



## Candidate Information Booklet

IRC264852

# Higher Scientific Officer (HSO) SWELL Project Water Quality Monitoring Coordinator - 24 month Fixed Term contract

Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Northern Ireland (AFBI)



Completed Application Forms must be returned to HRConnect no later than 12 noon (UK time) on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021.

**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.

**Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Job Description</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Key Responsibilities</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Eligibility Criteria</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Interview guidance</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Selection Process</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>General Information</b>	<b>25</b>

## **BACKGROUND**

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

AFBI is a non-departmental public body sponsored by DAERA and a leading provider of scientific research and services to government, non-governmental organisations and commercial companies.

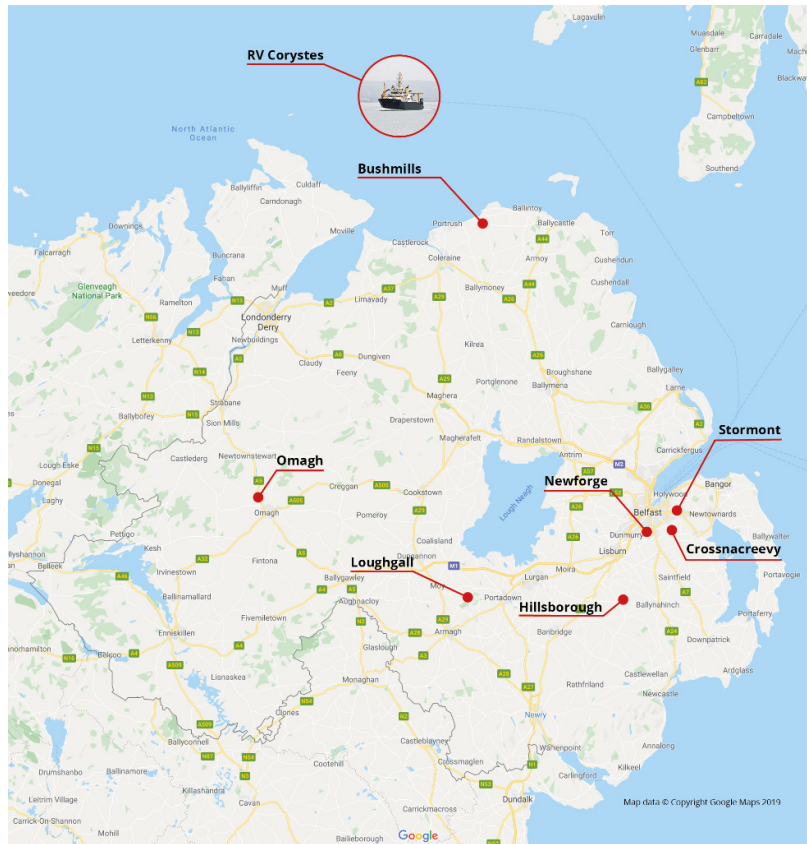
In line with AFBI's vision of "Advancing the local and global agri-food sectors through scientific excellence." the Institute seeks to be an influential, internationally recognised, centre for research and scientific services in the agri-food and marine sectors, providing high quality and locally relevant science. Our current Corporate Plan for 2018-22 sets out our aims to deliver for society, the economy and the environment, and to meet the needs of customers and partners in an ever more efficient and effective manner. To achieve these aims, our Corporate Plan also outlines how we, with the support of our sponsoring department, plan to invest in our people and infrastructure to provide innovative, efficient and effective service delivery. These plans include an ambitious programme of capital investment in AFBI's infrastructure including a new animal health sciences building at AFBI Stormont, improved research farm facilities at AFBI Hillsborough and a replacement sea-going research vessel.

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 universities and industry mean that it is ideally placed to carry out research that has 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 funders 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's main work areas are aimed at leading improvements in the agri-food industry; protecting animal, plant and human health; and enhancing the natural and marine environments. We have a staff complement of approximately 650 people, with an annual turnover of approximately £60 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.

## AFBI SITES ACROSS NORTHERN IRELAND



AFBI has 7 sites across Northern Ireland

- Newforge Lane (Headquarters)
- Stormont
- Hillsborough
- Crossnacreevy
- Loughgall
- Omagh
- Bushmills

In addition a 53 m dedicated marine research vessel RV Corystes based in Port of Belfast.

AFBI's science activities are organised across 3 divisions – Environment and Marine Sciences Division (EMSD), Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division (SAFSD) and Veterinary Science Division (VSD) with Finance and Corporate Affairs Division (FCAD) delivering on Business needs.

## ENVIRONMENT AND MARINE SCIENCES DIVISION (EMSD)

EMSD is a new science division, which has been established following a review of AFBI's organisational structure. It comprises of two areas, which have in recent years been part of the Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division. The areas of work which will fall within EMSD currently have approximately 120 scientific, technical and support staff.

The decision to establish this new division reflects the increasing importance and amount of scientific work undertaken by AFBI in the agri-environment, marine and aquatic ecosystems areas. The division will focus on evidence based science, which is key to addressing the significant environmental challenges whilst ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources and the future prosperity of the agri-food sector. The division is in a unique position to delivery on a high impact and quality integrated programme of research spanning from the soil to the sea.

Key actors within EMSD represent:

**Agri-Environment Branch** - which interfaces between intensive livestock production, and environmental management and regulation which includes the impacts of agricultural land use practices on soil, water and air and identify ways of optimising land-based livestock production.

**Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems Branch** who conduct research and development, monitoring and technology transfer in the area of marine fisheries stock assessment, coastal zone science, biological oceanography, marine ecosystem health, and freshwater fisheries stock assessment.

## SUSTAINABLE AGRIFOOD SCIENCES DIVISION (SAFSD)

SAFSD currently employs approximately 200 scientific, technical and support staff across its five scientific based branches.

As such SAFSD is a highly multi-disciplinary division with a key focus on livestock, plant and in general agriculture production and their interactions with the environment. This multi-disciplinary team can explore all aspects of the food supply chain taking research from the soil through to the plant to the animal and the resultant food quality and nutritional value, while also working with colleagues at VSD to ensure animal health and food safety is optimised and modelling market impacts as a result of policy decisions.

SAFSD utilises a highly instrumented platform across livestock and land management to service its main deliverables of research and innovation and monitoring and surveillance. SAFSD also collaborates extensively with other research organisations, industry and government departments locally, nationally and internationally. A key drive within SAFSD is to produce high quality peer review publications while also ensuring the research conducted has impact through an active dissemination programme.

Key actors within SAFSD represent:

The **Economics Research Branch** undertake quantitative and qualitative socio-economic research to inform agri-food and rural policy development and industry decision making, regionally and nationally.

**Livestock Production Sciences Branch** which links fundamental livestock science to systems level research to deliver innovations for the agri-food sector and advance scientific knowledge.

**Food Research Branch** who deliver research in the areas of optimising eating quality and nutritional quality in meat, dairy and other food products, together with evaluating novel processes for extending shelf-life and increasing safety.

**Grassland and Plant Science Branch** who underpin DAERA's policy development on plant health and deliver scientific advances in areas such as grass breeding, testing and agronomy, Plant Health and land management.

**Statistical Services Branch** which provide a Statistical Analyses and Consultation Services in support of Scientific Research Projects and Statutory work carried out by AFBI.

### **VETERINARY SCIENCES DIVISION (VSD)**

VSD currently employs approximately 260 veterinary, scientific, technical and support staff across its four Branches (Bacteriology, Chemical and Immunodiagnostic Sciences, Disease Surveillance and Investigation, and Virology). The Division is predominantly based at Stoney Road, Belfast with a smaller disease surveillance centre based at Omagh, Co. Tyrone.

The Division undertakes an integrated programme of statutory, disease surveillance, emergency response and R&D work on the diseases of major animal and human health significance along with significant programmes of work on the chemical and microbiological safety of food. The work supports government policy and disease eradication and control programmes in areas such as bovine tuberculosis, food-borne zoonotic infections and transboundary diseases. One of the key roles of the Division is in delivering a laboratory response to local, national and international emergencies involving animal diseases, and food and feed contamination incidents.

VSD also provides a disease investigation service covering all of the major farm animal species and fish, and provides commercial laboratory services in support of industry led disease eradication and control programmes. The work of the Division is underpinned by research and development (R&D) on animal diseases and food safety issues relevant to the local industry.

VSD includes the following branches

**Bacteriology Branch** undertakes statutory, analytical and research work on the major bacterial pathogens of animal and public health significance. Much

of this work underpins important DAERA animal disease control programmes in areas such as bovine tuberculosis and food-borne zoonoses.

The work of **Chemical and Immunodiagnostic Sciences Branch** includes chemical analysis for a wide range of veterinary drug residues, marine biotoxins, pesticides, mycotoxins and heavy metals as well as immunodiagnostic testing in support of a number of disease control programmes including brucellosis, transboundary diseases, import/export testing and TSE.

**Disease Surveillance and Investigation Branch** undertakes a programme of scanning (passive) disease surveillance on behalf of DAERA and provides commercial laboratory services in support of industry led disease eradication and control programmes.

The work of the **Virology Branch** is aimed at improving the diagnosis and control of viral diseases of farmed animals (pigs, poultry, cattle, sheep and aquaculture). The Branch also has responsibility for the molecular confirmation of major infectious / epizootic diseases in animals.

## **FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS DIVISION**

Finance and Corporate Affairs Division currently employs approximately circa 80 staff across its Branches. The Division is based primarily at AFBI headquarters, Newforge Lane, Belfast but with staff deployed at some of the larger sites.

The Division supports the AFBI Chief Executive and senior management in securing and deploying the financial, people and infrastructure resources of AFBI. The Division has a key role in ensuring that AFBI is an efficient, effective, sustainable and accountable organisation with high standards of governance

The main areas of work of the Branches are outlined below.

### **Corporate Communications**

Corporate Communications is responsible for all of AFBI's internal and external communications. It support scientists to ensure their message is impactful by running a press office (including social media and photography), events management, and print and digital publishing to the AFBI intranet and internet.

### **Estate Management and Emergency Planning**

The AFBI Estate Management and Development Branch has responsibility for delivering estate / property management services across the AFBI occupied estate as leased from DAERA, including emergency planning capability for the Institute in terms of incident and business continuity management.

### **Health & Safety**

The AFBI Health and Safety Branch has an advisory function to the organisation, providing guidance and assistance to those with responsibility for implementing the health and safety policy within AFBI, and also to assist with health and safety queries from individuals.

### **Finance & Procurement**

AFBI Finance & Procurement Branch is responsible for the administration of all finance related functions in support of AFBI's 3 Divisions and Executive Management Team. This includes financial planning, budgeting and accounting and business planning and financial systems. The Branch provides a stores service on the Newforge and Stormont sites and also provides procurement advice to all AFBI staff.

### **Governance & Performance**

The Governance and Performance Branch provides support and advice on a range of corporate and information governance matters including organisational performance management, risk management, business planning, audit and assurance, insurance & indemnities, data protection, freedom of information, environmental information regulations and records management.

### **Human Resources**

The Human Resources Branch deliver a range of services to support the Institute in the functions of Learning & Development, Equality, Performance Management, Workforce Planning and Employee Relations. The team are extremely focused on providing support to staff and line managers in ensuring they have what they need to meet wider business plan objectives.

### **Information Systems Branch**

AFBI Information Systems Branch provides comprehensive line-of-business IT infrastructure and application support. This service is offered in conjunction with the support for common IT services provided by IT Assist, Department of Finance (DoF) and Enterprise Shared Services (ESS). The Branch also develops bespoke software solutions for internal and external clients to the benefit of the agri-food industry. Through development of these systems, ISB forms quality partnerships which leads to further collaboration between AFBI and industry bodies. ISB's operations are guided by AFBI's IT Strategic Plan which seeks to ensure that IT continues to work as a strategic enabler for the Institute.

### **Research Support Office**

The Research Support Office has recently been developed to enhance AFBI's success in maximising the benefit from relevant external funding and commercialisation opportunities, including the provision of support and guidance to AFBI staff during the development stage of funding applications. The unit facilitates horizon scanning, seeking to ensure that management and scientific colleagues are kept informed of emerging opportunities. In addition, it supports colleagues through the administrative process involved in winning and then managing grant funded projects.



The Research Support Office will drive engagement with a broad range of partners from Government to industrial and commercial clients, resulting in increased external income generation. It is responsible for: identifying and developing potential research and enterprise incomes sources, promoting these opportunities to relevant colleagues, supporting staff in preparing grant and commercial applications, managing the application/tendering/contracting process and providing post-award support (including on such issues as reporting and auditing). The team will also provide a critical role in support the Institutes submission to the Research Excellence Framework and other similar initiatives.

## FISHERIES AND AQUATICS ECOSYSTEMS BRANCH

Within the Environment and Marine Sciences Division (EMSD), the Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems Branch (FAEB) is one of the three national marine and freshwater science laboratories in the United Kingdom delivering scientific services and advice to the government on marine and aquatic matters. The branch 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.

Delivery of the work programme critically depends on our asset base, which comprises 63 permanent staff, together with contract staff, temporary staff and students. Our physical infrastructure is well resourced, with 53m, 1,100 t marine research vessel R.V. *Corystes* and the availability of DAERA facilities at the River Bush Salmon Station being key assets.

FAEB conducts science programmes across several core areas:-

- Marine Fisheries
- Marine Ecology
- Oceanography & Limnology
- Freshwater Fisheries

Individually and in combination, these core areas aim to foster multidisciplinary research programmes that merit both national and international recognition, attracting scientific collaborations and developing novel ideas. Collectively the work programme provides evidence-based research to develop science that informs policy, adapts to emerging scientific questions and supports an ecosystem-based approach to the sustainable management of Northern Ireland's aquatic resources. The strategic importance of the integration of knowledge about fish stocks, their environment and underlying processes that underpin production and sustainability is crucial to the mission of FAEB in meeting DAERA, national and international marine and fisheries strategy, as only through this approach can emerging scientific challenges be addressed.

The post-holder will work within the EU funded INTERREG VA Shared Waters Enhancement and Loughs Legacy (SWELL) Project which is examining the impact of land use on cross-border transitional water bodies. The post-holder will contribute to research that will improve our understanding of the inter-relationships between land use, nutrient export, river ecosystems and the status of transitional waterbodies. Ultimately the research will contribute to the evidence-base required for the successful implementation of the EU Water Framework in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

There is currently one full-time 24 month fixed term Higher Scientific Officer position to be filled (with a possibility of a short 4 month extension depending on funding). A reserve list will exist and will be held for a period of 12 months from the date of interview, to cover any further vacancies which may arise.

### **Salary**

Salary will be within the range £31,137 - £32,800 which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff performance reports are satisfactory.

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

### **Annual Leave**

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

### **Working Hours**

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

### **Location**

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

### **Travel**

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

### **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 successful candidate will be asked to complete a health declaration questionnaire and may be invited to attend a medical examination to confirm that they are fit to carry out the physical duties of the post.

The post holder will be required to participate in scientific sampling programmes on board vessels engaged in specific scientific studies, including the AFBI research vessel. It will be a condition of appointment that the post holders must hold an ENG 1 seafarers medical certificate, or be able to pass a seagoing medical ENG 1 examination.

### **Probation**

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**

Applicants wishing to learn more about the post before deciding to apply may email AFBI HR at [workforceplanning@afbini.gov.uk](mailto:workforceplanning@afbini.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).

## **KEY RESPONSIBILITIES**

The post-holders will work on the Shared Waters Enhancement and Loughs Legacy (SWELL) Project, which is funded by the EU's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body. The SWELL project is examining the impact of land use on cross-border transitional water bodies. The post-holder will contribute to research that will improve our understanding of the inter-relationships between land use, nutrient export, river ecosystems and the status of transitional waterbodies. Ultimately the research will contribute to the evidence-base required for the successful implementation of the EU Water Framework in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The post-holder will report to the SWELL project Manager (SSO). The main duties of the post will include:

### **To coordinate the SWELL Project Water Quality monitoring Programme**

The post holder will be an integral part of the SWELL project team. It will be the responsibility of the post holder to plan and coordinate water sampling surveys within both marine and freshwater environments. This will include surveys of both the Foyle and Carlingford catchments as well as sampling within Carlingford Lough and Lough Foyle. The post holder will be responsible for the planning of water sampling locations to ensure adequate coverage of the catchments, to inform the models being developed as part of the SWELL project. The role will require experience in the area of monitoring chemical and biological water quality and flow regimes in river catchments. Expertise in water quality analysis is also desirable.

### **Data management**

The post holder will be responsible for the development and management of a new SWELL project database through liaison with AFBI Information Systems Branch. The post holder will be responsible for the initiation of data analysis and interpretation in consultation with the SWELL project manager. It is essential that the post holder has the necessary skills to undertake data collation, data management and data analysis, including use of appropriate spatial statistics and software, such as R and Geographical Information System (GIS) applications.

### **Report writing**

It will be the responsibility of the post holder to prepare SWELL project monthly progress reports for submission to the SWELL PMO. The post holder will contribute to the preparation of SWELL project deliverables as outlined within the project execution plan.

### **Resource and staff management**

The post holder will be responsible for the deployment, calibration and maintenance of water quality and hydrological monitoring instrumentation and associated telemetry equipment. The post holder will coordinate and supervise the staffing and resources required for the successful delivery of a

large scale and time-critical water quality monitoring program. The post holder will be responsible for the management of SWELL project related resources and logistics and will work alongside and manage two SWELL Water Quality Monitoring support Scientific Officers.

### **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 should be regarded as working guidelines within which the post holder will work, they are not intended to be rigid and inflexible.

**Working on board vessels will be a physically demanding job with significant manual handling and the handling of marine 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 varying weight.**

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

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must have, by the closing date for applications:

1. Primary degree (at least a 2:2) in Aquatic Science, Environmental Science or equivalent, or a post graduate degree in Aquatic Science, Environmental Science or equivalent.
2. A minimum of two years' post graduate experience in chemical and biological water quality monitoring and analysis and/or hydrology of coastal and river ecosystems and the impact of land use practices.
3. A minimum of two years' post graduate experience of planning and executing fieldwork in the area of environmental or aquatic science under limited supervision.
4. A minimum of two years' post graduate experience in scientific data management – to include familiarity and competence with electronic data using spreadsheets, database packages and GIS. Must understand the importance of data quality and of following sampling protocols.
5. Have full driving licence that enables them to undertake the responsibilities of the role.

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

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

1. Practical experience of techniques/instrumentation for the monitoring of water quality and/or hydrology and related telemetry in the field, or of similar techniques in a related area of science.
2. A postgraduate qualification in environmental science, aquatic sciences, or a related academic field.

**Please note:**

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



## PERSON SPECIFICATION

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the eligibility criteria and shortlisting criteria. In addition, they will also be required to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) competency framework at Level 3 for the purposes of personal and professional development.

Higher Scientific Officer is analogous to Staff Officer 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.**

## **INTERVIEW CRITERIA**

In addition to satisfying the eligibility criteria and shortlisting criteria applicants will also be expected to display the following qualities and skills at interview:

### **1. Professional/Specialist/Technical Ability**

- Develops and updates professional/specialist/technical knowledge and skills to meet objectives and improve performance, demonstrates an in-depth knowledge and understanding of hydrodynamic and oceanographic data collection.
- Applies knowledge and skills in order to implement internationally set quality management systems and procedures to all aspects of survey protocols and procedures with particular emphasis on calibration and data validation.
- Applies knowledge and skills in the collection, collation and manipulation of scientific data.
- Applies knowledge and skills in writing narrative/data reports for clients.
- Develops and maintains knowledge in marine data collection.

**Marks available: 45**

**Minimum standard: 27**

### **2. Making Effective Decisions**

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

**Marks Available: 20**

### **3. Leading and Communicating**

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

**Marks Available: 20**

**Minimum standard: 12**

### **4. Managing a Quality Service**

Make effective use of project management skills and techniques to deliver outcomes.

**Marks Available: 20**

### **5. Collaborating and Partnering**

Create and maintain positive, professional and trusting working relationships with a wide range of people.

**Marks Available: 20**

## **6. Delivering at Pace**

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

**Marks Available: 20      Minimum standard: 12**

**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.

## **INTERVIEWS**

It is intended that interviews for this post will take place in AFBI HQ, Newforge Lane, Belfast during June 2021.

Candidates should note that due to current circumstances with COVID 19, social distancing measures will be put in place. If this is not possible the use of video technology may be used as an alternative.

## **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

- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed 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.
- State clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote. State "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

You can apply online at [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk).

- 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.
- 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.

- 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.

### **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.

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

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

### **Disability Requirements**

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

### **Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form**

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

For guidance on completing the Monitoring Form and to read the NICS Equal Opportunities Policy Statement to which AFBI adheres please refer to page 23.

Applications are particularly welcomed from Roman Catholics and Females as these groups are currently under-represented within AFBI.

**AFBI is an Equal Opportunities Employer.**

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

**Assessment Information**

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

You should ensure that these documents are readily available.

**Employment Requirements**

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

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

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

**Nationality Requirements**

There are no nationality requirements for AFBI posts.

**Vetting Procedures**

1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

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

- a) Your passport OR

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

We will organise a Criminal Record Check on all applicants to be carried out by AccessNI through Experian. HRConnect will provide your details to Experian who will undertake this check. 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. Further information regarding policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders and the vetting process is available at [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk) in Recruitment Policy and Procedures manual.

Security Policy for AccessNI Disclosure Information is available at [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk) under Useful Information.

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

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. 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.

### **Order of Merit**

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



## GENERAL INFORMATION

### **Pensions**

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

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

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/civil-service-pensions-ni>

or

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

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

### **Feedback**

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

THIS INFORMATION PACK DOES NOT FORM PART OF  
CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

**Contact details:**

If you have any queries regarding the competition process please contact HRConnect by;

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

**Tel:** 0800 1 300 330

**Fax:** 028 9024 1665

## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

### **Policy Statement**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Equal Opportunities Monitoring**

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

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

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

### **Legislative Context**

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

### **Gender**

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

### **Age**

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

### **Community Background**

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

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

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

### **Disability**

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

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

This definition is interpreted as follows:-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Exhibitionism and voyeurism;

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

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

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

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

***Race***

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

***Sexual Orientation***

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

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

### **Marital Status**

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

### **Dependants Status**

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

### **Confidentiality of Monitoring Information**

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

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

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

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