

Candidate Information Booklet

IRC302326

**APPOINTMENT OF A
COMMISSIONER**

**PLANNING AND WATER APPEALS
COMMISSIONS
(PACWAC)**

**Completed Application Forms
must be returned to HRConnect
no later than
12:00 on Friday 24th May 2024**

You are advised to download and keep a copy of this booklet for future reference - it will no longer be available online after the above date

Communication between HRConnect and you

HRConnect will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible; you should therefore check your email account, including junk mail folder, 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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The qualities required and details of how to complete the application form are set out within this pack. It is recommended that you read this information carefully before completing the application form.

Application forms can be completed via the online application at www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk or by hard copy. Hard copy and alternative formats of the application form (Braille, Large Print, etc) can be requested by contacting HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330 or via email to recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net. Reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the needs of applicants/candidates with a disability.

Completed hard copy application forms can be returned by post or hand delivered to the address below:

HRConnect, PO Box 1089, Beacon House, 27 Clarendon Road Belfast BT1 9EX.

Completed application forms should be submitted to HRConnect before the closing date of Friday 24th May 2024. **Late applications will not be accepted.** You should retain a copy of this booklet for your reference in the event that you are invited for interview.

The Department is committed to the principle of appointments based on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process. The Department is also committed to equality of opportunity and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified applicants irrespective of religious belief, gender, race, political opinion, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or whether or not they have dependants. We particularly

welcome applications from men, people with a disability, and those from ethnic minorities as these groupings are currently under-represented within the Commission.

Key Appointment Process Stages

Stage in Process	Timescale
Closing Date for Applications	Friday 24th May 2024
Eligibility sift	4th June 2024
Written Assessment	18 th & 19 th June 2024
Interviews	5th & 9 th July 2024

Privacy Notice

The Department of Justice is committed to protecting your privacy. We will process the personal data you provide us for the purpose of recruiting Commissioners to the Planning and Water Appeals Commissions (PACWAC). For more information please see our Privacy Notice at;

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/doj-core-privacy-notice.pdf>

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/Privacy%20Notice.pdf>

Information provided by candidates who are successful in the competition will be shared prior to appointment for vetting purposes. Please see details which are provided later in the handbook.

INTRODUCTION

The Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) and Water Appeals Commission (WAC) are statutory independent appellate bodies provided for by The Planning Act (NI) 2011 and The Water and Sewerage Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 respectively. Although two separate bodies they operate as one entity. There is currently a complement of 20 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Commissioners within PACWAC. All Commissioners are chartered members of a relevant professional body and are appointed by the Department of Justice (DoJ). Commissioners are not civil servants but are Office Holders and independent of Government. They have terms and conditions of service that are similar to civil servants in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). As such the posts are pensionable under Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme Northern Ireland (PCSPSNI) unless Commissioners chose to opt out of the scheme.

DoJ are seeking to appoint a permanent Commissioner. A reserve list will be maintained for 12 months from the date of the agreed merit list and may be used to fill similar posts as they arise.

The Commissions are a Tribunal Non Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department of Justice. The Commissions are currently located at 4th Floor, 92 Ann Street, Belfast, BT1 3HH. They have a range of statutory functions relating to planning and environmental matters to decide appeals from decisions by Government Departments and Local Government, and to report to them on matters which they refer to the Commissions. In exercising their statutory functions, the Commissions provide a unique public service to those who wish to challenge or make representations about the planning and environmental decisions of Government Departments and Local Government. Further information can be found on the Commissions' website www.pacni.gov.uk

Purpose and Vision

The Planning Act (NI) 2011 provides that the Commissions shall consist of a Chief Commissioner, Deputy Chief Commissioner and a number of other Commissioners.

The Commissions aim to make the best possible appeal decisions and offer the best possible recommendations in a timely fashion, consistent with the evidential context within which appellate functions are exercised.

All individuals within PACWAC should adhere to the seven principles of public life which represent the underlying values that the organisation seeks to uphold. In addition, PACWAC is committed to the following values:

Making a Difference

We commit to provide a high level of customer service, working professionally and ensuring that we deliver decisions or recommendations in a timely fashion.

Maintaining Quality

We commit to ensuring that our decisions and recommendations are of the highest standards and Commissioners are exemplars within the planning profession.

Functions

The Commissions do not make policy, but in exercising their functions they have a duty to have regard to relevant policy and to interpret and apply it properly. They have a number of statutory functions relating to planning and environmental matters under a range of legislative provisions. A full list of these functions can be found on the Commissions' website www.pacni.gov.uk

The Commissions also conduct inquiries, hearings and independent examinations which are initiated by Departments and Local Government. Many of these cases raise complex issues and hence take up a significant proportion of the Commissions' time. The majority of such procedures relate to development plans and major planning applications.

Exercising Judgment

The decisions of the Commissions are quasi-judicial, that is they are administrative in nature but made in a judicial context. The principles upon which the Commissions conduct their business are those of openness, fairness and impartiality. Their decisions must only be made within the evidential context of proceedings and this demands a high level of transparency.

The Commissions have a statutory role in the scrutiny of administrative decisions, by Government Departments and Local Government, in the planning and environmental processes in Northern Ireland. These decisions directly affect the rights, including rights under the European Convention on Human Rights, of individual members of the public. The Commissions also make recommendations to Government Departments and Local Government on major development proposals, draft local development plans and legal issues in the planning and environmental areas, including draft legislation. The Commissions have a significant role in the planning and environmental fields and this can attract substantial interest from the public, politicians and the media. Efficient and effective appellate tribunals such as PACWAC issue quality decisions and recommendations and therefore make substantial contributions to the economy of Northern Ireland and the protection of its environment.

The Chief Commissioner is accountable for the Commissions' decisions and the Commissions' responses to a range of priorities. The Chief Commissioner's role is to ensure the regular throughput of evidenced judgments based on a high level of professional knowledge and expertise. Therefore, Commissioners must ensure that relevant information has been collated, weighed appropriately and that their decisions and recommendations are well reasoned and robust. In the exercise of their quasi-judicial responsibilities, on behalf of the Commissions, Commissioners, as individual decision makers, must comply with requirements of tribunals and must issue quality decisions which may be subject to judicial review. A Commissioner must make judgments which establish that;

- the process has been open, fair and impartial;
- all relevant matters have been considered in the decision, recommendation and/or ruling;
- no irrelevant matter has been considered; and
- the decision, recommendation or ruling is reasonable, correct and consistent with the Commission's general approach and previous decisions.

Nature of the work

The Commission's functions fall into two broad categories:

- to make independent decisions on appeals against Central Government and Local Government decisions on a wide range of planning and environmental matters; and
- to hear and report to relevant bodies, following either a public inquiry, independent examination or hearing, on a wide range of matters referred to the Commissions. Final decisions on these matters are taken by the referring authority.

'Hear and Decide' is the appeal casework. Appellants lodge appeals and the Commission considers the evidence and make a final decision. In addition to the appeal decision the Commission may have to consider a costs claim if it is submitted. Hear and Decide workload includes proposals ranging from single rural dwellings to major housing schemes, renewable energy proposals, commercial development, waste disposal and enforcement. Hear and Decide caseload is predicted to be in the region of 300 appeals per year for the foreseeable future. The Water Appeals Commission has functions under water and other environmental legislation but recent workload in this area has been fewer than 10 cases per year and is unlikely to rise above this level in the short term.

'Hear and Report' is the second area of work. The principal elements are firstly, public inquiries and hearings into regionally significant and 'called in' planning applications, and secondly independent examinations into local development plans (LDPs). Referrals are predominately made from the Department for Infrastructure to the Commission. The Commission will consider the evidence presented to them and report back to the referring authority who will make the final decision. There are also a variety of other hear and report functions, including public inquiries into development schemes, vesting orders and road schemes, and hearings into the need for environmental impact assessments for planning applications. This workload varies from year to year.

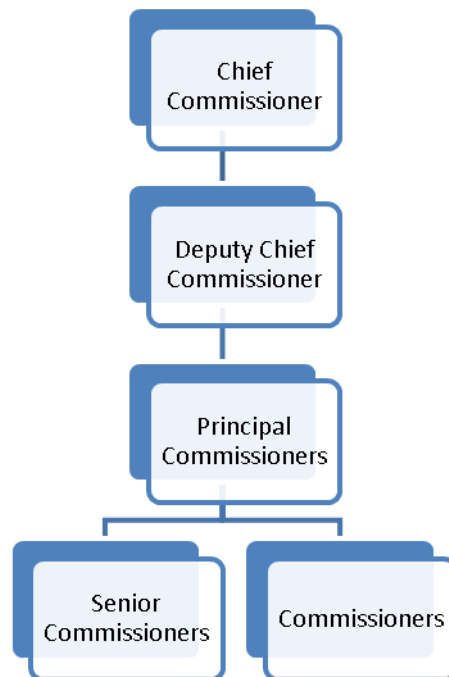
The Commissioner, with training and support, will be expected to undertake, hear and decide work as allocated by the Chief Commissioner.

Administrative Support

The NICTS provides a small administrative team to PACWAC and fulfils a sponsorship role under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding

Structure of the Commission

An organisational chart is provided below. Please note this structure may be subject to review:



Website

Further information is available from the PAC website at www.pacni.gov.uk

JOB DESCRIPTION

Duties and Responsibilities

The post of Commissioner requires strong decision-making skills and a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of planning policy and legislation as it is applied within a tribunal context. It is a highly pressurised role which requires personal commitment and drive for the achievement of results.

The main duties and responsibilities of the post are –

- Effectively managing a personal quasi-judicial caseload
- Understanding and correctly applying legislation, policy, guidance and procedures
- Considering and weighing evidence in order to produce well-reasoned and justifiable decisions and recommendations on planning appeals and other casework
- Conducting hearings in an efficient, inclusive and authoritative manner in accordance with procedural rules and guidance
- Completing appeal decisions, reports and any other work in line with timeliness objectives and to the required quality standards
- Participating in the collective decision-making process as required
- Maintaining and developing professional skills and knowledge by undertaking appropriate training
- Participating in wider PACWAC business and management initiatives as required

The above list is not exhaustive but gives a good indication of the main duties of the post.

The post holder should be aware that aspects of the post may alter as a result of organisational, legislative, governance and policy changes. The post holder will be required to be flexible and adaptable to meet the changing needs and requirements of the organisation.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

It is a departmental appointment which is made by the Department of Justice. This is a full-time, permanent appointment with terms and conditions of service that are similar to those in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) and is pensionable under PCSPSNI however a Commissioner may choose to opt out of this scheme.

Engagement in other activities

A commissioner must not engage, whether directly or indirectly, or be a partner of any person who engages, in a gainful profession, occupation or business if to do so would in any way be incompatible with the commissioner's functions under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Remuneration

The remuneration for this appointment will be in the range of £52,578 to £56,237 per annum (under review). Starting salary will be at the minimum of the scale.

A new appointee to the Commissions may join the Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension Scheme. Further details can be found on the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (Northern Ireland) website at: www.financeni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni

Hours per week

You will be required to work a minimum of 37 hours excluding meal breaks. You will also be required to work such additional hours as may from time to time be reasonable and necessary for the efficient performance of your duties. Commissioners are normally expected to operate between the hours of 9am to 5pm on working days. Potential flexibility and working from home remotely will be considered in the context of the NICS hybrid working policy.

Annual Leave

In addition to the usual public and privilege holidays there is an annual leave allowance of 30 days.

Location

The Commissions are currently located at 92 Ann Street, Belfast and it is the normal office location for a Commissioner. The office will be your permanent workplace. It is acknowledged that Commissioners dealing with casework are required to operate remotely across Northern Ireland.

Travel outside Northern Ireland may be required on occasion for training purposes.

Transport

As the post requires the applicant to travel on official duty, the successful candidate must have access to a form of transport which will enable them to fulfil their responsibilities.

Probation

Confirmation of your appointment will be dependent upon the satisfactory completion of a probationary period of 1 year. If your performance, conduct or attendance during this period is not satisfactory your appointment may be terminated. All appointees will be expected to demonstrate a track record of effective service within this period.

Vetting

The appointment will be dependent on the individual satisfying the Access NI Basic Level security vetting requirements for the post.

Further Information

Applicants wishing to learn more about the post before deciding to apply may email: recruitment@pacni.gov.uk. Please set out any questions in full in your email and provide a telephone number to facilitate a call back.

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

PERSON SPECIFICATION

The person specification addresses the qualities, experience, background and competences sought. A criteria-based selection procedure is employed.

The application form is an essential element of the process and is designed to require applicants to give specific examples of past performance to demonstrate their ability or competence. Make sure you take full advantage of the opportunity to provide practical evidence and examples of how and why you consider you are suitable for the post.

Eligibility Criteria

By the closing date for applications, applicants must have:

1. A primary degree in town and country planning or a post graduate qualification in town and country planning or have a similar professional qualification in surveying, architecture, civil engineering or be a qualified barrister or solicitor.*

AND

2. Current chartered membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute, Irish Planning Institute or other relevant professional body.**

AND

3. Demonstrate a sound understanding and application of current legislation and policy in relation to town and country planning and other environmental matters gained through a minimum of five years' experience working within an organisation operating in a relevant field.

AND

4. Have gained an in depth and up to date understanding of quasi-judicial*** proceedings gained through personal experience of presiding over or participating and presenting using a range of communication skills in such proceedings.

AND

5. Demonstrate an ability to analyse large amounts of information to interpret and to apply policies; and to draw out in a timely manner the main issues requiring your consideration to reach reasoned conclusions and provide written reports and advice.

Applicants must demonstrate in their applications that they satisfy **all** of the above criteria.

*** Applications will also be considered from candidates with relevant qualifications considered by the Panel to be of an equivalent or higher standard to those stated where chartered membership of a relevant body has been awarded.**

**** Relevant professional memberships – give details of the professional membership held, and reasons why it is considered to be equivalent to the membership required.**

The onus is on you to provide the panel with details of the professional membership so that a well-informed decision can be made.

***** Quasi-judicial – includes but is not exclusive to planning appeal hearings, public inquiries, independent examinations, other hearings and court proceedings. The onus is on you to provide the panel with details so that a well-informed decision can be made.**

Please note:

You should ensure that you provide evidence of your experience in your application form, giving length of experience, examples and dates as required. It is not sufficient to simply list your duties and responsibilities. The selection panel will not make assumptions from the title of the applicant's post or the nature of the organisation as to the skills and experience gained. If you do not provide sufficient detail, including the appropriate dates needed to meet the eligibility criteria, the selection panel will reject your application.

ONLY the details provided by you in the eligibility and shortlisting sections of your application form will be provided to the selection panel for the purpose of determining your eligibility for the post.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Assessment for this competition will comprise of 2 parts;

1. Written assessment – 50% of overall assessment score
2. Competency Based Interview – 50% of overall assessment score

The selection process will include a written assessment and a competence based interview.

WRITTEN ASSESSMENT

For the first part of the assessment process candidates will be expected to undertake a written assessment exercise to demonstrate their analysis, judgement and writing skills. Full assessment guidance will be sent to candidates with their written assessment invitations. This part of the selection process will be marked out of 50 and will be added to the score obtained during the oral interview stage.

The written assessment will be marked out of 50 and candidates will be required to achieve a minimum score of 30 to pass the written assessment.

Only those who meet the required pass mark in the written assessment will progress to interview. The panel reserve the right to interview only the top scoring candidates from the written assessment.

The overall written assessment score will constitute 50% of overall available mark, and will be added to the interview score to produce a merit order list.

It is intended that the written assessments will take place in Belfast on 18th and 19th June 2024.

COMPETENCE BASED INTERVIEWS

Those candidates who proceed to the interview stage of the assessment process will complete a competence based interview. The overall score will constitute 50% of the overall available mark, and will be added to the written assessment score to produce a merit order list.

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

INTERVIEW CRITERIA

At the oral stage of the interview, candidates will be expected to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out below: This interview will be a competence based interview.

1. Making Effective Decisions

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

2. Leading and Communicating

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.

3. Building Capability for All

Effectiveness in this area is having a strong focus on continuous learning for oneself, others and the organisation. It is about being open to learning and keeping knowledge and skill set current and evolving to meet current and future business needs.

4. Delivering at Pace

Effectiveness in this area means focusing on delivering timely performance with energy and taking responsibility and accountability for quality outcomes.

5. Managing a Quality Service

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

The selection panel will design questions to test the applicant's knowledge and experience in each of the selected areas and award marks accordingly.

Each competence will be marked out of 5 and candidates will be required to achieve a minimum score of 3 against each competence in order to pass the interview.

Please see Annex 2 for interview guidance.

Interviews

It is intended that interviews for this post will take place in Belfast on 5th and 9th July 2024. Candidates should make themselves available on these dates.

SELECTION PROCESS

The Merit Principle

Appointments to PACWAC 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 criteria.

Guidance for Applicants

Please note that, to ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants:

- The space available on the application form is the same for all applicants and must not be altered.
- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed application forms.
- Applicants must complete the application form in either typescript font size 12, or legible, block capitals using black ink.
- Applicants must not reformat application forms.
- HRConnect will not examine applications until after the closing deadline;
- All applications must be received by the advertised closing date. Late applications or applications received by fax or by email will not be accepted. Applicants using Royal Mail should note that 1st class mail does not guarantee next day delivery. It is also the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that sufficient postage has been paid to return the form to HRConnect. HRConnect will not accept any application where they are asked to pay any shortfall in postage.
- Applicants are encouraged to submit online applications wherever possible. However, all requests for hard copy application packs are welcomed and all applications will be treated equally regardless of whether they are hard copy or online.
- When completing the online application, your information is saved as you move through the pages. You may leave the application at any time, providing you have clicked on the 'Save & Continue' button. You can return and edit you application form at any time up until the time you submit it. 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.

Changes in personal circumstances or contact details

Please ensure HR Connect are informed immediately of any changes in personal circumstances or contact details such as name, address or email address.

Process

The appointment process will adhere to the following steps:

1. Following the closing date for applications the Panel will formally assess each application form against the eligibility criteria. Only the eligibility and shortlisting sections of your application form will be forwarded to the panel.

If shortlisting is required, all applicants who meet the eligibility requirements will be assessed against the shortlisting criteria.

It is therefore important that applicants complete the eligibility criteria section and shortlisting section (if applicable) fully. *Relevant guidance on completing your application form can be found at Annex 1.*

2. Applicants who do not meet the eligibility or shortlisting criteria (if applicable) will be advised in writing.
3. For applicants who do proceed to the assessment stage, it is anticipated that written assessment and interviews will take place in Belfast. The written assessment will take place 18th and 19th June. For those who progress, interviews will take place on the 5th & 9th July. Candidates should make themselves available on these dates.

As part of the process candidates will be expected to undertake a written assessment exercise to demonstrate their analysis, judgement and writing skills. Full assessment requirements will be sent to candidates with their invitations. This part of the selection process will be marked out of 50. Candidates will be required to achieve a minimum score of 30 to pass the written assessment.

The selection panel will assess the information presented by you at oral interview stage against each relevant selection criterion/competence. A score will then be allocated against each selection criterion/competence and a total interview stage score derived accordingly. *Relevant guidance on preparing for interview can be found at Annex 2.*

The overall interview score will constitute 50% of the overall available mark, and will be added to the written assessment score (50%) to rank candidates in order of merit. Candidates will be allocated to the vacancy (or vacancies) in the order listed. It is presently intended that the merit list for this competition should remain extant for a period of one year.

4. All candidates will be notified of the outcome.

Standards of Behaviour

It is expected that the conduct of those appointed to serve will be above reproach. The Commissioner will be expected to adhere to the NICS Code of Ethics.

Political Activity

The successful candidate will be asked to complete a Political Activity Questionnaire Form. The Committee on Standards in Public Life recommends that all candidates for public appointments be asked to declare any significant political activity including office holding, public speaking and standing for election that they may have undertaken in the previous 5 years. This question is asked because it enables monitoring of political activity of those appointed to a public appointment, in so far as it is already in the public domain. Neither activity, nor affiliation, is a criterion for appointment (except where statute dictates specific

representation). If you are the successful applicant, the information provided will be published with the announcement of your appointment.

PROBITY AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Departments must ensure that the individuals they appoint are committed to the principles and values of public service. These principles are: **Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership**. All successful candidates will be expected to comply with the Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles). Further information is available at <http://www.publicstandards.gov.uk/>.

The Department must take account of actual, or perceived, conflict of interest. Therefore, applicants, in their application form, must disclose information or personal connections that could lead to a conflict of interest, or be perceived as such if they were to be appointed.

It is very important, therefore, that all applicants provide appropriate details on their application form of any interests that might be construed as being in conflict with the appointment for which they have applied. If, from the information provided on the form, it appears that a possible conflict might exist, or arise in the future, this will be fully explored with the applicant with a view to establishing whether it is sufficiently significant to prevent the individual from carrying out the duties of the post. The Panel will do this at interview stage.

More information is included in the factsheet "Probity & Conflicts of Interest Guidance for Candidates" at Annex 3.

Complaints or queries

Should you wish to make a complaint or query about any stage of this process, you should first direct your concerns to:

**HRConnect,
PO Box 1089,
Beacon House,
27 Clarendon Road
Belfast
BT1 9EX.
Email: recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net**

HOW TO APPLY

The competition is being managed by HRConnect on behalf of the Department of Justice.

Application forms can be completed via the online application at www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk or by hard copy. Hard copy and alternative formats of the application form (Braille, Large Print, etc) can be requested by contacting HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330 or via email to recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net. Reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the needs of applicants/candidates with a disability.

Completed hard copy application forms can be returned by post or hand delivered to the address below:

**HRConnect,
PO Box 1089,
Beacon House,
27 Clarendon Road
Belfast
BT1 9EX.**

Completed application forms should be submitted to HRConnect before the closing date of xxxx. **Late applications will not be accepted.** You should retain a copy of this booklet for your reference in the event that you are invited for interview.

Accessibility Requirements

Please let HRConnect know if you require any reasonable adjustments, due to disability, to enable you to attend the interview. Any information provided will be used for this purpose only and will not form any part of the selection process.

If you are subsequently 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.

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.

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. Where there is a requirement to fill any further Commissioner posts in PACWAC, 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.

Legal entitlement to work in the UK

The Department of Justice must ensure that anyone it appoints is not subject to immigration control. You should ensure that there are no restrictions on your stay or your freedom to take or change roles before you apply for this appointment. If you are being considered for an appointment we may ask you to provide documentation confirming that you are not subject to immigration control. Advice on these issues can be obtained from the following website www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk

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. The category of AccessNI check required for this post is;

Basic Disclosure Certificate

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

For more information, the address of the AccessNI website is: <http://www.accessni.gov.uk/>. Those applicants who are being considered for appointment will be contacted by HRConnect, normally after interview/test, and will be asked to complete the AccessNI application form. 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.

Feedback

The Department of Justice is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit appointments are fair and in accordance with the principles of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (NI) Code of Practice. The Department is also committed to providing feedback in respect of decisions taken in determining eligibility/shortlisting as well as at

interview. HRConnect will forward any feedback requests to the Interview Panel, who will be responsible for 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.

APPLICATION FORM GUIDANCE

Personal details – all applicants should complete this part.

Eligibility Section: – The person specification addresses the qualities, experience and background sought. A criteria-based selection procedure is employed for this competition.

The application form is an essential element of the process and is designed to require applicants to give specific examples of past performance to demonstrate they can meet the requirements. The mere mention of a skill or attribute is insufficient. Neither can the selection panel make assumptions from the title of a post or the nature of an organisation as to the experience, qualities and skills gained.

There are five essential criteria. These describe what you need to be able to do in order to be effective in the role being filled.

Please take full advantage of the opportunity to provide practical evidence and examples of how and why you consider you are suitable for this appointment. These examples as provided will inform the selection process.

Note that examples can be provided from your professional experience, voluntary and/or community sector experience or from within your personal life.

We recommend applicants to read the ‘Public Appointments Guide which provides an overview of Public Appointments in Northern Ireland and helpful information for those wishing to apply. - <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/public-appointments-guide-overview-public-appointments-northern-ireland-and-helpful-information>

Where the criterion requires you to demonstrate your skills by setting out your experience, the ‘Public Appointments’ guide suggests the following model to help you to structure your examples and express them in a logical manner:-

- a) **Situation:** Briefly outline the situation
- b) **Task:** What was your objective?;
What were you trying to achieve?
- c) **Action:** What did you actually do?
What was your unique contribution?
- d) **Result:** What happened?
What was the outcome?
What did you learn?

Probity and Conflict of Interest - A conflict of interest may arise if you, or your immediate family, have any business or other interests or personal connections that might be construed as being in conflict with an appointment in the Planning and Water Appeals Commissions.

Further Information

Please let HRConnect know if you require any reasonable adjustments, due to disability, to enable you to attend the interview. Any information provided will be used for this purpose only and will not form any part of the selection process.

If you are subsequently 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.

Declaration

You should read the declaration statement and confirm that you agree with this.

Equal Opportunities Monitoring

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) is committed to ensuring that all eligible persons have equal opportunity for public appointments on the basis of their ability and aptitude for the role. Monitoring is carried out to help us ensure that our processes and procedures promote equality of opportunity as far as possible and therefore your help in completing and returning the monitoring form as part of your application would be appreciated. Please note the information you provide in the monitoring form will be detached from the information on the application form, held separately and will not be available to selection panels or to anyone else involved in the selection process. The information will be used for statistical purposes only and analysed independently by staff in the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in the strictest confidence.

ANNEX 2

INTERVIEW GUIDANCE

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 fulfil 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.

You are strongly advised to read the 'Public Appointments Guide' when preparing for interview - <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/publicappointments-guide-overview-public-appointments-northern-ireland-and-helpfulinformation>

ANNEX 3

PROBITY & CONFLICTS OF INTEREST – GUIDANCE FOR CANDIDATES

Standards of Behaviour

It is expected that the conduct of those they appoint to serve in public office will be above reproach. Everyone who puts themselves forward for a public appointment must be able to demonstrate their commitment to the maintenance of high standards in public life.

The Seven Principles Underpinning Public Life

In 1995, the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined seven principles, which should underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way. These are:

- **Selflessness** – holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest.
- **Integrity** – holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- **Objectivity** – holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- **Accountability** – holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- **Openness** – holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- **Honesty** – holders of public office should be truthful.
- **Leadership** – Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

As part of the selection process, you will be tested on your commitment to maintaining high standards in public life with particular emphasis on probity issues and conflicts of interest

What is a conflict of interest?

Public appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity, in relation to the stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable or political interest which might be material and relevant to the work of the body concerned should be declared.

There is always the possibility for real or perceived conflicts of interest to arise. Both are a problem, as the perceived inference of a conflict may, on occasions, be as damaging as the existence of a real conflict.

No-one should use, or give the appearance of using, their public position to further their private interests. This is an area of particular importance, as it is of considerable concern to the public and receives a lot of media attention. It is important, therefore, that you consider your circumstances when applying for a public appointment and identify any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived.

Surely a perceived conflict is not a problem, as long as I act impartially at all times?

The integrity of the individual is not in question here. However, it is necessary for the standing of the individual that members of the public have confidence in their independence and impartiality. Even a perceived conflict of interest on the part of an office holder can be extremely damaging to the body's reputation and it is therefore essential that these are declared and explored, in the same way as an actual conflict would be. The fact that an office holder acted impartially may be no defence against accusations of potential bias.

What should I do if I think I have a conflict of interest?

You will find a section on conflicts of interest in the application form for you to complete. This asks you to consider and declare whether or not you have a real, or perceived, conflict. If you are unsure if your circumstances constitute a possible conflict, you should still complete this section, in order to give the Selection Panel as much information as possible.

If I declare a conflict, does this mean I will not be considered for appointment?

No, each case is considered individually. If you are short-listed for interview, the Panel will explore with you how far the conflict might affect your ability to contribute effectively and impartially and how this might be handled, if you were to be appointed.

However, if, following the discussion with you, the Panel believes that the conflict is too great and would call into question the probity of the Office or the appointment they can withdraw your application from the competition.

What happens if I do not declare a known conflict, which is then discovered by the Department after my appointment?

Again, each case would be considered on its merits, but the Department may take the view that by concealing a conflict of interest, you would be deemed to have breached the seven principles of conduct underpinning public life and may terminate your appointment.

What happens if I do not realise a potential conflict exists?

This situation may arise where the applicant is not familiar with the broad range of work which a body covers and therefore does not realise that a conflict might exist. In some cases, the Panel, with their wider knowledge of the body, might deduce that there is a potential conflict issue, based on the information on employment and experience provided by the candidate in the application form. They will then explore this at interview with the candidate.

What happens if a conflict of interest arises after an appointment is made?

This could arise for two main reasons. The first is that the member's circumstances may change, for example, they may change jobs and in doing so, a conflict with their work becomes apparent. The second is where a member is unfamiliar with the range of the work of the body, but after appointment, it becomes clear that a conflict exists where none had been envisaged during the appointment process.

In both cases, the issue should be discussed with the Sponsoring Department to decide whether or not the member can continue to carry out their role in an appropriate manner and each case is considered individually.

It may be that the conflict is such that it would be impractical for the member to continue in their role,

You may be asked to sign a declaration of commitment to the above principles as a condition of your appointment.

ANNEX 4

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) is committed to ensuring that all eligible persons have equal opportunity for public appointments on the basis of their ability and aptitude for the role. Monitoring is carried out to help us ensure that our processes and procedures promote equality of opportunity as far as possible.

This section provides an explanation of the definition of disability.

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.

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). Access to this data is restricted and misuse of monitoring information is viewed as a disciplinary offence.