

**Candidate  
Information  
Booklet**

**IRC250703  
Water Management Unit – Higher  
Scientific Officer (HScO)**

**Northern Ireland Environment  
Agency (NIEA)**

**Department of Agriculture,  
Environment and Rural Affairs  
(DAERA)**

**Completed Application Forms  
must be returned to  
HRConnect no later than 12  
noon (UK time) on  
*Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020***

**Please retain a copy of this  
booklet for your reference  
throughout the selection  
process.**

**Department of Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

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**Sustainability at the heart of a living,  
working, active landscape valued by  
everyone**

**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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## **FOREWORD**

Thank you for your interest in this post of Higher Scientific Officer in the Water Management Unit of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). NIEA contributes to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs' vision of "Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone".

An important element of our work involves co-operating with other Government departments and agencies to limit adverse impacts upon the environment.

The Agency has a wide range of scientific and professional skills and expertise among its staff. This skills and experience base allows us to manage and protect our landscapes and their wildlife, and to maintain a healthier environment.

If you believe you have the skills and experience to undertake this post, I would be delighted if you would take the next step and complete and submit the application form.

**Tracey Teague**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Northern Ireland Environment Agency**

## **BACKGROUND**

### **DAERA BACKGROUND**

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has responsibility for food, farming, environmental, fisheries, forestry and sustainability policy and the development of the rural sector in Northern Ireland. The Department assists the sustainable development of the agri-food, environmental, fishing and forestry sectors of the Northern Ireland economy, having regard for the needs of the consumers, the protection of human, animal and plant health, the welfare of animals and the conservation and enhancement of the environment.

DAERA provides a business development service for farmers and growers and a veterinary service for administration of animal health and welfare. The Department's College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) delivers training and further and higher education courses in the agri-food sector. DAERA is responsible to the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in Great Britain for the administration of schemes affecting the whole of the United Kingdom. The Department also oversees the application of European Union agricultural, environmental, fisheries and rural development policy to Northern Ireland.

The Department is currently preparing for BREXIT working closely with our partners in Northern Ireland and with colleagues in the other UK Administrations.

### **DAERA VISION AND STRATEGIC GOALS**

#### **Vision**

“Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone”

#### **Strategic Outcomes**

1. Sustainable agri-food, fisheries, forestry and industrial sectors.
2. A clean, healthy environment, benefiting people, nature and the economy.
3. A thriving rural economy, contributing to prosperity and wellbeing.
4. A well-led, high performing organisation focused on outcomes.

#### **DAERA Top Management Group comprises:-**

- Forest Service, Rural Affairs and Estate Transformation
- Central Services and Contingency Planning
- Veterinary Service Animal Health Group
- Environment Marine and Fisheries Group; and
- Food and Farming Group

## **DAERA has two Executive Agencies:**

- Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)
- Forest Service

The Department also sponsors a number of NDPBs including the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI).

The Permanent Secretary of DAERA is Dr Denis McMahon.

## **NORTHERN IRELAND ENVIRONMENT AGENCY**

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is an Executive Agency within DAERA. The NIEA has two Divisions; namely Resource Efficiency Division and Natural Environment Division.

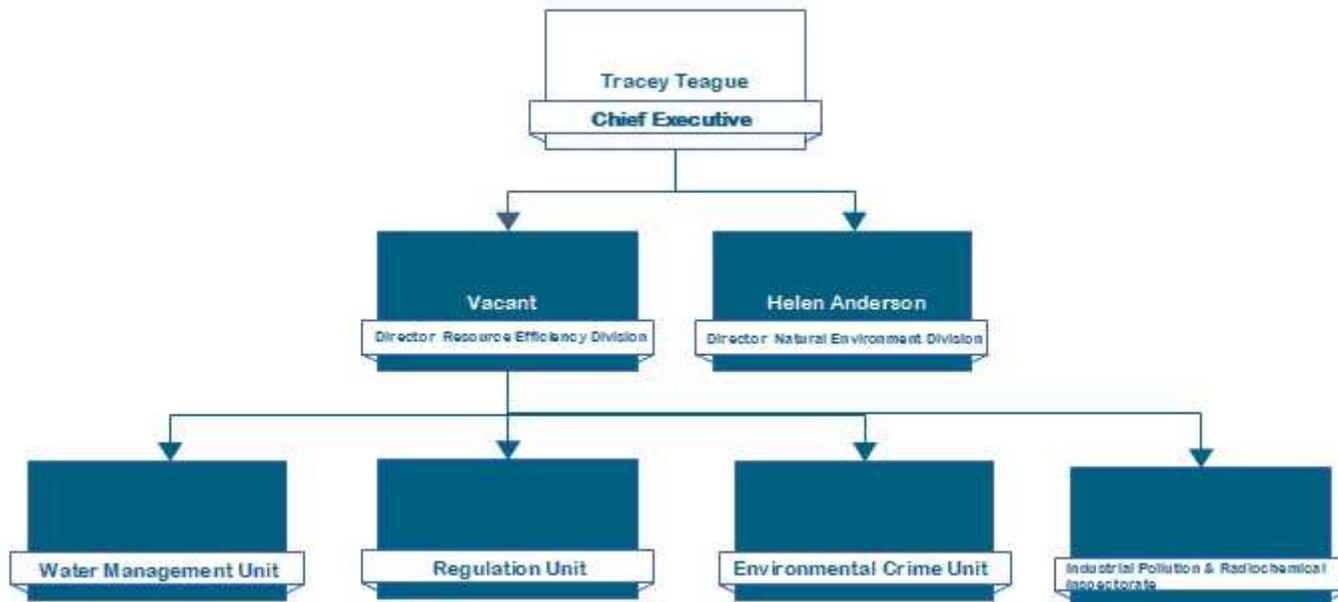
The role of NIEA is to:

- promote both public awareness of environmental issues and action to deal with them;
- regulate adverse human impacts upon the environment;
- work in partnership with others to protect the environment;
- protect public health through regulation of drinking water quality;
- provide financial support to others to encourage action to protect the environment;
- manage our properties to promote public access to, and understanding of, the environment; and
- advise Government and other key sectors on environmental issues.

NIEA has over 440 staff, the greater percentage being scientific and technical staff, at its headquarter buildings in Belfast, Lisburn and a number of regional locations.

Further information about NIEA can be obtained on the Internet at [www.daera-ni.gov.uk/northern-ireland-environment-agency](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/northern-ireland-environment-agency) .

## Organisational Chart



## **Resource Efficiency Division**

The Resource Efficiency Division is the largest Division within the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). The Division is responsible for a diverse range of activities and seeks to safeguard the quality of the environment through effective regulation of activities that have the potential to impact on air, water and land. This involves engagement with businesses and the public to provide information and advice; monitoring, recording, reporting and setting standards for compliance; issuing consents, licences, permits and authorisations and enforcing legislation.

### **Water Management Unit**

The Water Management Unit (WMU), sits within Resource Efficiency Division. Under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, it has a duty to promote the conservation of the water resources of Northern Ireland and the quality and cleanliness of water both in waterways and underground.

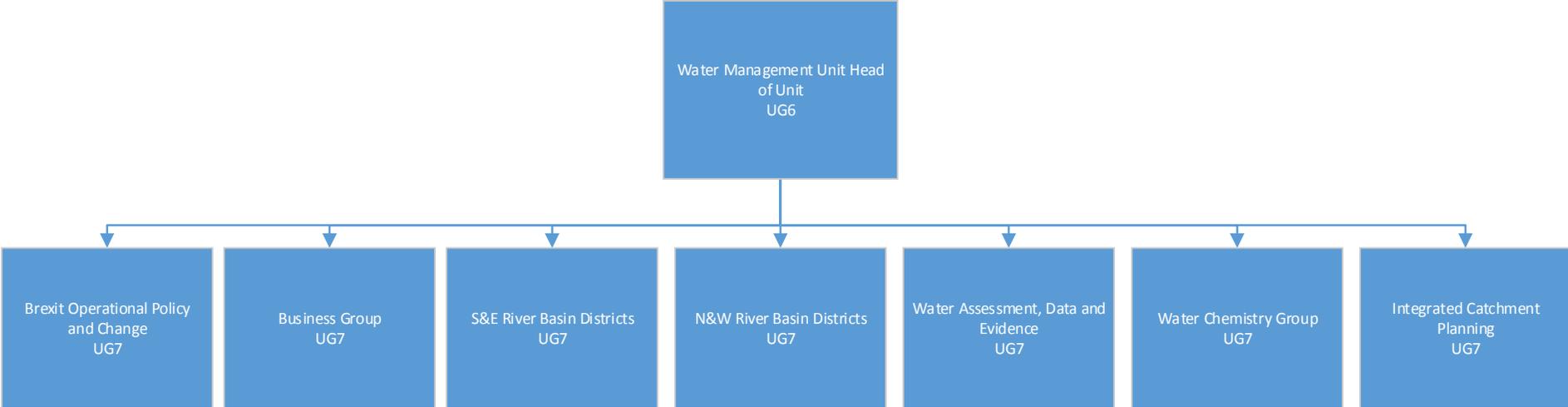
In doing so, the NIEA must take into account the needs of industry and agriculture, the protection of fisheries, the protection of public health, the preservation of amenities, and the conservation of flora and fauna.

The WMU protects the aquatic environment through a number of activities including:

- monitoring water quality;
- preparing water quality management plans;
- catchment management;
- taking action to combat or minimize the effects of pollution;
- supporting environmental research;
- coordinating production of draft River Basin Management Plans with partners;
- enforcement;
- pollution prevention;
- agricultural regulation.

Much of this work is guided by a complex mesh of international agreements, EU directives and regulations, together with UK and NI domestic policy and legislation.

**Organisational Chart**



## **Brexit Operational Policy and Change Team**

The Brexit Operational Policy and Change Team is a small team leading development of redesigned operational policy and inspection regimes to replace existing EU derived legislation covering the freshwater aquatic environment to ensure operational policy is both efficient and fit for purpose in order to continue improvement in water quality in a post Brexit environment. This includes the development and recommendation of new options, approaches and strategies for the implementation of important organisational changes to ensure WMU remains effective and fit for purpose both in the run up to Brexit and subsequently.

## **Business Group**

The WMU Business Group is currently divided into two teams: the Development Management Team is a technical support team within the Unit, whose primary function is to assess planning consultations on behalf of the unit. The Business support team, looks after budgets, facilities management, workforce planning and correspondence management and co-ordination (including FOI/EIR).

## **River Basin Districts (S&E and N&W)**

The River Basin District Groups (N&W and S&E) sit within the Water Management Unit of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and support the Agency's target of achieving good water quality as required under the European Water Framework Directive (WFD) through effective monitoring and regulation of activities that have the potential to impact on water quality.

The River Basin District teams work across three areas of responsibility: agricultural regulation, catchment operations and catchment management to safeguard the environment aiming to achieve good water quality.

**Agricultural Regulations** - are responsible for conducting Cross Compliance inspections for all statutory requirements managed by NIEA. The teams also contribute to the development, implementation and review of appropriate policies, strategies, plans and procedures in relation to the impacts of agriculture on the water environment. The work includes reviewing nutrient management plans, agricultural planning applications, ensuring compliance with Nutrient Action Programme (NAP) Regulations, conducting slurry storage and derogation calculations and conducting preparatory work relating to NAP and Cross Compliance visits. The team also processes authorisations under the Groundwater Regulations.

**Catchment Operations** - are responsible for operational response to water pollution incidents received through the pollution hotline taking appropriate enforcement action where necessary. Catchment operations provide pollution prevention and technical advice in relation to pollution from those activities likely to impact on the water environment.

**Catchment Management** - develop, implement and deliver a programme of catchment work that support the Agency's requirements under the Water Framework Directive. The team are responsible for assisting with on-the-ground identification and assessment of pressures and sources of impact that adversely affect the water environment via GIS and river walks. They also lead the way in engaging with stakeholders within the catchments including Government Departments / Agencies, industrialists, farmers, angling clubs and Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations.

### **Water Assessment, Data and Evidence (WADE)**

The Water Assessment, Data and Evidence Group carries out a range of activities associated with monitoring, assessment and reporting of the freshwater environment, primarily to fulfil obligations under EU Directives such as Water Framework Directive and Nitrates Directive. This scientific data and evidence is used to underpin strategies for the environment, land use, agriculture and industry, and is used to target actions to protect drinking water and aquatic ecosystems.

The Group comprises three teams :

**Freshwater Ecology**, which undertakes monitoring of rivers and lakes through the assessment of macroinvertebrates, aquatic plants, and algae, through field surveys, sampling and laboratory analysis. This team also carries out investigations, manages all freshwater monitoring programmes, and undertakes classification and reporting.

**Hydrology and Morphology** team undertake monitoring of river flows, lake and groundwater levels, and provide technical assessments, flow modelling, and advice in support of Water Order (NI) 1999 and the Water Abstraction and Impoundment (Licensing) Regulations (NI) 2006. The team also undertakes assessment of river morphology and habitats.

The **Data Analysis and Management** Team undertake GIS data analysis, management and publication of OPENDATA and associated web viewers, analysis of pressures on the water environment and reporting of data sets to EU as required under WFD, Nitrates Directive, and other obligations such as OSPAR.

### **Water Chemistry Group**

The Water Chemistry Group provides analytical services in the fulfilment of the Agency's obligations under EU Directives such as the Water Framework Directive.

The Group's laboratories provide scientific data used by policy makers to implement environmental strategies designed to protect and improve Northern Ireland's aquatic environment.

Its laboratory analysis is incorporated in evidence used in the Agency's regulatory enforcement cases in relation to breaches of legislation including

the Water (NI) Order 1999. Staff are required from time to time to provide expert witness advice in the event of prosecution proceedings.

The laboratories also deliver aquatic monitoring and assessment of Northern Ireland's surface waters and biota to an agreed plan, as well as carrying out investigative work and analysis relating to pollution cases.

The Group works across three analytical areas; inorganic, organic and metals analysis alongside support from the Sampling and Quality teams.

### **Integrated Catchment Planning Team**

The Integrated Catchment Management Team, is a small team responsible for the design, development, management and implementation of river basin management plans for Northern Ireland under the Water Framework Directive or post Brexit equivalent. The team is responsible for ensuring cooperation between DAERA, other NI government departments, NI Water, external bodies and the Republic of Ireland's statutory bodies and stakeholders, as NI is the only part of the UK that shares water bodies with another country. The team also ensures that post Brexit, NI can achieve good water quality through interactions with existing EU regulations and any national regulations arising as a result of Brexit.

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Higher Scientific Officers (HScO) within WMU report to either a Senior Scientific Officer (SScO) or Deputy Principal (DP).

The post could be in any one of the following WMU teams:

- River Basin Districts (S&E or N&W)
- Business Group – Development Management Team
- Integrated Catchment Planning
- Brexit Operational Policy and Change Team

The post holder's main duties and responsibilities in the different WMU teams will depend on the team in which the post holder is placed:

Duties relevant to the River Basin Districts, Business Group Development Management, Integrated Catchment Planning and Brexit Operational Policy and Change teams:

- Contribute to drafting of River Basin Plans (RBMPs) and related Water Framework Directive deliverables;
- Liaise with internal and external delivery partners/ stakeholders for Water Framework Directive Programme of Measures, RBMPs and related reporting;
- Contribute to the production and implementation of catchment action plans to deliver the objectives in the RBMPs to improve the water environment;
- Contribute to the formulation of strategies and policies that assist in delivering the objectives of the RBMPs;
- Participate in programmes to identify significant water pollution threats and take appropriate action to negate each risk;
- Assist with on-the-ground identification and assessment of pressures and sources of impact that adversely affect the water environment and the development of mitigating measures;
- Contribute to the management and coordination of the Unit's responses to development management consultations e.g. planning consultations;
- Preparation of reports that include the interpretation of scientific data against regulatory requirement, technical review and determination of applications for consents under the Water (NI) Order 1999;
- Contribute to the development, implementation and review of appropriate policies, strategies, plans and procedures in relation to the impacts of agriculture on the water environment. This will include reviewing nutrient management plans, agricultural planning applications, ensuring that anaerobic digesters are compliant with Nutrient Action Programme (NAP)

regulations, slurry storage and derogation calculations, co-ordination of risk assessments for NAP visits;

- Conduct cross compliance inspections for all statutory requirements managed by NIEA;
- Manage and maintain IT systems including online manure exports/fertilisation accounts, anaerobic digestate exports and derogation applications;
- Keep abreast of emerging issues within the agricultural regulation sector such as ammonia, digestate and green waste, nutrient management, and identify issues between waste, water and agricultural regulation;
- Engage in enforcement activities related to the Water (NI) Order 1999, and the Control of Pollution (Oil Storage) Regulations (NI) 2010;
- Dealing with queries, both verbally and in writing by drafting responses to enquiries from other government departments, the public, industry and NGOs. This includes contributing to Freedom of Information or Environmental Information Request queries; Private Office/Ministerial queries, press queries and external queries;
- Developing and maintaining good working relationships with key stakeholders (eg. NI Water, local councils, industry groups and bodies, environmental agencies, geological surveys etc), including other parts of NIEA, DAERA, other government departments and environmental regulators in the UK and Ireland/Europe;
- Contribute to stakeholder engagement and communications. Attend stakeholder meetings, site visits and necessary fieldwork. The Department has a number of vehicles at its disposal to allow staff to carry out fieldwork;
- Represent NIEA on relevant committees and working groups;
- Ensure both the post holder and their staff meet the requirements of departmental Health and Safety procedures and risk assessments;
- Provide support to line management and senior management as required in developing and delivering the team's objectives and reporting progress through the Unit's and team's operational plans;
- Source personal development opportunities to develop and update specific technical skills and knowledge as required by the post, for example completing relevant courses, self-study or attendance at relevant conferences/seminars;
- Contribute to the testing of the unit's business continuity plan to ensure continued service provision in the event of key services being interrupted;

- Contribute to the Department's EU exit priority programme;
- Line manage a small team of staff, potentially including both scientific and administrative grade staff.

Staff at HScO grade and above within WMU, may, from time to time (depending on business need), be asked if they wish to train and participate in the Duty Emergency Pollution Officer (DEPO) rota. The duties and responsibilities for this role will include:

- Participating in an on-call rota arrangement as part of a team that has a 24hr, 365 day pollution response capability to ensure water pollution incidents are assessed and responded to by Water Quality Inspectors in a timely and professional manner;
- The post holder will be required to drive a departmental vehicle and may have to attend reported incidents of water pollution outside of normal working hours, and at short notice. They may be required to drive departmental vehicles across rough terrain and off road in order to transport goods and equipment necessary for dealing with pollution incidents.

**The above list is not comprehensive but gives a good indication of the range and main duties of HScO posts in the above teams within WMU. The emphasis on particular duties will vary over time according to business needs and priorities.**

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

There is currently one permanent, full time vacancy at HScO grade within WMU and it is expected that there will be more during the period of this competition.

Further appointments may be made from this competition should NICS positions become vacant which have similar duties and responsibilities. Depending on the nature of posts, this list may be used to fill vacancies across Resource Efficiency Division.

### **Location**

The post holder will be based at NIEA, 17 Antrim Road, Tonagh, Lisburn BT28 3AL.

However, other vacancies at this grade may arise during the lifetime of this competition at various locations across the whole DAERA estate, including Ballykelly, in Northern Ireland.

### **Salary and Allowances**

Salary will be within the range £30,526 - £32,157 (under review) within which pay progression will be performance related.

Starting salary will be at the minimum of the scale. If the successful candidate is an existing civil servant, normal pay on promotion/re-grading arrangements will apply.

### **Pensions**

The NICS offers all employees an attractive pension package. Further details can be found on the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (Northern Ireland) website at [www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni)

### **Holidays**

In addition to public and privilege holidays, currently 12 days, the annual leave allowance will be 25 days, rising to 30 days after 5 years' service.

### **Hours of Work**

The normal conditioned hours of work are full-time: 42 hours per week which includes a 1 hour meal break (37 hours net) Monday to Friday. Most offices work flexi-time. On occasions the duties may include some evening and weekend working.

As these posts are fully operational and require the staff to spend considerable time undertaking physical duties there are health and safety requirements pertinent to these particular posts. Candidates for these posts

must have a reasonable level of fitness due to the physical elements of the post and be capable of giving regular and effective service.

### **Travel**

The successful candidates will be expected to travel throughout Northern Ireland if required. Travel within GB, ROI and Europe may also be required. The successful candidate must have a current driving license and/or access to a form of transport which will enable them to meet the requirements of the post in full.

### **Vetting**

An appointment will be dependent on the individual satisfying the vetting requirements for the post. The level of vetting required for this post is Basic.

### **Probation**

Confirmation of your appointment will be dependent upon the satisfactory completion of a probationary period of 1 year. If your performance, conduct or attendance during this period is not satisfactory your appointment may be terminated.

### **Career Development**

The NICS is committed to career development and offers attractive career prospects across a wide variety of roles and professions. Career development is an integral part of the performance management system. Personal Development Plans identify learning and development needs with a view to enhancing skills and capabilities. NI Civil Servants have access to a wide range of internal job opportunities, including secondments with external organisations and are encouraged and supported in proactively managing their career.

### **Conflict of Interest**

It is a basic requirement of all Civil Servants that their private activities should not bring them into conflict with their official duties.

Conflict of Interest is not no limited to the individual's own private, financial or other interests, as family, friends and associates may also have dealings which affect the Department's business directly or indirectly. Therefore to avoid any conflict or potential conflict and to demonstrate impartiality to the public at all times, an officer must not, without prior approval, engage in any activity which could be considered to be in conflict with official business.

As such, to protect employees and the Department from public criticism, it will be mandatory for the successful candidate to complete a Conflict of Interest declaration on appointment.

## **Further Information**

Applicants wishing to learn more about the post before deciding to apply may telephone Eileen Mallon on 028 92623094 or email [Eileen.Mallon@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Eileen.Mallon@daera-ni.gov.uk)

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

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications have:

1. A HNC / HND or an equivalent qualification in hydrogeology, biology, geology, earth sciences, aquatic or environmental sciences, hydrology, environmental/ water management, water resource management, environmental health, chemistry, microbiology, water ecology and/ or environmental engineering; or where these subjects provide a core component\*.
2. At least 3 years experience gained within the last 8 years at a professional level in an environmental water management related field\*\*, water resource management or aquatic sciences or water ecology/chemistry, in groundwater protection and/ or groundwater regulation; or drinking water regulation; or water quality regulation to include the assessment against set criteria:
  - The provision of evidence based scientific advice;
  - Assessment of scientific information against specific criteria;
  - Scientific data management and preparation of scientific reports;
  - Collection of data/ evidence to be used in the investigation of regulatory breaches
3. Possess a full current driving licence to enable the post holder to drive in Northern Ireland and /or access to a form of transport which will enable the applicant to meet the requirements of the post in full.

\***Core component** is defined as: At least 50 % of the course covers hydrogeology, biology, geology, earth sciences, aquatic or environmental sciences, hydrology, environmental/ water management, water resource management, environmental health, chemistry, microbiology, water ecology and/ or environmental engineering modules.

\*\* **'An environmental water management related field'** is defined as marine waters, and freshwaters including rivers, lakes and groundwaters.

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

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:

1. A degree or an equivalent qualification in hydrogeology, biology, geology, earth sciences, aquatic or environmental sciences, hydrology, environmental/ water management, water resource management, environmental health, chemistry, microbiology, water ecology and/ or environmental engineering; or where these subjects provide a core component\*.

You will be required to provide documentary evidence of your qualifications at interview so please ensure you have these readily available.

### **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 selection 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.**
- **The examples you provide should be concise and relevant to the criteria, This is very important as the examples you provide may be explored at interview and you may need to be prepared to talk about these in detail if invited to interview. It is your unique role the panel are interested in, not that of your team or division.**
- **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.**
- **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. Please do not include your name in the employment history or eligibility criteria sections.**
- **The NICS Competency framework can be accessed via [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk)**

## **ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

The selection process will be in the form of a competence based interview.

### **1. Leading and Communicating**

At all levels, effectiveness in this area is about leading from the front and communicating with clarity, conviction and enthusiasm. It is about supporting principles of fairness of opportunity for all and a dedication to a diverse range of citizens.

**Marks available: 20**

### **2. Managing a Quality Service**

Effectiveness in this area is about being organised to deliver service objectives and striving to improve the quality of service, taking account of diverse customer needs and requirements. People who are effective plan, organise and manage their time and activities to deliver a high quality and efficient service, applying programme and project management approaches to support service delivery.

**Marks available: 20**

### **3. Seeing the Big Picture**

Seeing the big picture is about having an in-depth understanding and knowledge of how your role fits with, and supports, organisational objectives and the wider public needs. For all staff, it is about focusing your contribution on the activities which will meet Departmental and Programme for Government goals and deliver the greatest value.

**Marks available: 30      Minimum standard: 18**

### **4. Making effective decisions**

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

**Marks available: 30      Minimum standard: 18**

### **5. Delivering at Pace**

Effectiveness in this area means focusing on delivering timely performance with energy and taking responsibility and accountability for quality outcomes. For all staff, it is about working to agreed goals and activities and dealing with challenges in a responsive and constructive way.

**Marks available: 20      Minimum standard: 12**

## **6. Collaborating and partnering**

People skilled in this area create and maintain positive, professional and trusting working relationships with a wide range of people within and outside the NICS, to help to achieve business objectives and goals. At all levels, it requires working collaboratively, sharing information and building supportive, responsive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, whilst having the confidence to challenge assumptions.

**Marks available: 20**

**Total Marks Available: 140**

**Overall Pass Mark: 84**

## **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 Lisburn during week commencing 27<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

## **NICS COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK**

The selection process will assess candidates against the NICS competency framework at level 3.

RED Water Management Unit – Higher scientific Officer is analogous to Staff Officer in the NICS.

The NICS 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 via [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 selection process. Should you require assistance in accessing the competency framework please contact HRConnect.**

## GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

### APPLICATION FORM

Please refer to the Candidate Information Booklet before making your application and retain a copy for your reference. 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. **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.

#### **Please note:**

- Applicants are encouraged to submit online applications wherever possible. However, hard copy application packs are available on request. All applications will be treated equally regardless of whether they are hard copy or online.
- 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, unless it is specifically requested in the application form and candidate information booklet.
- All applications must be received by the advertised closing date and time.
- 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.
- Only the employment history, eligibility and shortlisting sections will be made available to the panel.
- 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.
- 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.
- You must click SUBMIT once you have finished your online application. You will receive an acknowledgement email. Please contact HRConnect if you do not receive an acknowledgment email within 24 hrs.

## **Help with making your application**

You can get advice or assistance with making an application from your local Jobs and Benefits Office - contact details are available on NIDirect: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/jobs-benefits-offices-jobcentres-and-social-security-offices>

You can also get advice or assistance from local disability employment organisations. To find out more about local disability employment organisations contact Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment (NIUSE), an umbrella group for individuals and organisations promoting opportunities for people with disabilities to access and maintain employment, email [info@niuse.org.uk](mailto:info@niuse.org.uk), tel. 0044 (0)28 71 377709, text phone 0044 (0) 28 71 372077

## **GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS**

### **INTERVIEW PREPARATION**

**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 to demonstrate the range of behaviours associated with the competences being assessed. 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.

For professional and technical posts, questions may be framed in the context of professional elements of the post.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **The Merit Principle**

In accordance with the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code, appointments to the NICS are made under the 'merit principle', where the best person for any given post is selected in fair and open competition.

Further information on the Civil Service Commissioners can be found at [www.nicscommissioners.org](http://www.nicscommissioners.org).

### **NICSHR Privacy Notice**

NICSHR are committed to protecting your privacy. HRConnect manage job applications on behalf of NICSHR, in line with the NICSHR privacy notice available via [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk)

### **Offers of Employment**

Candidates will only receive one offer of appointment which, if not accepted, will generally result in withdrawal from the competition.

### **Changes in personal circumstances and contact details**

Please ensure HRConnect are informed immediately of any changes in personal circumstances. It is important that HRConnect have up to date contact details.

### **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.

### **Merit List**

**HRConnect will allocate a candidate (or candidates) to a vacancy (or vacancies) in the order listed.** It is presently intended that the merit list for this competition should remain extant for a period of one year. However you

should be aware that circumstances may arise in the future where it will be necessary to extend the currency of the merit list for a further period. The merit list will only be extended where cogent practical reasons for doing so arise.

### **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.

### **Documentation**

Identification documents to satisfy the Nationality and Security requirements of the post will be required. Further details regarding acceptable documentation will be issued with an invitation to attend for assessment.

You will be required to bring documentary evidence of your qualifications / professional membership to assessment.

You should ensure that the required documents are readily available.

### **Right to Work and Nationality Requirements**

HRConnect must ensure that you are legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom and satisfy the Nationality requirements for appointment to the NICS. Applicants must be either:

- (i) A UK national; or
- (ii) A Commonwealth citizen; or
- (iii) A British Protected Person; or
- (iv) An EEA national; or
- (v) A Swiss National; or
- (vi) A person who is not an EEA or Swiss national, but is a family member of an EEA national who has moved to the UK from another EEA Member State for an approved purpose.

Further guidance on Nationality requirements is available via [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk).

## **Security**

### 1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

For this post in the NICS 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) A specimen signature at any assessment event and have this validated against passport, driving licence, application form etc.

Further information regarding the Baseline Personnel Security Standard, including other acceptable documents is available via [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

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.

The AccessNI code of practice can be accessed via [www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni).

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. 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 application 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.

### **Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form**

**Please note the Equal Opportunities monitoring section of the application form is mandatory in order to submit an application.**

For guidance on completing the Monitoring Form and to read the NICS Equal Opportunities Policy Statement please refer to the DoF website [www.finance-ni.gov.uk](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk).

**As women are currently known to be under represented in this occupational group across Northern Ireland Civil Service, and as young people (people under the age of 35), people with a disability and people from minority ethnic communities are currently under represented in NICS, we would particularly welcome applications from these groups.**

**The Northern Ireland Civil Service is an Equal Opportunities Employer.**  
All applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit

### **Feedback**

The Northern Ireland Civil Service is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit and select staff are fair and in accordance with the principles of the Civil Service Commissioners Code. 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.

***Completed Application Forms should be sent to the HRConnect Recruitment Team:***

HRConnect  
PO Box 1090  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
The Metro Building  
6-9 Donegall Square South  
Belfast  
BT1 9EX

**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:** [NICS@HRConnect.nigov.net](mailto:NICS@HRConnect.nigov.net)

**Tel:** 0800 1 300 400

**Fax:** 028 9024 1665

**THIS INFORMATION PACK DOES NOT FORM PART OF  
CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT**