



Candidate Information Booklet

IRC277342

Principal Scientific Officer (PSO) - Sustainable Soil Nutrient Management

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 8th July 2022.

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

Communication between HRConnect and you

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

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BACKGROUND

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.

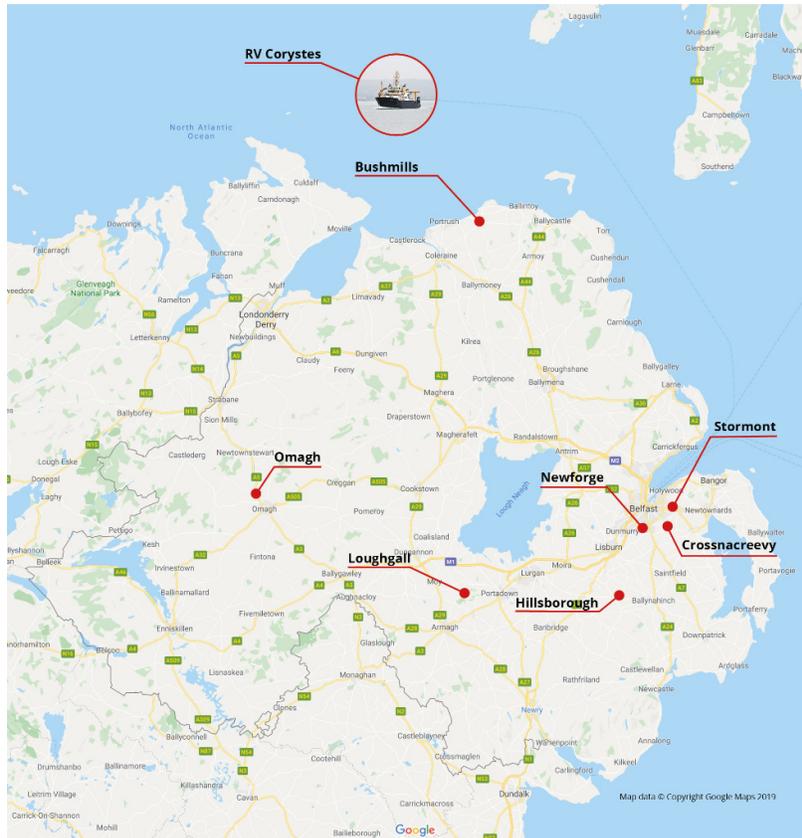
In line with AFBI's vision of "Advancing the local and global agri-food sectors through scientific excellence." the Institute seeks to be an influential, internationally recognised, centre for research and scientific services in the agri-food and marine sectors, providing high quality and locally relevant 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 organizational 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 optimizing 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 AGRI-FOOD 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.

AGRI-ENVIRONMENT BRANCH

Agri-Environment Branch (AEB) is one of two Branches within the Environment and Marine Sciences Division (EMSD). The aims of the Branch are to develop and sustain an integrated research effort with national and international recognition on nutrient management within agricultural systems, focusing particularly on the needs of Northern Ireland, thereby

- Developing sustainable practices within a competitive industry
- Providing a scientific basis for government policy and
- Enhancing the quality of the environment.

Environmental research in the Branch addresses land and nutrient management issues to make appropriate and efficient use of resources, while protecting the environment. The integrated research effort covers the impact of agriculture on air, soil, water quality and biodiversity. The outputs of this research have provided much of the scientific basis for the development of DAERA policy in soil and nutrient management in Northern Ireland for example the Nitrates Action Programme, Phosphorus Regulations and Water Framework Directive. The Branch undertakes basic, strategic and applied research for DAERA and other government departments and agencies, as well as commercial organisations.

The Agri-Environment Branch is also leading on the implementation of the new £45 million Soil Nutrient Health Scheme (SNHS) that will be funded by DAERA and delivered by AFBI over the next 4 years (<https://www.afbini.gov.uk/articles/afbi-soil-nutrient-health-scheme-snhs>). The SNHS is one of the most comprehensive regional soil nutrient sampling schemes to be undertaken anywhere in the world and is a key part of Northern Strategy to reduce nutrient emission and achieve Net-Zero. AEB will manage all aspects of the scheme to ensure it is delivered on time, within budget and within the scope of the delivery agreement with DAERA. The SNHS scheme will build on the success of previous soil pilot schemes (see Cassidy et al 2019; Higgins et al 2021 and Okumah et al 2021 below for further information) and aims to soil sample ~700,000 fields across Northern Ireland and thereby provide unique region-wide baseline information on soil pH (lime requirement), P, K, Ca, Mg, S and LOI (soil C proxy) at field, farm, and catchment scales, and for different enterprise types. Farmers will be provided with nutrient field maps, runoff risk maps and cost-saving opportunity maps, with CAFRE (<https://www.cafre.ac.uk/>) providing training and advice to participating farmers. The SNHS project will involve 15 dedicated staff in AEB, with additional scientific, technical and administrative staff from across AFBI also contributing to the implementation of the scheme. The successful applicant will lead a research programme linked to the SNHS.

Research programmes are in place within the Branch to address issues affecting the Northern Ireland Agri-food industry in relation to nutrient use efficiency, water quality, soil health, biodiversity, ammonia and greenhouse gas emissions, bioenergy and the circular economy.

Our research is currently delivered via five research programmes:

1. Air Quality & Climate Change
2. Catchment Sciences
3. Sustainable Soil Nutrient Management
4. Soil Biogeochemistry & Terrestrial Ecology
5. Agri-Environmental Technologies.

This position will lead the Sustainable Soil Nutrient Management Programme and is an exciting opportunity for an experienced, horizon scanning scientist. This post will oversee and lead research aimed at optimising the efficiency of soil, manure and fertiliser nutrients for crop production and identifying ways of mitigating macro- and micro-nutrient surpluses and deficiencies in soils and crops, whilst minimising losses to water and air, making use of 'state-of-the-art' technologies. The post-holder will also play a key role in bringing in new research projects that build on the existing work with in the SNHS, The post-holder will manage a team comprising approximately 9 scientists and related technical staff.

References

Higgins, A.J., Cassidy, R. and Bailey, J.S., 2021. The relative impacts of dairy and non-dairy ruminant sectors on the Olsen-P status of grassland soils and hence water quality in Northern Ireland. *Soil Use and Management*, 37(4), pp.900-905.

Cassidy, R., Thomas, I.A., Higgins, A., Bailey, J.S. and Jordan, P., 2019. A carrying capacity framework for soil phosphorus and hydrological sensitivity from farm to catchment scales. *Science of the total environment*, 687, pp.277-286.

Okumah, M., Martin-Ortega, J., Chapman, P.J., Novo, P., Cassidy, R., Lyon, C., Higgins, A. and Doody, D., 2021. The role of experiential learning in the adoption of best land management practices. *Land Use Policy*, 105, p.105397.

JOB DESCRIPTION

There is currently one full-time, permanent Principle Scientific Officer position to be filled. A reserve list will exist and will be held for a period of 12 months from the date of interview, to cover any further permanent vacancies which may arise. The successful candidate will be an employee of AFBI.

Salary

Salary will be within the range £52,026 - £55,685 which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff performance reports are satisfactory.

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

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

Annual Leave

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

Working Hours

The successful candidates will normally be required to work 37 hours each week, however the hours / duties will include evening/night and weekend working. AFBI operates a flexi working system. The other key site of activity will be at AFBI Hillsborough.

Location

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

Travel

The post will entail travel locally, nationally and internationally 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.

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

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

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The post holder will report to the AEB Head of Branch, and the main duties of the post will be as follows:

1. Delivery of Research and Development Programmes

To lead the Sustainable Soil Nutrient Management research programme within AEB. Within this remit, develop and expand a portfolio of research projects that is linked to the SNHS, policy requirements of DAERA, and the research requirements of other Government departments, external funding bodies and private companies.

The successful candidate will have expertise in soil chemistry, (*and ideally soil physics and/or crop nutrition*), and experience in conducting research to improve soil fertility and crop productivity whilst mitigating detrimental nutrient emissions to the environment, and will have a strong track record of working in multidisciplinary teams to address such issues.

The research duties of the post will include: building research partner collaborations locally, nationally and internationally, and preparation and submission of research bids to local, national and international funding providers. The duties will also include the production of detailed experimental protocols, ensuring that these are effectively implemented and that the results are of a high quality, the publication of research in high impact scientific journals and the dissemination of research findings to government, industry and other stakeholders as appropriate to encourage adoption by the farming industry and relevant supporting industries.

2. Manage staff and resources

To manage research staff, technical staff and other staff as appropriate, in compliance with all relevant AFBI health and safety and staff management practices. To ensure that all resources and specialist equipment are utilised to greatest effect and properly maintained. The post holder will work closely with the team leading the SNHS to ensure staffing utilisation is optimised for both the operational delivery of the scheme and the research associated with it

3. Secure funding and work with funders

To secure research funding from government, levy bodies, industry and other external funders, where possible, and establish good relationships with these funders. To manage the contractual and financial commitments associated with research projects and contracts. To ensure that allocated budgets are handled in a fully auditable manner, compliant with AFBI procedures, and to supply appropriate financial data to project funders when required to do so.

4. Establish and maintain linkages with other research groups

To establish and maintain linkages with other research groups in the UK, Republic of Ireland and internationally to ensure that research is carried out collaboratively and that AFBI's research reputation is appropriately recognised.

5. To undertake data interpretation, the publication of results and scientific paper/report writing and dissemination of research findings to the wider industry

To ensure the accurate collation of research data and appropriate statistical analysis and interpretation of the data, which will require excellent computer skills and an in depth understanding of statistical procedures.

The job holder will be required to write scientific papers to a standard necessary to ensure publication in high impact peer-reviewed scientific journals, to prepare reports (e.g. press articles, quarterly/annual reports, industry reports, and other material) as required to ensure effective knowledge transfer of relevant messages, and to meet the contractual requirements of research programmes. The job-holder will have excellent communication skills and will communicate the outcomes of research projects to farmers, stakeholders and the scientific community, and provide a lead to policy on issues arising from the research programmes when required.

The job-holder will contribute to the delivery of advice to DAERA and other Government Departments on issues relating the management of soils and in particular how the results arising from the SNHS can improvement best management practice on farms into the future. When required, they will represent AFBI on technical committees locally, nationally and internationally. Such representation should enhance their own and the Institute's scientific reputation.

6. Support the Head of Agri-Environment Branch

To support and assist the Head of the Agri-Environment Branch in wider Branch management activities.

7. Student supervision

The Job-holder will be required to supervise/co-supervise postgraduate students involved in research programmes.

8. To undertake continuous professional development

To maintain an up-to-date knowledge of scientific literature in relevant areas and to demonstrate personal development in all relevant areas of managing research programmes, staff and resources. To maintain an awareness of all developments in air quality science internationally and to interpret the relevance of these developments for local farming enterprises.

9. To fulfil other duties

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

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

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must demonstrate that they possess the following criteria, by the closing date for applications:

1. A Ph.D. degree in environmental science, soil science physical geography or a related subject;
2. A minimum of 5 years' post-graduate* experience within the last 10 years in research related to soil nutrient management, soil fertility and/or crop nutrition/agronomy;
3. A minimum of 3 years post graduate experience of leading a research team;
4. Proven ability to secure research funding;
5. A proven ability to disseminate scientific findings as evidenced by having published at least 5 peer reviewed journal publications in international ISI listed scientific journals** as **first** or **senior** author.

* Should not include time spend to obtain further full-time academic qualifications (e.g. PhD).

** Candidates must provide evidence of eligibility criterion 5 by submitting a fully cited bibliography (authors, paper title, journal title, volume and page numbers) of **all** publications. Candidates can provide this information within the application form itself, or if necessary, it can be sent by the closing date for applications as a separate attachment to: recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net

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

In the event that shortlisting is required the selection panel will reach a decision as to whether or not an applicant meets criteria 2 - 5 on a scored basis, with a minimum score set. Only those applicants assessed as meeting all essential criteria will be eligible to proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

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

Please note:

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

PERSON SPECIFICATION

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

Principal Scientific Officer is analogous to Grade 7 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

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:

PRESENTATION

Before the competence based interview, candidates will be required to deliver a presentation, lasting no more than 8 minutes, the subject of which will be provided to candidates in the invitation to interview letter.

Candidates should fully prepare their presentation in advance of the interview and no preparation time will be provided on the day of interview. Your presentation should be delivered via PowerPoint and you will be asked to submit it to HRConnect by a specific date prior to your interview. Full details will be provided should you be invited to interview.

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

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

1. Professional Knowledge and Skills

Identify and implement set methods to achieve predefined goals; can develop professional/specialist/technical knowledge and skills to meet programme/project objectives; has understanding of standardised data collection processes and procedures; applies knowledge and skills in developing methods of data collection and identify appropriate methods suited to current situation.

Marks Available: 60 Minimum Standard: 36

2. 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: 10

3. 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: 10

4. 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 Minimum Standard: 12

5. Collaborating and Partnering – 1q

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 Minimum Standard: 12

6. 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: 10

Total marks available: 180

Overall pass mark: 108

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 August 2022.

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.

- 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.

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.
- 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 in Recruitment Policy and Procedures manual.

Security Policy for AccessNI Disclosure Information is available at www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk under Useful Information.

The AccessNI code of practice can be accessed via 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

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

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.