



## **Candidate Information Booklet**

**IRC247119**

### **Seabed Habitat Mapping: Senior Scientific Officer (SSO)**

Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute

Completed Application Forms must be returned to HRConnect no later than 12 noon (UK time) on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

## **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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## **ABOUT THE AGRI-FOOD AND BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE**

**AFBI is a leading provider of scientific research and services to government, non-governmental organisations and commercial companies.**

In line with AFBI's mission of "using scientific excellence to advance the local and global agri-food sector", the Institute has developed a reputation of being an influential, internationally recognised, centre for innovation in agri-food and biosciences providing high quality and locally relevant science. Our "2020 Strategy" includes plans for an ambitious programme of capital investment in AFBI's infrastructure, improved facilities at AFBI Hillsborough and a new veterinary sciences building, which will give us one of the most modern laboratory and ancillary estate infrastructures of any agri-food research institute in Europe.

As the Northern Ireland government's main research and statutory testing provider in the areas of agri-food, fisheries and the environment, AFBI plays a major role in the Northern Ireland knowledge economy. AFBI's scale, relationships with a wide range of international research organisations and close links with local industry mean that it is ideally placed to carry out research that is of both global and local impact. AFBI's science is outcome-driven and aimed at solving important practical problems for a wide range of local, national and international customers in the public and private sectors. Our staff carry out world class scientific research, surveillance, and analytic and diagnostic testing for a wide range of customers in the fields of animal health and welfare, sustainable agricultural systems, plant science, food innovation and safety, environmental protection, fisheries and aquatic ecosystems, and agricultural and rural economics.

AFBI was established on 1 April 2006 as a non-departmental public body and is sponsored by Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). It is responsible 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 approximately 650 people, with a budget of approximately £55 million. Details of AFBI's most recently published income and expenditure are available on its website.

AFBI is located on seven sites across the province, with its headquarters at Newforge Lane, Belfast. The AFBI sites are at Newforge Lane (1), Stoney Road, Stormont (2), Crossnacreevy (3), Hillsborough (4), Loughgall (5), Omagh (6) and Bushmills (7), along with a sea going research vessel, the RV Corystes (8).



## BRANCH BACKGROUND

AFBI has two science divisions namely the Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division (SAFSD) and the Veterinary Sciences Division. Within SAFSD, the Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems Branch (FAEB) conducts research and development, monitoring and technology transfer in support of the sustainable management of productive, healthy and biodiverse marine and freshwater ecosystems, including its fishery and aquatic resources, focusing particularly on the needs of Northern Ireland. Currently, approximately 63 staff, together with contract staff and postgraduate students are based at FAEB. FAEB is particularly well resourced, with a 53m marine research vessel, the RV *Corystes*, underpinning the marine science programme.

FAEB conducts science programmes across several core areas:

- Marine Fisheries
- Coastal Zone Science and Oceanography
- Freshwater Fisheries

Individually and in combination, these core areas aim to sustain multidisciplinary research programmes that merit national and international recognition. The successful candidate will work within the Coastal Zone Science and Oceanography group of FAEB.

The Coastal Zone Science and Oceanography group aims to provide evidence-based research to develop an ecosystem-based approach to the management of Northern Ireland's coastal and regional waters. This is approached through a variety of research themes covering areas such as coastal oceanography and water quality, seabed mapping, shellfish management and environmental impact assessments. The group collects data using the AFBI research vessel *Corystes*, data recovered from moorings deployed at sea and ad-hoc surveys to develop the science that informs policy and supports the management of the marine environment.

This is a scientific post, with the post holder working as a project leader of the coastal science group at FAEB carrying out seabed ecosystem assessments particularly in relation to sustainable marine resource management in support of policy customers under the relevant environmental drivers. The post holder will act as an expert on the ecology and functioning of marine benthic habitats for AFBI and provide informed opinion to Government departments on issues relating to the sensitivity and management of seabed habitats in Northern Ireland.

The work will necessarily require travelling and will also include working at sea in all weather conditions and during unsocial hours and at weekends. Typically working at sea requires people to carry out physically demanding work and manual handling, handling of marine organisms, putting up with adverse

conditions at sea for long periods of time (motion sickness) and working in close proximity with others (i.e. shared sleeping quarters).

## **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 permanent or Fixed Term vacancies which may arise. The successful candidate will be an employee of AFBI.

### **Salary**

The salary for the post will be within the range £37,272 - £40,979, within which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff 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.

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 unsociable hours and some evening and weekend working. AFBI operates a flexi working system.

### **Location**

The successful candidate will normally be based at AFBI Newforge, Belfast BT9 5PX. They may also be expected to work at other AFBI sites as required. The successful candidate will be required to work at sea in inclement conditions within a team of scientists for up to a total of 50 days per year on trips of up to two weeks duration on research and chartered vessels engaged in scientific studies.

### **Travel**

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

## **Training**

Appropriate training will be provided, where required, to enable the successful candidate to carry out the full range of assigned duties. The candidate will be required to successfully undertake a personal sea survival course before any appointment can be confirmed.

## **Medical**

The post holder will be required to participate in scientific surveys on board the AFBI research vessel and from time to time on other vessels. It will be a condition of appointment that the post holder must hold an ENG 1 seafarers medical certificate, or be able to pass a seagoing medical ENG 1 examination. A sea survival course also must be successfully undertaken before any appointment can be confirmed.

## **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 Philip White, Telephone 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 Coastal Zone Sciences Programme leader (Principal Scientific Officer – Grade 7) and the main duties of the post will be:

### 1. Initiation and delivery of research and development programmes

- The post-holder will lead projects to map the seabed of Northern Ireland's Coastal Zone and immediate offshore area. Initially focus will be on the development of evidence based marine management plans for fisheries and other key habitats and the ecosystem response to external pressures. This programme represents a long-term commitment to this benthic habitat mapping and ecology. He/she will have specific responsibilities for the biological dimension of the work, including the quantitative application of the use of remote sensing, underwater video and other new technologies.
- The post-holder will also propose, after discussions with his/her line manager and other scientists, research projects that address the functioning and management of marine habitats. This research should assist in the development of policy and management strategies by Government Departments and the need for compliance with legislation relevant to the benthic quality of the coastal waters of Northern Ireland. He/she should also endeavour to attract outside funding to the Branch.
- The post-holder will supervise and participate in these projects and ensure that conclusions arising are communicated to appropriate stakeholders. The post-holder will be expected to initiate data collection, analysis, interpret outputs, prepare reports arising from the projects and publish findings in high quality scientific journals.
- To provide specialist advice on marine benthic resources to DAERA and other funders as appropriate.

### 2. Secure funding and work with funders

- To secure research funding from DAERA, EU and other funders, as appropriate, and to establish and maintain good relationships with these funders. To oversee the management of the contractual and financial aspects of research projects and contracts. To ensure that allocated budgets are handled in a manner compliant with AFBI procedures, and to supply appropriate financial data to project funders when required to do so.

### 3. Manage staff and resources

- To provide leadership and manage research staff, technical staff and other staff as appropriate, in compliance with all relevant AFBI health and safety and staff management practices. To oversee the management of all aspects of facilities and equipment used by the

FAEB and ensure all resources are utilised to greatest effect and properly maintained.

4. Establish and maintain linkages with other research groups

- To establish and maintain linkages with other research groups in the UK and Ireland and internationally to ensure that, where possible, research is carried out collaboratively and that AFBI's research is widely recognised.

5. To undertake data interpretation, the publication of results and report writing

- To oversee and carry out the accurate collation of research data, appropriate statistical analyses, data interpretation and publication of results in peer-reviewed scientific journals. To prepare reports (e.g. press articles and other material) as required to ensure effective technology transfer of relevant results, and to meet the contractual requirements of research programmes. To communicate the outcomes of research projects to stakeholders and to the scientific community, and to provide a lead to policy on issues arising from research programmes, when appropriate. This will necessitate the job holder having written skills of a high standard.

6. To undertake continuous professional development

- To maintain an up-to-date knowledge of scientific literature in relevant areas and to demonstrate personal development in all relevant areas of managing research programmes, staff and resources.

7. Student supervision

- The post holder may be required to co-supervise postgraduate students involved in research programmes.

8. To fulfil other duties

- The post holder will be required to fulfil any other duties and responsibilities as determined by management that fall within the remit of the post. The job description is not intended to be rigid and inflexible. Rather, it should be regarded as working guidelines within which the postholder will work.

**This list is not exclusive and the successful candidate will be required to carry out other duties as allocated by management.**

**Working on board vessels will be a physically demanding job with significant manual handling and the handling of aquatic organisms. The post holder will be required to be sufficiently fit to work on a moving platform for prolonged periods of time and, as part of a two person**

**team, lift/move baskets/boxes/instruments of approximately 2-50kg in weight.**

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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

1. PhD in an appropriate scientific discipline, for example, marine benthic ecology, geology, marine resource assessment or environmental science with a strong marine ecology element;
2. At least 3 years' post graduate experience, gained within the last 8 years, of marine benthic ecology and seabed mapping projects or programmes;
3. At least 3 years' experience, gained within the last 8 years, of initiating and conducting innovative scientific studies in marine science, including evidence of analysing and interpretation of the results. This research period shall include any period spent in gaining a post-graduate qualification;
4. Successful delivery of at least one paper in a peer-reviewed scientific journal and proven ability to deliver oral scientific presentations. (\*Candidates must provide evidence of this by submitting a fully cited bibliography)

\* Candidates must provide evidence of eligibility criterion 4 by submitting a fully cited bibliography (authors, paper title, journal title, volume and page numbers) of **all** publications and stakeholder presentations. 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: [recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net](mailto:recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net)

The bibliography should be marked with the relevant competition reference number (IRC247119), competition title and your full name.

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.

## SHORTLISTING CRITERIA

A sift of all application forms received will be carried out by the appointed selection panel to assess each applicant against the eligibility criteria. The selection panel will reach a decision as to whether or not an applicant meets each criterion on the basis of the evidence provided on their application form. This will be completed on a scored basis for criteria 2 – 4 with a minimum score set for each criterion. Only those applicants assessed as meeting all essential criteria will be eligible to proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

However, in the case of a high volume of applicants the Institute may decide to limit the number of applicants it invites for interview in a proportionate manner. In this instance all applicants who meet the essential requirements will be listed in merit order according to their total score and the highest scoring applicants will proceed to interview.

In providing evidence for each of these eligibility 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**

**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.**
- **The panel may decide to interview only those applicants who appear, from the information available, to be most suitable in terms of relevant experience and ability.**
- **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. In addition, although AFBI is outside NICS, 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 3** for the purpose of personal and professional development.

This post is analogous to Deputy Principal Grade in the NICS.

### **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.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.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.

## **ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

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

### **PRESENTATION**

As part of the interview candidates will be required to make a presentation relevant to the responsibilities of the post lasting no longer than 7 minutes. Candidates will be advised of presentation topic when they report for interview and will be given a maximum of 30 minutes to prepare for their presentation. Candidates should therefore report for interview at least 45 minutes earlier than their scheduled interview appointment to allow time to prepare their presentation.

A flipchart and writing materials will be provided for candidates' use. No personal documentation may be brought in to the pre-interview room. Candidates will be allowed to bring any flipchart sheets and some short speaking notes into the interview room for assistance during the presentation (but note that use of the flipchart is not mandatory). No other materials or visual aids will be permitted.

Following the presentation, the panel may elect to ask questions on the presentation.

The presentation will be used to assess the Professional Knowledge and Skills competence.

#### **1. Professional Knowledge and 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 habitat mapping, benthic ecology, application of multibeam and camera data, with particular reference to marine spatial planning and sustainable marine ecosystem management.
- Applies knowledge and skills in the collection, collation, manipulation, analysis and interpretation of scientific data.
- Applies knowledge and skills in writing scientific and technical reports.

**Marks Available: 40**

**Pass mark: 24**

## **2. Making effective decisions**

Effectiveness in this area is about being objective, using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to provide accurate, expert and professional advice. It means showing clarity of thought, setting priorities, analysing and using evidence to evaluate options before arriving at well-reasoned, justifiable decisions.

**Marks Available: 20**

**Pass mark: 12**

## **3. Collaborating and partnering**

Create and maintain positive, professional and collaborative working relationships with a range of people within the marine seabed mapping science field to support delivery of policy and business objectives and goals.

**Marks Available 10**

## **4. Seeing the big picture**

Being able to have an in-depth understanding and knowledge of how own role fits with, and supports, organisational or work area objectives. Demonstrate ability to focus activities to ensure alignment with wider goals and priorities.

**Marks Available: 10**

## **5. Delivering value for money**

Demonstrate the ability to identify and bid for resources; manage resource use efficiently, effectively and economically to delivery services to customers, while maintaining the quality of the service delivery.

**Marks Available: 10**

## **6. Leading and communicating**

Demonstrates ability to develop teams and individuals to enhance performance and meet business objectives, Communicates in a way that is clear concise, timely and relevant to the audience..

**Marks Available: 10**

**Total marks available: 100**

**Overall pass mark: 60**



## **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.

No notes or personal documentation may be brought into the interview room.

## **INTERVIEWS**

It is intended that interviews for this post will take place in AFBI, Newforge during October 2019.

## 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.

### **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 permanent or fixed term 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 17.

As Roman Catholics are currently known to be under represented in this grade, applications from the Roman Catholic section of the community would be particularly welcome.

All applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit

AFBI IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES EMPLOYER

### **Assessment Information**

It is HRConnect policy that all candidates invited to attend for assessment bring sufficient documentation to satisfy the eligibility 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 posts in the AFBI 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.

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, the (PCSPS (NI)) – NUVOS arrangement. Pension is an important part of the reward package for civil servants and, on average, employers pay more than 18% of pay towards pension costs. As well as providing you with an easy and secure way to help you provide for your retirement, the PCSPS (NI) also provides dependants and ill health benefits.

We offer all new employees the choice of either:

- Nuvos - a high quality, index-linked defined benefit pension scheme that currently has a 3.5% member contribution rate. Your employing Department also makes contributions; or
- Partnership in a stakeholder type money purchase arrangement with an employer contribution. The employer basic contribution is based on your age, and this is paid regardless of whether you choose to contribute. You do not have to contribute if you do not wish to, but if you do your employing Department will match your contributions up to an additional 3% of pay. Your employing Department will also pay a further contribution, of 0.8% of pay, to the PCSPS (NI) to cover you for Death in Service benefits.

If you previously worked for an employer covered by the PCSPS (NI) arrangements, different conditions may apply. If you already have a PCSPS (NI) pension in payment, you should be aware that the pension scheme rules prevent members from receiving more by way of pay and pension combined on re-employment than they were earning as salary before they retired. This is called “abatement”. If you want to know more about how this may affect you, please contact Civil Service Pensions at:

Waterside House,  
75 Duke Street,  
Londonderry,  
BT47 6FP;  
Tel: 028 7131 9000;  
Email: [cspensions.cpg@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto:cspensions.cpg@dfpni.gov.uk)

If you left the NICS with an early retirement, severance or redundancy package then your existing benefits may be affected if you accept this post. If your service was enhanced (increased) when you left then you will not be able to build up benefits in the defined benefit scheme during the period that is covered by the enhancement included in your existing benefits. If you opt to join the Partnership arrangement, employer contributions will not be payable

for this enhancement period but you will be able to contribute if you wish. If you are receiving a pension or annual compensation payment then this may be reduced during your re-employment. If you received a top-up payment under the early severance temporary arrangements then your pay may be reduced during your re-employment. If you want to know more about this, please contact Civil Service Pensions.

You may be able to transfer a pension with your current or a previous employer into the PCSPS (NI). Information on Transfers In can be found in the New Entrant Pack which you should receive on taking up employment.

### **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

**Completed application forms should be sent 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)

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## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Policy Statement**

The Northern Ireland Civil Service Equal Opportunities Policy statement to which AFBI adheres is set out below.

“The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) is committed to providing equality of opportunity. 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 in which all workers are encouraged to apply their diverse talents and in which no worker feels under threat or intimidated. This right is protected in many instances by legislation.

In order to provide a high quality service to the people of Northern Ireland the NICS needs to recruit, retain and promote the best available people. Our equal opportunities policy is central to this strategy. We aim to foster a culture which encourages every member of staff to develop his or her full potential and which rewards achievement. Creating a working environment where individual differences are valued and respected enables all staff to give of their best and helps us to respond more effectively to the needs of the people we serve.

The NICS seeks to maintain the confidence of the whole community. It will continue to promote equality of opportunity and fair participation within the framework of the law and will strive to achieve a workforce that is broadly representative of the society which it serves.

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.

### **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 necessary to enable the completion of the annual statutory monitoring return, 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 age.

**Community Background**

The Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 outlaws discrimination on the basis of religious belief or political opinion. The information requested in the Community Background section of the monitoring form is required in connection with the requirements of the above Order and to enable the completion of the annual statutory monitoring return to the Equality Commission for NI.

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**

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. 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.

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; 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.

**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.

**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 & Dependants**

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 and between persons with dependants and persons without.

**Use of Monitoring Information**

Monitoring information is used to enable the NICS to assess the effectiveness of its EO policies and to determine the impact (if any) of various policies and procedures on different categories of staff. In addition to this internal focus community background and gender information on both staff and applicants is used to complete the annual statutory monitoring return to the Equality Commission.

**Confidentiality of Monitoring Information**

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.

The confidentiality of community background information is also protected through regulations made under the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) 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 used for the purposes of monitoring under FETO.

The release of an individual's monitoring information is permitted by legislation as part of prospective or actual proceedings under equality legislation, e.g. where another individual has made a complaint of alleged discrimination.

Many people from all backgrounds in Northern Ireland and beyond are interested in the profile of the NICS workforce and the candidates who apply for jobs. For this reason the NICS regularly publishes data in the form of statistical summaries, graphs etc. On occasions it may also be necessary to use monitoring information to answer questions from Assembly Members, MPs and MEPs or to respond to requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act. In all cases where information is made public, the format of presentation will be such that it will not be possible to identify any individual's information.