

**Candidate  
Information  
Booklet**

**IRC209738**

**Principal Scientific Officer -  
Plant Pathology**

**Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute  
Northern Ireland (AFBI)**

**Completed Application Forms  
must be returned to HRConnect  
no later than 12 noon (UK time)**

**on**

***Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2016***

## **Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Northern Ireland (AFBI)**

### **Communication between HRConnect and you**

HRConnect will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible, you should therefore check your email account to make sure that you don't miss any important communications in relation to this competition. There may, however, still be a necessity to issue some correspondence by hard copy mail.

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## BACKGROUND

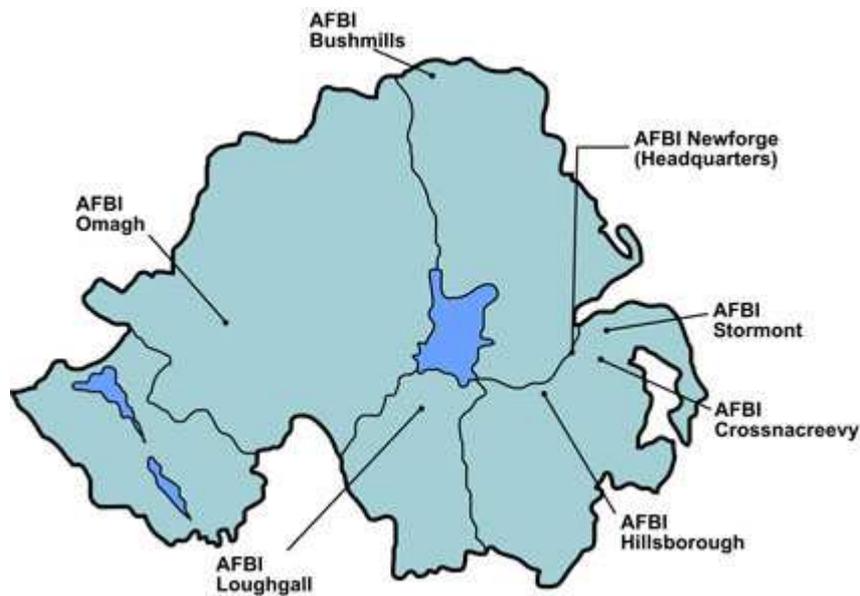
**AFBI, the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, is one of the world's leading providers of scientific research and services to government, non-governmental and commercial organisations.**

AFBI was established on 1 April 2006 as a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). It is responsible mainly for the provision of statutory and scientific programmes in the areas of agri-food, animal and plant health, fisheries and the environment, providing access to specialist expertise and providing facilities to Industry and Public Sector bodies for contracted scientific services. AFBI has a staff complement of approx. 650 people, with a budget of approximately £50million across its 7 specialised sites throughout Northern Ireland.

### Location

**AFBI is based at seven sites across the province, with its Headquarters at Newforge Lane, Belfast.**

The AFBI sites are located at Newforge Lane, (Belfast), Crossnacreevy, Hillsborough, Stoney Road (Stormont), Loughgall, Bushmills and Omagh.



## **GRASSLAND AND PLANT SCIENCE BRANCH**

AFBI consists of three divisions, the Finance & Corporate Affairs Division (FCAD), Veterinary Sciences Division (VSD) and the Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division (SAFSD). Within SAFSD there are 6 branches including the Grassland and Plant Science Branch. Grassland and Plant Science Branch activities underpin DAERA's policy development for long-term sustainable and profitable farming and rural development and support the requirements of the broader Agri-Food Industry in Northern Ireland.

Grassland and Plant Science Branch has been recently created to amalgamate all of AFBI's grassland and plant science capability under one line management structure.

### **Overall Vision**

The concentration of expertise and effort in this new Branch will enable the creation of an international centre of excellence demonstrating an integrated and dynamic approach to the plant sciences with the primary focus on grassland. Although the core aim of the Branch will be to support programmes focussed on grass breeding, grass testing and grassland agronomy, plant disease diagnosis and control will also be a core activity of the centre in support of DAERA's plant health strategy.

### **Grass Breeding**

A key aspect of activity for Grassland and Plant Science Branch will involve breeding of high yielding and high nutritive value grass varieties adapted to Northern Ireland soil and climatic conditions and livestock systems. The delivery of Plant Genomics/Bioinformatics within the branch will support the grass breeding programme in the use of next generation DNA sequencing (NGS) capability currently being developed within AFBI. The NGS platform currently under procurement will facilitate the use of techniques including bioinformatics, marker assisted selection, DNA sequence analysis, single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) in the support of grass breeding and varietal selection.

### **Grass Agronomy**

The Branch will have an important role in the development of an improved understanding of the physiological basis of growth and the influence of soil and climatic conditions on grass growth. Research programmes will examine the opportunities to more fully exploit the potential of forage legumes, including both red and white clover, to deliver a range of ecosystem services including production, nutrient capture, water use efficiency, sward structural heterogeneity, biodiversity, soil structure and function and carbon sequestration.

The Branch will act as a platform to launch on-farm varietal testing in support of a wider effort to encourage better grassland management by embracing new technologies and the genetic potential to be exploited in grass and other crops. The branch will utilise remote sensing technology for crop health assessment and yield measurement, compliance with agricultural measures and precision farming from a field to a landscape scale.

### **Plant Health**

The Centre will develop a plant pest and disease emergency response capability based on the latest NGS technology to support DAERA's plant health delivery. Activities related to plant health will be a core activity of the Centre and will support DAERA's plant health strategy and responsibilities.

It is clear that Northern Ireland, like the rest of the British Isles, will face new challenges resulting from the introduction of non-native pests and diseases, as well as the emergence of native plant pathogens. The extension of molecular biology facilities and the acquisition of ISO17025 accreditation for all testing will also support the plant pest and disease activities outlined above, as well as enabling AFBI to continue to engage in externally funded research on other agricultural, forestry and horticultural crops

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

There is currently one full time permanent position to be filled. A reserve list will exist and will be held for a period of 12 months from the date of interview, to cover any further vacancies which may arise.

### **Salary**

The salary for the post will be within the range £46,141 - £51,816 within which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff performance reports are satisfactory.

Starting salary will normally be at the minimum of the scale except for existing AFBI staff for whom starting salary may be determined by either promotion or re-grading terms if these are more favourable.

In exceptional circumstances only, consideration may be given to starting at a higher point on the salary scale for applicants with additional relevant experience and/or qualifications. The relevance and extent of the additional experience will be determined by AFBI at the time of offer of appointment.

### **Annual Leave**

In addition to the usual public and privilege holidays, there is an annual leave allowance of 25 days, increasing to 30 after five year's satisfactory service.

### **Working Hours**

The successful candidate will normally be required to work 5 days each week, totalling 37 hours. On occasions the duties may include some evening and weekend working. AFBI operates a flexi working system.

### **Location**

The successful candidate will be based at AFBI Newforge, 18a Newforge Lane, Belfast, BT9 5PX, however, they may, on occasion, also be expected to work at other AFBI sites in Northern Ireland as required.

### **Travel**

The post may entail some travel throughout Northern Ireland and for this reason the successful applicant will require access to a form of transport which will permit them to meet the requirements of the post in full.

### **Probationary Period**

The post holder will serve 12 months probation in the new post. This will commence from the date of appointment. At the end of the probation period a formal review will be conducted to determine if the posting will be made permanent.

## **Further Information**

Further information about the post may be obtained from Witney Williamson by email at: [Witney.williamson@afbini.gov.uk](mailto:Witney.williamson@afbini.gov.uk) or by telephone on 028 9025 5060.

If you have any queries about the competition process you should contact HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330, or email [recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net](mailto:recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net)

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The post holder will report to the Head of Grassland and Plant Science Branch (UG6) within the Sustainable Agri- Food Sciences Division. The main duties of the posts will include the following:

1. Lead the plant health team which undertakes statutory testing of grass, arable (potatoes and cereals) and non-arable crops (woody plants, forestry and horticulture) as well as leading research programmes on the epidemiology and control of commercially and environmentally important plant pathogens.
2. Support and assist the Head of Grassland and Plant Science Branch (HOB), including deputising for HOB, developing strategic management initiatives, maintaining high standards of corporate governance, budget planning and control and staff management, and responding to AFBI senior managers and DAERA Policy leads
3. Initiate proposals to DAERA, the European Commission, industry and other suitable funding sources for strategic and applied research on commercially important plant pathogens including fungi, fungi-like organisms, bacteria and viruses.
4. Oversee the diagnostics programme on plant material in order to detect the presence of plant pathogenic fungi, fungi-like organisms or bacteria, especially non-indigenous organisms.
5. Establish and maintain customer/academic networks, locally, nationally and internationally, and secure income from a wide range of funding bodies to deliver a Research & Development (R&D) programme in all aspects of plant health.
6. Interpretation and publication of research results in high impact scientific journals, R&D project report writing, knowledge transfer activities and press articles.
7. Lead a post-graduate research team, including bidding for student grants and support, supervision of students and building appropriate linkages with universities.
8. Manage staff and resources within the 'Unit', 'Programme Group' and 'Branch' in an efficient and cost effective manner and ensure that allocated budgets are expended and monitored in a fully auditable manner, compliant with AFBI procedures and the fiscal requirements of external project funders.
9. Ensure that all research activities comply with appropriate formal quality standards (currently ISO 9001 and ISO 17025).

10. Provision of detailed advice and diagnostic support to DAERA Plant Health Policy Branch and other stakeholders.
11. Undertake horizon scanning for potential plant pathogenic threats

**Please note that the above does not constitute an exhaustive list of duties and the successful candidate will be required to take on additional functions as directed by management.**

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants **must** demonstrate in their application form that they possess the following criteria, by the closing date:

1. A PhD in a scientific discipline related to plant health or a closely related natural science discipline.
2. At least three years experience of working in a plant health related work area.
3. A proven track record of initiating and managing research studies in plant health or a related scientific area.
4. A proven ability to be the **lead author** of **papers** which have been published in peer reviewed ISI listed scientific journals.

Candidates must provide evidence by submitting a fully cited bibliography (authors, paper title, journal title, volume and page numbers) of all refereed and non-refereed publications.

\*Candidates must provide evidence of eligibility criterion 4 by submitting a fully cited bibliography of all publications. Candidates can provide this information within the application form itself, or if necessary, it can be sent by the closing date for applications as a separate attachment to:

E-mail: [recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net](mailto:recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net)

OR

HRCconnect  
PO Box 1089  
2nd Floor, The Metro Building  
6-9 Donegall Square South  
Belfast  
BT1 9EW

The bibliography should be marked with the relevant competition reference number (IRC209738), competition title and your full name.

## SHORTLISTING CRITERIA

In addition applicants should be aware that after an eligibility sift, should it be necessary to shortlist candidates to go forward to interview, the following shortlisting criteria will be used in order:

1. At least three years experience of working in a plant pathology laboratory.
2. Extensive scientific knowledge of research in a plant health related area as evidenced by publication of at **least three** relevant peer reviewed papers as **lead author** in scientific journals (ISI listed).

In providing evidence for each of eligibility and shortlisting criteria it will be essential that candidates draw upon specific examples of work they have undertaken to illustrate the extent to which they possess the experience and skills required. It will not be sufficient simply to list the duties and responsibilities of posts held.

Applications will also be considered from applicants with relevant formal qualifications considered by the selection panel to be of an equivalent or higher standard to those stated.

**Relevant or equivalent** qualifications: give the type of qualification and date awarded (the date awarded is the date on which you were notified of your result by the official awarding body). If you believe your qualification is equivalent to the one required, the onus is on you to provide the panel with details of modules studied etc so that a well informed decision can be made.

### Please note:

- You should ensure that you provide evidence of your experience in your application form, giving length of experience, examples and dates as required.
- It is not sufficient to simply list your duties and responsibilities.
- The panel will not make assumptions from the title of the applicant's post or the nature of the organisation as to the skills and experience gained.
- If you do not provide sufficient detail, including the appropriate dates needed to meet the eligibility criteria, the selection panel will reject your application.
- **ONLY** the details provided by you in your application form (the employment history and eligibility criteria) will be provided to the selection panel for the purpose of determining your eligibility for the post.
- Further information on the Core Competences for this grade can be accessed through [www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk)

## PERSON SPECIFICATION

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the eligibility criteria and shortlisting criteria. In addition, they will also be required to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) competency framework at **Level 4** for the purposes of personal and professional development.

### **What is the NICS competency framework?**

The competency framework sets out how all NICS employees should work. It puts the Civil Service values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality at the heart of everything they do, and it aligns to the three high-level leadership behaviours that every civil servant needs to model as appropriate to their role and level of responsibility: Set Direction; Engage People and Deliver Results. Competencies are the skills, knowledge and behaviours that lead to successful performance. The framework outlines ten competencies, which are grouped into three clusters. The competencies are intended to be discrete and cumulative, with each level building on the levels below i.e. a person demonstrating a competency at level 3 should be demonstrating levels 1 and 2 as a matter of course.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service competency framework can be accessed through [www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk)

**It is important that all candidates familiarise themselves with the competency framework as this forms the basis of the assessment / interview criteria as outlined below.**

## **CORE COMPETENCES**

The Core Competence Framework, which is grade specific, describes what people need to do in order to be effective at work. It is not enough to just have the knowledge and skills to do our jobs. Competence is about what people actually do, it is about how you apply or demonstrate the knowledge and skills whilst carrying out your tasks. Demonstrated competence is observable and measurable.

Principle Scientific Officer – Plant Pathology is analogous to Grade 7 in the NICS.

**The selection process will include a presentation and a competence based interview.**

## **PRESENTATION**

Before the competence based interview, candidates will be required to deliver a presentation, lasting no more than 7 minutes.

Following the presentation, the panel may elect to ask clarification questions on the presentation. The presentation topic will be provided on the day of interview and 30 minutes preparation time will be given.

A flipchart and writing materials will be provided for candidates' use. No other materials or visual aids will be permitted unless required as a reasonable adjustment. No personal documentation may be brought in to the pre-interview room. The only materials candidates will be permitted to bring into interview will be those prepared in the pre-interview room.

The presentation will be used to assess against the Professional/Specialist/Technical Ability and Leading & Communicating competencies.

**Marks available: 15**

## **INTERVIEW CRITERIA**

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the Essential Criteria. In addition, they will also be required to demonstrate competency in Professional Knowledge & Skills pertaining to this post together with the skills and competencies set out in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) competency framework at Level 4 for the purpose of personal and professional development.

At interview candidates will be expected to display the following qualities and skills:

### **1. Professional Knowledge & Skills**

- Develops and updates professional/specialist/technical knowledge and skills to meet objectives and improve performance.
- Demonstrates an in-depth knowledge and understanding of current developments and best practice.
- Applies knowledge and skills in the collection, collation, manipulation, analysis and interpretation of scientific data.
- Applies knowledge and skills in writing scientific papers and technical reports.

**Marks available: 60      Minimum standard: 36**

### **2. Seeing the Big Picture**

- Understanding how your role contributes to AFBI's wider policy and organisational objectives

**Marks Available: 15**

### **3. Making Effective Decisions**

- Being objective, using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to provide accurate, expert and professional advice

**Marks Available: 15**

### **4. Leading and Communicating**

- Communicating with clarity, conviction and enthusiasm, both orally and in writing

**Marks Available: 15      Minimum standard: 9**

## **5. Collaborating and Partnering**

- Creating and maintain positive, professional and trusting working relationships with a wide range of people

**Marks Available: 15**

## **6. Delivering at Pace**

- Delivering timely results and taking responsibility and accountability for quality outcomes.

**Marks Available: 15      Minimum standard: 9**

**Total Marks Available: 150**

**Overall Pass Mark: 90**

## **COMPETENCE BASED INTERVIEWS**

Selection panels will design questions to test the applicant's knowledge and experience in each of the above areas and award marks accordingly.

## **INTERVIEWS**

It is intended that interviews for this post will take place in AFBI Newforge, Belfast during week commencing 18<sup>th</sup> July 2016.

## **INTERVIEW GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS**

**If this is your first experience of a competence-based interview, bear in mind that it does not require you to:**

- Talk through previous jobs or appointments from start to finish;
- Provide generalised information as to your background and experience; or
- Provide information that is not specifically relevant to the competence the question is designed to test.

**A competence-based interview does however require you to:**

- Focus exclusively, in your responses, on your ability to fulfill the competences required for effective performance in the role; and
- Provide specific examples of your experience in relation to the required competence areas.

**In preparation for the interview you may wish to think about having a clear structure for each of your examples, such as:**

- Situation – briefly outline the situation;
- Task – what was your objective, what were you trying to achieve;
- Action – what did you actually do, what was your unique contribution;
- Result – what happened, what was the outcome, what did you learn.

The panel will ask you to provide specific examples from your past experience in relation to each of the competences. You should therefore come to the interview prepared to discuss in detail a range of examples which best illustrate your skills and abilities in each competence area. You may draw examples from any area of your work / life experiences.

## SELECTION PROCESS

### The Merit Principle

Appointments to AFBI are made under the 'merit principle', where the best person for any given post is selected in fair and open competition.

### Making your application

The application form is designed to ensure that applicants provide the necessary information to determine how they meet the competition requirements and the eligibility/shortlisting criteria.

### Guidance for Applicants

- The space available on the application form is the same for all applicants and must not be altered.
- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed application forms.
- Applicants must complete the application form in either typescript font size 12, or legible, block capitals using black ink.
- Applicants must not reformat application forms.
- Information in support of your application will not be accepted after the closing date for receipt of applications.
- HRConnect will not examine applications until after the closing deadline;
- Do not use acronyms, complex technical detail etc. Write for the reader who may not know your employer, your Branch or your job.
- Write down clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote. Write "I" statements e.g. I planned meetings, I managed a budget, I prepared a presentation. It is how you actually carried out a piece of work that the panel will be interested in.
- The examples you provide should be concise and relevant to the criteria. This is very important as the examples which you provide may be checked out at interview and you may need to be prepared to talk about these in detail if you are invited to interview. It is your *unique* role the panel are interested in, not that of your team or Division.

### Application Form Submission

- Please refer to the Candidate Information Booklet before completing an application.
- **All** parts of the application form **must** be completed by the applicant before this application can be considered. Failure to do so may result in disqualification.
- All applications must be received by the advertised closing date. Late applications or applications received by fax or by email will not be accepted. Applicants using Royal Mail should note that 1<sup>st</sup> class mail does not guarantee next day delivery. It is also the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that sufficient postage has been paid to return the form to HRConnect. HRConnect will not accept any application where they are asked to pay any shortfall in postage.

- Only the employment history, eligibility and shortlisting sections will be made available to the panel.
- Applicants are encouraged to submit online applications wherever possible. However, all requests for hard copy application packs are welcomed and all applications will be treated equally regardless of whether they are hard copy or online.
- When completing the online application, your information is saved as you move through the pages. You may leave the application at any time, providing you have clicked on the 'Save & Continue' button. Once your application has been submitted the option to edit will no longer be available.
- Please note - the session timeout for the online application is 40 minutes, if you do not save or change page within this time you will automatically be logged out and any unsaved work will be lost.
- Please do not attempt to reformat application forms as this will result in disqualification.

### **Changes in personal circumstances**

Please ensure HRConnect are informed immediately of any changes in personal circumstances.

### **Transgender Requirements**

Should you currently be going through a phase of transition in respect of gender and wish this to be taken into consideration in confidence to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process please contact HRConnect. Details of this will only be used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process.

### **Communication between HRConnect and you**

HRConnect will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible, you should therefore check your email account to make sure that you don't miss any important communications in relation to this competition. There may, however, still be a necessity to issue some correspondence by hard copy mail.

### **Further appointments from this competition**

Where a further position in AFBI is identified which is considered broadly similar to that outlined in this candidate information booklet, consideration will be given to filling the position from this competition. The merit list resulting from this competition will be valid for a period of up to one year.

## **Disability Requirements**

We will ask on the application form if you require any reasonable adjustments, due to disability, to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process. Details of any disability are only used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process. If you have indicated on your application that you have a disability and are successful in the selection process and are being considered for appointment, you may be required to outline any adjustments you consider necessary in order for you to take up an appointment. If you wish to discuss your disability requirements further, please contact HRConnect.

## **Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form**

**Please note, this form is regarded as part of your application and failure to complete and return it will result in disqualification.**

For guidance on completing the Monitoring Form and to read the NICS Equal Opportunities Policy Statement to which AFBI adheres please refer to page 24.

All applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit. Applications are particularly welcomed from Roman Catholics and Females as these groups are currently under-represented within AFBI.

AFBI IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES EMPLOYER

## **Assessment Information**

It is HRConnect policy that all candidates invited to attend for assessment brings sufficient documentation to satisfy the eligibility/shortlisting criteria and the Nationality and Vetting requirements. Further details regarding acceptable documentation will be issued with an invitation to attend for assessment.

You should ensure that these documents are readily available.

## **Employment Requirements**

HRConnect must ensure that you are legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom.

Entry to the United Kingdom is controlled under the Immigration Act 1971. Everyone who does not have the right of abode is subject to immigration control. You should check whether there are any restrictions on your stay or your freedom to take or change employment before you apply for a post. If you are invited to interview we will ask you to provide documentation confirming that you are entitled to work in the UK, under the terms of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996.

Advice on entitlement to work may be obtained from the Home Office website, [www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk).

## **Nationality Requirements**

There are no nationality requirements for AFBI posts.

## **Vetting Procedures**

### 1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

For this post the level of vetting is a Baseline Standard. For this check you will be required to provide the following:

- a) Your passport OR
- b) A document verifying your permanent National Insurance number (e.g. P45, P60 or National Insurance card) AND your birth certificate which includes the names of your parents (long version).
- c) Other acceptable documents are listed on [www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk).
- d) A specimen signature at any assessment event and have this validated against passport, driving licence, application form etc.

We will organise a Criminal Record Check on all applicants to be carried out by AccessNI. The category of AccessNI check required for this post is;

### **Basic Disclosure Certificate**

You should not put off applying for a post because you have a conviction. We deal with all criminal record information in a confidential manner, and information relating to convictions is destroyed after a decision is made.

**PLEASE NOTE:** It is a criminal offence for anyone who is included on a barred list to work or seek work, in regulated activity.

For more information, the address of the AccessNI website is: <http://www.accessni.gov.uk/>. Those applicants who are being considered for appointment will be contacted by HRConnect, normally after interview/test, and will be asked to complete the AccessNI application form. This can be downloaded from the AccessNI website. Guidance notes of the completion of the form are also included on the website. Please note that a request to complete this form should not be seen as a guarantee of an offer of appointment. Failure to complete the above form and return it within the specified time will be regarded as 'no longer interested in the position' and your application will be withdrawn.

Criminal Record information is subject to the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978.

## **Order of Merit**

The selection panel will assess candidates against the interview criteria. Those candidates who meet the required standard(s) and pass mark will be deemed suitable for appointment. The selection panel will then list those suitable for appointment in order of merit with the highest scoring applicant ranked first. HRConnect will allocate a candidate (or candidates) to a vacancy (or vacancies) in the order listed. The order of merit is valid for one year.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### **Pensions**

New entrants who join the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) are eligible to join the NICS pension scheme.

Further details can be found on the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (Northern Ireland) website at:

<http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni/index/new-members.htm>

or

if you are unable to access the website please contact Civil Service Pensions as follows:

Civil Service Pensions  
Waterside House  
75 Duke Street  
Londonderry  
BT47 6FP  
Tel: 02871 319000  
Email: [cspensions.cpg@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto:cspensions.cpg@dfpni.gov.uk)

### **Feedback**

AFBI is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit and select staff are fair. We are consequently committed to providing feedback in respect of decisions taken in determining eligibility/shortlisting as well as at interview. Feedback in respect of eligibility/shortlisting will be communicated automatically to those candidates who fail to satisfy any criteria. All requests for feedback are welcome.

THIS INFORMATION PACK DOES NOT FORM PART OF  
CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

**Please apply online or post your hardcopy completed application form to the HRConnect Recruitment Team:**

HRConnect  
PO Box 1089  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
The Metro Building  
6-9 Donegall Square South  
Belfast  
BT1 9EW

**NOTE:** Late applications or applications received by fax or email will not be accepted.

**Contact details:**

If you have any queries regarding the competition process please contact HRConnect at the address above or by;

**Email:** [Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net](mailto:Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net)  
**Tel:** 0800 1 300 330  
**Fax:** 028 9024 1665

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

### Policy Statement

The Northern Ireland Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy statement to which AFBI adheres is set out below.

“The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) has a strong and clear commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. It is our policy that all eligible persons shall have equal opportunity for employment and advancement in the NICS on the basis of their ability, qualifications and aptitude for the work. Everyone has a right to equality of opportunity and to a good and harmonious working environment and atmosphere where they are treated with dignity and respect. We aim to provide opportunities for all sections of the community and continue to strive to create an inclusive working environment in which difference is recognised and valued. Bringing together people from diverse backgrounds and giving each person the opportunity to contribute their skills and experience will help us to respond more effectively to the needs of the people we serve”.

We all want to work in an harmonious workplace where we feel valued, respected and included, irrespective of gender, including gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, race/ethnic origin, religious belief or political opinion, disability, having or not having dependants, sexual orientation and age.

In order to provide a high quality service to the people of Northern Ireland the NICS needs to attract, recruit, develop and retain the very best people at all levels. Our approach is based on three key principles:-

**Equality** – we promote equality of opportunity by seeking to remove barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups of people.

**Diversity** – we accept each person as an individual. Our success is built on our ability to embrace diversity – and we believe that everyone should feel valued for their contributions. By working together we will deliver the best possible service for our staff, customers and stakeholders.

**Inclusion** – we create a working culture where differences are not merely accepted, but valued; where everyone has the opportunity to develop in a way that is consistent with, and adheres to NICS values of impartiality, honesty, integrity and objectivity. Our aim is to be an organisation where people feel involved, respected and connected to our success.

It is the responsibility of all staff to be aware of and to apply this policy. Both Management and Trade Union Side are fully committed to the policy and will endeavour to ensure its full implementation.

## **Equal Opportunities Monitoring**

Equality monitoring is the process of collecting, storing and analysing information that is relevant to and necessary for the purpose of promoting equality of opportunity between different categories of persons. This section sets out what information is collected, the reasons for doing so and what it is used for.

You should note that the Monitoring Form is regarded as part of your application and failure to fully complete and return it will result in disqualification. The Monitoring Form will be processed separately and neither the form nor the details contained in it will be available to those considering your application.

Monitoring equality and diversity in the workforce enables the NICS to examine how our employment policies and processes are working and to identify areas where these appear to be impacting disproportionately on certain groups of staff.

### **Legislative Context**

This section explains the reasons for gathering this information by setting out the legislative background.

#### **Gender**

The Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended) makes it unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the grounds of his or her sex. Information on gender is also provided in the annual statutory monitoring the, as required by the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between men and women generally.

#### **Age**

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006 make it unlawful for employers and others to discriminate on grounds of age. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different ages and age groups.

#### **Community Background**

The Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 outlaws discrimination on the basis of religious belief or political opinion. The Order also requires the NICS to submit an annual monitoring return to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. This takes the form of a statistical return, providing information on the gender and community background composition of all people working in the NICS at the 1st January each year.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief and political opinion. Following guidance issued in July 2007 by the Equality Commission

for NI the NICS has decided to use “community background” information as a proxy for political opinion.

### **Disability**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the DDA) provides protection for disabled persons against discrimination on the grounds of disability.

The DDA defines disability as a “physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

This definition is interpreted as follows:-

**Physical Impairment:** this includes, for instance, a weakening of part of the body (eyes, ears, limbs, internal organs etc) caused through illness by accident or from birth. Examples would be blindness, deafness, paralysis of a leg or heart disease.

**Mental Impairment:** this includes mental ill health and what is commonly known as learning disability, and social functioning.

**Substantial:** put simply, this means the effect of the physical or mental impairment on ability to carry out normal day to day activities is more than minor or trivial. It does not have to be a severe effect.

**Long-term adverse effect:** the effect has to have lasted or be likely to last overall for at least 12 months and the effect must be a detrimental one. A person with a life expectancy of less than 12 months is of course covered if the effect is likely to last for the whole of that time.

**A normal day to day activity:** this is something which is carried out by most people on a fairly regular and frequent basis such as washing, eating, catching a bus or turning on a television. It does not mean something so individual as playing a musical instrument to a professional standard or doing everything involved in a particular job.

### ***What sort of effect must there be?***

The person must be affected in at least one of the respects listed in the DDA: mobility; manual dexterity; physical co-ordination; continence; ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects; speech; hearing or eyesight; memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; ability to take part in normal social interaction and form social relationships; or perception of risk of physical danger.

### ***What happens if the effects are reduced by medication or other treatment?***

Broadly speaking, the effects that matter are those that would be present if there was no medication or treatment taking place. The exception is people who wear spectacles or contact lenses when what matters is the effect that remain while the spectacles or contact lenses are being used.

***Are there any types of condition covered by special provisions in the DDA?***

Yes, because some people with particular conditions might not otherwise be counted as disabled. These are provisions covering:

Recurring or fluctuating conditions such as arthritis, where the effects can sometimes be less than substantial, which are treated as continuing to have a substantial adverse effect so long as that effect is likely to recur;

Conditions which progressively deteriorate, such as motor neuron disease, which count as having a substantial effect from the first time they have any effect at all on ability to carry out normal day to day activities even if it is not substantial, so long as there is eventually likely to be a substantial adverse effect; and

People with cancer, HIV, or multiple sclerosis are deemed to be disabled people from the point of diagnosis, regardless of whether or not they have any symptoms.

***Are any conditions not covered?***

Yes, the following conditions specifically do not count as impairments:

Addiction to or dependency on alcohol, nicotine or any other substance (unless resulting from the substance being medically prescribed);

Seasonal allergic rhinitis (e.g. hay fever) unless it aggravates the effect of another condition;

Tendency to set fires, or steal, or physically or sexually abuse other persons;

Exhibitionism and voyeurism;

Severe disfigurements consisting of tattoos, non-medical body piercing or attachments to such piercing are not treated as having substantial adverse effects.

***What if someone has recovered from a disability?***

Much of the DDA also applies to people who have had a disability in the past (for example, someone who was disabled by mental ill health) but have now fully recovered. People who were registered disabled under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act (NI) 1945 both on 12 January 1995 and 2 December 1996 will be regarded as having had a disability in the past if they do not in any case fall within the definition of the DDA.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons with a disability and persons without.

***Race***

The Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different racial group(s).

***Sexual Orientation***

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) Order 2003 makes it unlawful for employers and others to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation. In order to monitor the effectiveness of NICS policies

information is gathered on sexual orientation. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different sexual orientation.

### **Marital Status**

The Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended), makes it unlawful to discriminate against married persons and civil partners in employment. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different marital status.

### **Dependants Status**

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions in NI, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons with dependants and persons without.

### **Confidentiality of Monitoring Information**

The following general principles will be applied to all individual monitoring information:-

- individual monitoring information will be afforded a high degree of confidentiality;
- misuse of monitoring information will be viewed as a disciplinary offence; and
- individual monitoring information will only be disclosed to members of staff or officials of a trade union, members of which are employed in the NICS, if it is necessary to do so for the appropriate discharge of their duties and responsibilities.

In addition to the above internal safeguards on the protection of equality monitoring information generally, the confidentiality of community background monitoring information is protected through Regulations made under the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (FETO). These make it a criminal offence, subject to specific exceptions, for an employer or employee to disclose information on the community background of an individual which has been obtained, or is used, for the purpose of monitoring under FETO.

As with other forms of personal data, the obtaining, use, storage and disclosure of monitoring information is covered by the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). Monitoring information is held on computer and is protected by a high level of security. Access to this data is restricted to those NICS staff, employees of HRConnect and Trade Union officials whose duties make it necessary for them to have it. Misuse of monitoring information is viewed as a disciplinary offence.