyor is made of the same material as the flights i.e. the elastomeric material: polyurethane, whereby the conveyor is castable in a simple mould. To provide stiffness to the conveyor a pipe of carbon fibre reinforced resin is cast-in reaching from one end of the conveyor to the other between the bearings supporting the conveyor.

Summary of the invention

The present invention aims at providing a screw conveyor and a decanter centrifuge, which provides for a reduced diameter of the conveyor hub, said conveyor hub being capable of withstanding high speed operating conditions, while avoiding the above mentioned drawbacks of the prior art.

This object is achieved according to the present invention by a screw conveyor according to claim 1 and a decanter centrifuge according to claim 10.

Thus according to the invention is provided a decanter centrifuge for separating a supplied material in a light phase and a heavy phase comprising:

an elongate bowl arranged for rotation about its longitudinal axis, said bowl having a separation chamber with a circumferential wall, a screw conveyor being provided in the separation chamber and being coaxial with the bowl,

said screw conveyor comprising a conveyor hub, said conveyor hub comprising a longitudinal tubular steel body part, and a helical steel conveyor flight attached to said longitudinal tubular steel body part, wherein said conveyor hub further comprises an inner longitudinal body extending coaxially relative said longitudinal tubular steel body part, said inner longitudinal body extending through at least a part of the longitudinal tubular steel body part and being made of a first material whose specific modulus is larger than specific modulus of the steel material of the longitudinal tubular steel body part.

By providing said inner longitudinal body in a different material, thus effectively separating the conveyor hub in two coaxially extending, cylindrically shaped components, it may be achieved that the diameter of the conveyor hub is reduced. To that purpose, the above-mentioned inner longitudinal body is made of material whose specific modulus is larger than specific modulus of the steel material of the tubular steel body part. The specific modulus or stiffness-to-weight ratio is defined as the ratio of elastic modulus and mass density of a material. Such a material is at the same time rigid and lightweight. Consequently, relevant material properties may be improved. Thus, the wall thickness of the original tubular steel body part may be reduced or so-to-speak replaced by said inner longitudinal body reducing the overall diameter of the hub. Such a conveyor hub and, inferentially, decanter centrifuge are capable of withstanding high speed operating conditions.

In an embodiment, a play is provided between the helical flight and the circumferential wall of the bowl. In this way, it may be ensured that contact between the flights and the circumferential wall of the bowl and consequent wear on the flights as well as the circumferential wall of the bowl is avoided.

In a further embodiment, an adhesive layer may be applied between at least a portion of an inner surface of the longitudinal tubular

steel body part and an outer surface of the inner longitudinal body. In this way, said body part and said inner body are fixedly engaged to each other.

Said first material may be a fibre reinforced polymer. Fibre reinforced polymers are composite materials made of a polymer matrix reinforced with fibres.

Said polymer may be epoxy. Epoxy is a thermosetting polymer that cures when mixed with a hardener. By using a rigid and lightweight material such as epoxy, an improved decanter centrifuge may be obtained.

Said fibres may comprise carbon fibres. These are known to have a high strength to weight ratio. By reinforcing epoxy with carbon fibres, an additional strengthening of the polymer may be achieved.

In an embodiment, the angle between substantially longitudinally running fibre strands of said fibre reinforced polymer and a longitudinal axis is preferably below 20°, more preferred below 15° and most preferred below 10°. In this way, an increased structural strength of the inner longitudinal body may be achieved. As an advantage, the risk of crack formation in the body may be greatly reduced.

Preferably at least one winding of fibre strands is arranged circumferentially relative said longitudinal axis for every 5-20 substantially longitudinal windings.

In an embodiment, said inner longitudinal body is tubular and may have a wall thickness that is at least equal to wall thickness of said longitudinal tubular steel body part.

In a different embodiment, said inner longitudinal body may, over at least a part of its length, radially extend to the centre of the conveyor hub. In this way, given the superior properties of the first material, it may be achieved that the weight and the diameter of the conveyor hub may be significantly reduced, while its other properties at any rate are maintained.

Other objectives, features and advantages of the present invention will appear from the following detailed disclosure, from the attached claims as well as from the drawings.

Generally, all terms used in the claims are to be interpreted according to their ordinary meaning in the technical field, unless explicitly defined otherwise herein. All references to "a/an/the [element, device, component, means, step, etc]" are to be interpreted openly as referring to at least one instance of said element, device, component, means, step, etc., unless explicitly stated otherwise. The steps of any method disclosed herein do not have to be performed in the exact order disclosed, unless explicitly stated.

Brief description of the drawings

The above, as well as additional objects, features and advantages of the present invention, will be better understood through the following illustrative and non-limiting detailed description of preferred embodiments of the present invention, with reference to the appended drawings, where the same reference numerals will be used for similar elements, wherein:

Fig. 1 shows schematically a decanter centrifuge 1;

Fig. 2a is a front view of a conveyor hub according to a first embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2b is a cross-sectional view of the conveyor hub along the line b - b of Fig. 2a;

Fig. 3 shows an inner longitudinal body with fibre strands according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Detailed description of preferred embodiments

The decanter centrifuge 1 shown in Fig. 1 comprises a bowl 2 and a screw conveyor 3 which are mounted on a shaft 4 such that they in use can be brought to rotate around an axis 5 of rotation, the axis 5 of rotation extending in a longitudinal direction of the bowl 2. Further, the decanter centrifuge 1 has a radial direction 5a extending perpendicularly to the longitudinal direction.

For the sake of simplicity directions "up" and "down" are used herein as referring to a radial direction towards the axis 5 of rotation

and away from the axis 5 of rotation, respectively.

The bowl 2 comprises a base plate 6 provided at one longitudinal end of the bowl 2, which base plate 6 has an internal side 7 and an external side 8. The base plate 6 is provided with a number of liquid phase outlet openings 9. Furthermore the bowl 2 is at an end opposite to the base plate 6 provided with solid phase discharge openings 10.

In addition, the screw conveyor 3 comprises inlet openings 11 for supplying a material e.g. a slurry to the decanter centrifuge 1, the slurry comprising a light or liquid phase 12 and a heavy or solid phase 13. During rotation of the decanter centrifuge 1 as previously described, separation of the liquid 12 and solid 13 phases is obtained in a separation chamber 26 delimited by a circumferential wall of the bowl 2. The liquid phase 12 is discharged through the liquid phase outlet openings 9 in the base plate 6, while the screw conveyor 3 transports the solid phase 13 towards the solid phase discharge openings 10 through which the solid phase 13 eventually is discharged. As it may be seen, a play 21, which is typically 1-2 mm, is provided between the screw conveyor 3 and the circumferential wall of the bowl 2. The play 21 ensures that contact between the flights and the circumferential wall of the bowl 2 is avoided, thus preventing wear on the flights as well as on the circumferential wall of the bowl 2.

Fig. 2a is a front view of a screw conveyor 3 in another embodiment while Fig. 2b is a cross-sectional view of said screw conveyor 3 along the line b - b of Fig. 2a. The screw conveyor 3 comprises the conveyor hub 14 and a helical conveyor flight 15 attached to its outer surface, both provided in steel material. The conveyor hub 14 comprises a cylindrical section 16 having an outer radius (R), a substantially frusto-conical section 17 and a feed inlet section 25 positioned between the cylindrical section 16 and the frusto-conical section 17. A longitudinal tubular steel body part 18 constitutes the outermost portion of said cylindrical section 16. By providing the outermost portion of said cylindrical section 16 in steel material it is ensured that the conveyor hub 14 may withstand the potentially damaging effect of the supplied material. The feed inlet section 25 is provided with inlet openings 11 for supplying the

slurry into the interior of the bowl 2, i.e. the separation chamber 26.

The cylindrical section 16 further comprises an inner longitudinal body 19 that may be tubular and that extends coaxially relative said longitudinal tubular steel body part 18 and through the cavity defined by the longitudinal tubular steel body part 18. The inner longitudinal body 19 may, over at least a part of its length, radially extend to the centre of the conveyor hub 14. The inner longitudinal body 19 is made of a material whose specific modulus is larger than specific modulus of the steel material of the longitudinal tubular steel body part 18. The specific modulus or stiffness-to-weight ratio is defined as the ratio of elastic modulus and mass density of a material. The material of the inner longitudinal body 19 is, thus, rigid and lightweight. In the preferred embodiment, an epoxy matrix reinforced with carbon fibres, more thoroughly described in conjunction with Fig. 3, is used. A plurality of other materials may be envisaged, provided that their specific modulus is larger than specific modulus of the steel material of the longitudinal tubular steel body part 18. Other polymers as well as non-polymer materials, are equally conceivable. By way of example, carbon fibres may be substituted with kevlar or glass fibres. By combining the longitudinal tubular steel body part 18 and the therein enclosed, inner longitudinal body 19 in rigid and lightweight material, it is achieved that the conveyor hub 14 and, inferentially, decanter centrifuge 1 are capable of withstanding high speed operating conditions while the diameter of the conveyor hub 14 is reduced. The longitudinal tubular steel body part 18 may be constructed with a decreased wall thickness compared to conventional decanter centrifuges. However the wall thickness should be sufficient to provide the necessary strength for carrying the helical conveyor flight 15, which is usually welded onto the hub 14.

As it may be seen in Fig. 2b, an adhesive layer 20 is applied at the interface between the longitudinal tubular steel body part 18 and the inner longitudinal body 19. By applying said adhesive layer 20, said longitudinal tubular steel body part 18 and said inner longitudinal body 19 are fixedly engaged to each other. A suitable adhesive is, for instance, epoxy.

Fig. 3 shows an inner longitudinal body 19 with fibre strands 22 according to an embodiment of the present invention. The fibre strands 22 are wound into a tube and worked into the polymer matrix in a manner well known to the person skilled in the art. In order to achieve a strong and rigid material, carbon fibres are used. The substantially longitudinally running fibre strands 22 belonging to the fibre reinforced polymer are arranged at an angle (α) relative a longitudinal axis 23. Said angle (α) is preferably inferior to 20° corresponding to a single winding extending from one end to the other of the tube. This provides for maximum bending strength of the tube. In addition, at least one winding or layer of fibre strands 24 is arranged substantially circumferentially relative said longitudinal axis for every 5-20 substantially longitudinal windings 22. In this way, an increased structural strength of the inner longitudinal body 19 may be achieved. As an advantage, the risk of crack formation in the inner longitudinal body 19 may be greatly reduced.

The invention has mainly been described above with reference to a few embodiments. However, as is readily appreciated by a person skilled in the art, other embodiments than the ones disclosed above are equally possible within the scope of the invention, as defined by the appended patent claims.

CLAIMS

1. A screw conveyor for a decanter centrifuge (1), comprising:

a conveyor hub (14), said conveyor hub (14) comprising a longitudinal tubular steel body part (18), and a helical steel conveyor flight (15) attached to said longitudinal tubular steel body part (18),

characterized in that said conveyor hub (14) further comprises an inner longitudinal body (19) extending coaxially relative said longitudinal tubular steel body part (18), said inner longitudinal body (19) extending through at least a part of the longitudinal tubular steel body part (18) and being made of a first material whose specific modulus is larger than specific modulus of the steel material of the longitudinal tubular steel body part (18).

2. A screw conveyor according to claim 1, wherein an adhesive layer (20) is applied between at least a portion of an inner surface of the longitudinal tubular steel body part (18) and an outer surface of the inner longitudinal body (19).

3. A screw conveyor according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said first material is a fibre reinforced polymer.

4. A screw conveyor according to claim 3, wherein said polymer is epoxy.

5. A screw conveyor according to claim 3, wherein said fibres comprise carbon fibres.

6. A screw conveyor according to claim 5, wherein the angle (α) between substantially longitudinally running fibre strands (22) of said fibre reinforced polymer and a longitudinal axis (23) is preferably below 20°, more preferred below 15° and most preferred below 10°.

7. A screw conveyor according to claim 6, wherein at least one winding of fibre strands (24) is arranged circumferentially relative said longitudinal axis (23) for every 5-20 substantially longitudinal windings (22).

8. A screw conveyor according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said inner longitudinal body (19) is tubular and has a wall thickness that is at least equal to wall thickness of said longitudinal tub-

ular steel body part (18).

9. A screw conveyor according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said inner longitudinal body (19), over at least a part of its length, radially extends to the centre of the conveyor hub (14).

10. A decanter centrifuge (1) for separating a supplied material in a light phase and a heavy phase, comprising:

an elongate bowl (2) arranged for rotation about its longitudinal axis (5), said bowl having a separation chamber (26) with a circumferential wall, a screw conveyor (3) being provided in the separation chamber and being coaxial with the bowl (2),

said screw conveyor (3) comprising a conveyor hub (14) according to any of the claims 1 to 9.

11. A decanter centrifuge (1) according to claim 10, wherein a play (21) is provided between the helical flight (15) and the circumferential wall of the bowl (2).