



**Candidate
Information Booklet**

**AGRI-FOOD AND BIOSCIENCES
INSTITUTE (AFBI)**

CHAIR

Public Appointments Unit, DAERA,
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CPANI

The Commissioner
for Public Appointments
Northern Ireland

REGULATED

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If you would like to speak to someone in connection with any aspect of the process or if you require an application pack in a different format such as Braille, large print, audio etc. please contact:

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If you have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department Customer Services via Text Relay using the Next Generation Text Service (NGTS).

- Making a call from a textphone dial 18001 + 0300 200 7852
- Making a call from a telephone dial 18002 + 0300 200 7852

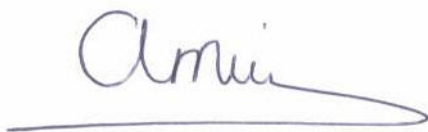
Welcome Statement

Thank you for your interest in the position of Chairperson of the Board of the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI). This is a vital role, providing strategic leadership to AFBI in the delivery of research and scientific services and services to government, non-governmental organisations and commercial organisations.

AFBI's vision is to achieve 'scientific excellence delivering impactful and sustainable outcomes for society, economy and the natural environment'. The work which AFBI undertakes is critical to the work of DAERA and our vision of 'Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape, valued by everyone'. As an Arms' Length Body of DAERA, AFBI's work aligns to Departmental priorities and contributes to Programme for Government outcomes.

This is a key senior Board appointment which will involve taking the organisation through significant challenges in the coming years. As AFBI Chair you will lead the Board to deliver its statutory functions and lead AFBI in its research and scientific services and services to government, non-governmental organisations and commercial organisations.

You will establish and maintain effective governance and oversight of the AFBI, ensuring the proper stewardship of public funds and accounting for how AFBI's resources are used to best effect. If you have a record of accomplishment of leadership and senior management achievement; the ability to demonstrate innovation and deliver successful change; and want to make a purposeful contribution to scientific services and to our environment, I hope that you will apply.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A Muir', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Andrew Muir MLA

Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

The Department is committed to equality of opportunity and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified people irrespective of religious belief, gender, disability, ethnic origin, political opinion, age, marital status, sexual orientation or whether or not they have dependants. All applications for appointment are considered strictly on merit.

Section 1 – Outline of the Public Body and its role

Background

AFBI is a DAERA Executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB). It undertakes scientific work (research and development, testing, advice and information on scientific matters and dissemination of the results of scientific research) in the fields of agriculture, animal health and welfare, food, fisheries, forestry, the natural environment and rural development and enterprise.

This work helps to enable the NI agri-food industry to market products nationally and internationally, helps protect animal and plant health, helps to ensure the safety of the food that we eat, contributes to the protection of our terrestrial and marine environments and is important to NI's long-term economic and environmental sustainability.

Key Partnerships for Delivery:

- College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise;
- Queens University Belfast / Ulster University; and
- Other research bodies – National and International.

AFBI leverages additional income from a wide range of local, national and international research funders and other customers. This external work is complimentary and synergistic to the DAERA funded science programmes. The work typically involves extensive national and international collaborations which ensures that AFBI's science remains internationally relevant while adding benefit to the Northern Ireland industry and wider society.

Further information about the organisation, including its Annual Report and Statement of Accounts can be obtained from the AFBI website at afbini.gov.uk

The AFBI Board

The Board of AFBI currently comprises of a Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and 11 members appointed by the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. The Board meets a minimum of 10 times per annum. Members may also be nominated to serve on sub-committees that also meet regularly. The AFBI Board currently has five sub-committees:

1. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
2. Organisational Development and Human Resources Committee
3. Finance and Business Strategy Committee
4. Science Strategy Committee
5. Oversight & Governance Committee

In accordance with the Agriculture (Northern Ireland) Order 2004, in making appointments to the AFBI Board, the Department seeks to:

- a) Secure that each member has experience in a field of activity relevant to the discharge of the functions of the Institute; and
- b) As far as practicable, secure that the members of the Institute (taken together) are reflective of the community in Northern Ireland.

The Board provides strategic direction and a challenge function to AFBI's Executive Management Team. It promotes good governance including the highest standards of financial management and provides assurance on the effectiveness of risk management and internal control. To this end, and in pursuit of its wider corporate responsibilities, the Board:

- Establishes the overall strategic direction of AFBI within the policy and resources framework determined by the Minister and DAERA;
- Constructively challenges AFBI's Executive Management Team in its planning, target setting and delivery of performance;
- Ensures that DAERA is kept informed of any changes which are likely to impact on the strategic direction of AFBI or on the attainability of its targets, and determine the steps needed to deal with such changes;
- Ensures that any statutory or administrative requirements for the use of public funds are complied with; that the Board operates within the limits of its statutory authority and any delegated authority agreed with DAERA, and in accordance with any other conditions relating to the use of public funds; and that, in reaching decisions, the Board takes into account all relevant guidance issued by the Department of Finance (DoF) and DAERA;
- Ensures that the Board receives and reviews regular financial information concerning the management of AFBI; is informed in a timely manner about any concerns relating to the activities of AFBI; and provides positive assurance to DAERA that appropriate action has been taken on such concerns;
- Demonstrates high standards of corporate governance at all times, including using the audit sub-committee to help the Board to address the key financial and other risks facing AFBI; and
- Appoints a Chief Executive to AFBI, sets performance objectives and remuneration terms linked to those objectives for the Chief Executive, which gives due weight to the proper management and use of public monies.

Section 2 – Role Profile

Appointment

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) wishes to appoint a new **Chair** of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Board, with effect from **1st September 2024**.

A Regulated Appointment

The procedure for this appointment adheres to the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland. This means that it will be based on **merit** after a fair, open, and transparent process that involves independent scrutiny. A copy of the Code can be found at:

www.publicappointmentsni.org

AFBI Chair: Role and Responsibilities

The Chair is responsible to the Minister. The Chair shares with other Board members the collective responsibilities set out above, in particular, ensuring that AFBI fulfils the aims and objectives set by DAERA and approved by the Minister and that AFBI's affairs are conducted with probity.

The Chair has a particular leadership responsibility on the following matters:

- formulating AFBI's strategy;
- ensuring that the Board, in reaching decisions, takes proper account of guidance provided by DAERA;
- promoting the efficient, economic and effective use of staff and other resources;
- encouraging and delivering high standards of regularity and propriety;
- representing the views of the Board to the general public; and,
- ensuring that the Board and its sub-groups meets at regular intervals throughout the year and that the minutes of meetings accurately record the decisions taken and, where appropriate, the views of individual Board Members.

The Chair shall also:

- in conjunction with DAERA, ensure that all members of the Board, when taking up office, are fully briefed on the terms of their appointment and on their duties, rights and responsibilities, and receive appropriate induction training, including on the financial management and reporting requirements of public sector

bodies and on any differences which may exist between private and public sector practice;

- advise DAERA of the needs of AFBI when Board vacancies arise, with a view to ensuring a proper balance of professional and financial expertise; and
- assess the performance of individual Board members. Board Members will be subject to on-going performance appraisal, with a formal assessment being completed by the Chair of the Board at the end of each year (and prior to any re-appointment of individual Members taking place). Members will be made aware that they are being appraised, the standards against which they will be appraised, and will have an opportunity to contribute to and view their reports.

The Chair of the Board will be arriving at a time of continued significant change for AFBI, for DAERA and for AFBI's external customers.

The period of AFBI's last Corporate Plan (2018-2022) was one of substantial change in the Institute, with a number of changes in organisational structures, and significant advancement of a number of key infrastructural and IT projects. These projects have included work to advance a new Animal Health Sciences building, a replacement research vessel, replacement livestock facilities and investment in a range of new or improved IT systems including CORA (project management), a new FBMS (financial and business management system) and the island project.

The balance of scientific work undertaken by AFBI has also changed over the period of the last Corporate Plan. Alongside delivering numerous Evidence and Innovation projects, there has been an increasing requirement for and emphasis on environmental and marine sciences, with work programmes in a number of areas expanding to meet the requirements of DAERA and the external funding opportunities which exist.

Additional key issues for AFBI include an increased focus on staff culture, engagement (including staff survey), grading, and retention; the new Science Strategy; and a continued development of the Partnership Agreement with DAERA, with a focus on sustainability and the outcome and impact of the Science Transformation Programme.

AFBI's new draft Corporate Plan 2023-2027 sets out an ambitious and forward-looking vision of what AFBI, through its science programmes, aims to deliver over the next four-year period along with the continued investment that is necessary in its infrastructure and systems. The Plan builds on the achievements of the last Corporate Plan but reflects a changing external environment, changes in governmental and societal priorities, and changes in the opportunities and challenges ahead for the organisation. The plan reflects the multidisciplinary

strength of the organisation to address some of society's largest challenges through scientific excellence and the impact this science aims to have on society, our economy and the environment.

Key challenges in the period ahead include:

- The delivery of increasingly complex and diverse science programmes to meet the expectation of DAERA and external funders with a key focus on environmental and agricultural sustainability, and NI climate change targets.
- Ensuring that the organisation is structured and has the key staffing capacity and skills to meet the challenges ahead in what is an increasingly competitive recruitment and retention environment.
- Financial stability including meeting the challenges of a constrained public sector funding landscape and the need for continued resource efficiency and effectiveness.
- Completion of the required infrastructural and IT projects including investment in new finance and business systems and DAERA-led projects such as the Animal Health Sciences building and the replacement laboratory information management system.
- External income – opportunity for increases via Peace plus etc, subject to approval by DAERA.
- Delivering solutions to farmers current pressures e.g. environmental and results of Soil Nutrient Health scheme.
- Ensuring focus of science and joined up thinking of platforms to deliver desired outcomes and impacts.

OTHER INFORMATION

Time commitment

The AFBI Chair is required to fulfil their role and responsibilities in full. To do so, a time commitment of approximately **40** days per year is envisaged including induction, training and development, attendance at and preparation for Board meetings, Strategy / Away days, joint DAERA and AFBI Board meetings, regular meetings with DAERA senior officials and the annual Ministerial meeting.

Period of appointment

The AFBI Chair will initially be appointed for a term of three years. An annual appraisal of the Chair's performance will be conducted and subject to satisfactory

performance, the Chair's appointment will continue for the remainder of the three-year term. The Chair may be offered a second term for up to a further two years subject to satisfactory performance and Ministerial approval.

Remuneration

The annual rate of remuneration for the AFBI Chair will be £28,049 (under review). Appropriate tax and National Insurance deductions will be made. The appointment is **not** pensionable.

The AFBI Chair is also eligible to claim allowances, at Northern Ireland Civil Service rates, for travel and subsistence costs necessarily incurred on official business. For the avoidance of doubt, 'official business' does **not** include travel between home and AFBI's headquarters (Newforge Lane, Belfast).

Location

AFBI's headquarters are currently at Newforge Lane, Belfast, with a further **six** regional sites across the North. Meetings will normally take place in Belfast but may occasionally be held at other locations in Northern Ireland.

Training and development

The new Chair may be required to attend relevant training courses, organised by AFBI or DAERA.

Performance Appraisal

An annual appraisal of the Chair's performance against agreed objectives will be conducted by the Department's Permanent Secretary (Accounting Officer) or a Departmental official acting on their behalf.

Indemnities for personal liability

The AFBI Chair, acting honestly and in good faith, will not have to meet out of their own personal resources any personal civil liability which is incurred in the execution of their function, save where the person has acted recklessly.

Conduct

The Chair has a duty in relation to conduct, propriety and confidentiality. The Chair will be required as a condition of appointment to abide by the Seven Principles of Public Life (**Annex A**) and by a Code of Practice of the AFBI Board. The Chair must notify the Institute Secretariat if they become the subject of a police investigation or is arrested by the police.

Attendance

The Chair is expected to attend meetings regularly. The appointment may be terminated if attendance becomes such that it interferes with the good running of AFBI.

Gifts and Hospitality

The Chair will be expected to ensure that the acceptance of gifts and hospitality can stand up to public scrutiny. Gifts should be declined wherever possible, and any offers should be reported to the Institute Secretariat. The Chair must take personal responsibility to ensure that a record is placed in the appropriate hospitality register.

Conflicts of Interest

The AFBI Chair must declare any personal or business interests which may, or may be perceived to, influence their judgement when performing their duties as a member of AFBI.

These interests will be included in an appropriate register of interests maintained by the Institute Secretariat and the Chair must ensure that their entries are kept up to date.

Should an issue arise subsequent to the completion of the register of interests that could give rise to a potential conflict of interest, the Chair must inform the Institute Secretariat. If, at a meeting of the Institute, a particular issue arises that could give rise to a potential conflict, the Chair should disclose their interest and withdraw from any discussion or consideration of the matter. The Chair is encouraged to register their own non-pecuniary interests and the interests of close family members and persons living in the same household that are closely related to their activities as a member of AFBI. Should the Chair be in any doubt, it is best to err on the side of caution and disclose the information.

The Chair must inform the Institute Secretariat in advance of any new appointments which may impinge on their duties.

Political Activity

The Chair of AFBI cannot occupy paid party-political posts, hold particularly sensitive positions of responsibility in a political party, or hold a position of elected MP or MLA, under the terms of the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 and the Northern Ireland Assembly Disqualification Act 1975.

The Chair is expected to inform the Institute Secretariat of any intention to accept a prominent position in any political party and to understand that their appointment as a member of AFBI may be terminated if the Department feels that, in the case of the AFBI Chair accepting such a role, the positions are incompatible.

Subject to the foregoing, the AFBI Chair may engage in political activities provided that they are conscious of their general public responsibilities and exercises proper discretion, particularly with regard to the work of AFBI.

Bankruptcy

The AFBI Chair may be removed from office before the end of their term of appointment if they become bankrupt, make an arrangement with creditors or is made the subject of a Bankruptcy Restrictions Order.

Official Secrets Act

The provisions of the Official Secrets Act 1911 to 1989 apply to the AFBI Chair. Unauthorised disclosure of any information gained in the course of their appointment, or its use by them or others for personal gain or advancement, could result in their appointment being terminated early, or even criminal prosecution.

Other Public Appointments

It is not uncommon for applicants for public appointments to hold other appointments or to have done so in the past. DAERA is required, as far as practicable, to take steps to check how applicants have performed in these other roles. As such, the application form includes a section for candidates to list **current** public appointments held in Northern Ireland and DAERA will seek information on performance from the relevant Department(s).

Nationality

In general, you should have the right to work in the UK to be eligible to apply for a public appointment.

Please note:

- DAERA has no public appointments which are restricted to UK nationals only.
- Republic of Ireland (RoI) citizens may be appointed to any post.
- Commonwealth citizens who have immigration status allowing them to work in the UK may be appointed to any post.

It is the responsibility of any non-UK or non-RoI applicants to provide evidence that they have the appropriate permission if being offered a post. The Department will undertake pre-appointment checks to confirm if they can legally work in the UK.

Section 3 - Person Specification

Before applying for this position, please take the time to study the essential criteria set out below and consider whether you meet these. Candidates who do not meet the essential criteria will not be considered for interview.

Essential Criteria

Candidates will need to demonstrate by way of example that they have the following skills, knowledge and experience. It is your responsibility to provide relevant examples, both on the application form and at interview, that show clearly how you meet each of the criteria listed below.

1. Experience in a Field of Activity Relevant to the Discharge of the Functions of the Institute (Application Stage Only)

The functions of AFBI, the role of the AFBI Board and Chair and some of the challenges facing the organisation are detailed on pages 4-8 of this document.

We are looking for evidence that demonstrates (a) your understanding of AFBI's role (b) your understanding of the range of strategic challenges facing AFBI in the medium-term and (c) your experience in a field of activity relevant to the discharge of AFBI's functions. When providing this evidence, you need to demonstrate that you have the ability to operate as an effective Chair. You do not need to demonstrate experience in undertaking any of AFBI's specialist scientific activities.

2. Strategic Thinking and Direction (Application and Interview Stages)

The AFBI Chair will be responsible for establishing the AFBI Board's strategy and for leading the Board in establishing the overall strategic direction of AFBI. In doing so, the Chair will ensure that AFBI fulfils the aims and objectives set by DAERA and approved by the Minister, including clarifying and shaping AFBI's role and purpose in helping the Department deliver the Programme for Government.

We are looking for evidence that demonstrates your strategic thinking and the skills you have employed to influence the direction of an organisation, taking account of internal issues, the wider external environment and any operating frameworks or other set parameters (resources, budget, policies, business models etc).

We are looking for evidence of your ability to fully engage with and utilise the AFBI Board and Executive Management Team's wider experience and knowledge to support strategic decision making.

3. **Leadership** (Application and Interview Stages)

The AFBI Chair will be responsible for generating corporate responsibility and cohesion among Board members and for providing strategic leadership to AFBI. This will involve working with Board colleagues, the AFBI Chief Executive and senior management team, senior civil servants, the DAERA Minister and other stakeholders.

We are looking for evidence that demonstrates your ability to provide strong leadership such as the ability to manage relationships effectively, guiding, persuading and constructively challenging others, driving the decision-making process and exercising personal authority.

4. **Communication and Collaboration** (Application and Interview Stages)

The AFBI Chair will be an excellent communicator and will be capable of communicating effectively in order to develop and maintain good relationships and to achieve results. The Chair will be expected to speak publicly on behalf of AFBI.

We are looking for evidence to demonstrate your communication skills including your ability to interact constructively with others and to influence key decision makers and those in senior positions of authority. We are also looking for evidence of your ability to be highly articulate, and be credible at the most senior levels, consistently delivering inspiring, engaging and meaningful messages about the future direction.

We are also looking for evidence to demonstrate your ability to collaborate with a range of different stakeholders and to bring them along with you in any decisions you make and for you to show that you are aware of the need seek specialist advice when necessary.

5. **Corporate Governance and Accountability** (Application and Interview Stages)

We are looking for evidence, gained at Board level of (a) your understanding and application of the principles and practice of corporate governance and accountability, including risk management and (b) to demonstrate that you have maintained or improved good governance within an organisation and (c) that you have demonstrated personal accountability when making decisions and taking action.

Please note:

1. Details of previous employment are **not** required.
2. You should ensure that you provide evidence in your application form which outlines how your experience matches the essential criteria detailed above.
3. 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 which you may have gained. It is not sufficient to simply list the various posts that you have held.
4. If you do not provide sufficient detail under each of the criteria the selection panel may reject your application.
5. Only the details provided by you in your application form will be provided to the selection panel for the purpose of determining your eligibility for the post or shortlisting (if necessary). Details must be provided in the relevant box for each of the essential criteria – any information provided on continuation sheets will **not** be used.

It is strongly recommended that all applicants/candidates read the '**Public Appointments Guide**' which provides an overview of Public Appointments in Northern Ireland and helpful information for those wishing to apply. A copy of this Guide can be found at the following link:

www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/public-appointments-guide.pdf

You may also be interested in registering for a free workshop on the public appointments process being offered by CPANI. Further details can be found at: <https://www.publicappointmentsni.org/workshops>

Section 4 – Application and Selection Process

DAERA is committed to the principles of public appointments based on **merit** with independent assessment, openness, and transparency of process. The appointment process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI).

Guaranteed Interview Scheme

All reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the needs of applicants/candidates with a disability. We are operating the Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) in this appointment process. The aim of the GIS is to provide applicants with a disability the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities beyond the initial application stage. Applicants with a disability who meet the essential criteria at stage one of the selection process (the sift process) will automatically be offered an interview. Their application will **not** be subjected to any **short-listing** which may take place.

Application Procedure

Application forms or further information about the process can be obtained from the Public Appointments Unit at the address on the cover of this document or by e-mailing a request to: publicappointments@daera-ni.gov.uk

Alternatively, you can download the information pack at:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/appointment-chair-agri-food-biosciences-institute-afbi>

Making Your Application

The application form is designed to ensure applicants provide the necessary information to determine how they meet the competition requirements. You will be assessed against the essential criteria contained in **Part B** of the application form. You can use examples from your working life, including any voluntary or community work you are, or have been, engaged in or, if preferred, you can use examples from your personal life.

Application instructions:

- Completed application forms should be submitted electronically to DAERA's Public Appointments at publicappointments@daera-ni.gov.uk. If this is not possible, you should notify the Public Appointments Unit that a hard copy application has been sent. You can contact us on **028 7744 2025** or by email.
- Typewritten or electronic versions of the application are preferred and should be completed in **Arial** minimum font size **12**. If your application is submitted by email, we may require you to sign **Part A** if invited to interview.

- Handwritten applications should be completed in legible block capitals using **black ink**.
- When completing the application form, a maximum of **400** words per criterion is permitted. Any additional words will be **redacted** and **not** presented to the panel for assessment.
- We will **not** accept CVs, letters, or any other supplementary material in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms.
- The format of the application form should **not** be amended in any way.
- Braille, large print and audio formats are available on request.

Closing Date

The **closing time and date** for receipt of completed application forms by post or e-mail is **Noon on Thursday 23 May 2024**.

Late applications will not generally be accepted. The Selection Panel may decide to accept a late application if there are exceptional extenuating circumstances.

The time of receipt of applications will be formally recorded. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that their application arrives with DAERA on or before the deadline. Applicants who send their application form electronically are required to meet the closing deadline for receipt in this office. Where an application is being sent by post, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for it to arrive. Please ensure that posted applications bear the correct amount of postage as any shortfall may lead to a delay in delivery, causing you to miss the deadline. In the event of a postal strike please contact the Public Appointments Unit to arrange alternative delivery arrangements to a local DAERA Direct office.

To ensure equality of opportunity for all, applications will **not** be examined or assessed by the selection panel until after the closing deadline. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the application is valid and meets the eligibility requirements.

Applications from Civil Servants/Former Civil Servants

Civil servants, or former civil servants are subject to the rules on Acceptance of Outside Business Appointments, Employment or Self-Employment for a period of up to two years after leaving the NI Civil Service. Individuals in this category, who wish to apply, must check their eligibility to do so with their current/ former Department and the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Human Resources. (*Standards of Conduct Policy Sections 8, IRO Public Appointments: The NICS Staff Handbook includes the HR policy, 6.01 Standards of Conduct*).

Civil servants, or former civil servants, should be aware that a judgement may also be made by the interviewing panel, taking account of the Cabinet Office guidance on Making and Managing Public Appointments, as to whether the nature of their employment could lead to a perceived, or real, split of loyalties of a sufficiently serious nature to render appointment as AFBI Chair, or Board Member, an unmanageable conflict of interest.

Selection Process

The appointment process for the Chair position will be overseen by a Selection Panel. The Selection Panel will have an independent panel member who has been allocated by the office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI) and has had no recent employment, advisory or other operational contact with DAERA. The panel will compile a list of candidates found suitable for appointment for consideration of appointment by the DAERA Minister.

DAERA's Public Appointments Unit will conduct an initial application admissibility check. Applications will only be eligible for panel assessment if they are received within the deadline and all eligible questions are completed in line with the parameters outlined in **Section 4** of the Candidate Information Booklet.

Part A and **Part B** of the Application Form must be completed in full.

Part C – Applicants are requested to complete the Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form. This will not be shared with the Selection Panel

The **Selection Panel** is:

- **Brian Doherty, Deputy Secretary and (joint) Head of Strategic Planning and Corporate Services Group, DAERA (Chair)**
- **David Malcolm, Deputy Secretary and Head of Management Services and Regulation Group, DfE**
- **Angela Coffey, Independent Assessor for the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI)**

Sift Process

Applications will be **anonymised** before the Selection Panel conducts the sift exercise. The Selection Panel will assess **Part B** of the application form only. Only information supplied under each criterion in the application form will be considered for the sift process. It is therefore essential that you provide in the application form information relevant to **each** of the **five** essential criteria.

The scoring framework of **1-5** will be used at sift stage. The pass mark will be **two** with weighting of criteria applied to **Strategic Thinking and Direction** and **Leadership**, where a pass mark of **three** will be required.

Shortlisting Criteria

Applicants should be aware that after an eligibility sift, should it be necessary to shortlist candidates to go forward to interview, the pass mark will incrementally be increased for the following criterion:

Essential Criterion 2: Strategic Thinking and Direction

If further shortlisting is required, the pass mark will be incrementally increased for the following criterion:

Essential Criterion 3: Leadership

Only those applicants who are deemed to meet **all** of the essential criteria will be invited to interview. If a high number of applications are received, only the top scoring applicants will progress to the next stage, based on the quality of information received. Applicants who are sifted out will be informed of the decision at this stage.

It is anticipated that the eligibility sift will take place week commencing 3 June 2024.

Feedback

If an applicant does not pass the sift stage of the process, feedback will be provided on request. This will be based on the Panel's consensus assessment of the application.

DAERA has a system in place to deal with queries, challenges, or complaints raised during the appointment process and to reassess decisions not to invite candidates for interview.

Reassessment Process

If an applicant is unhappy with the decision of the panel, in that they have not been invited to interview, they have the right to make a request in writing to have their case reviewed. The applicant must contact the Public Appointments Unit requesting a review within **10** days of receiving the outcome letter from the sift process.

The reassessment request will be shared with the panel in full and the panel are clearly advised **not** to take any additional information provided by the applicant into account, that the reassessment must be based **only** on the information provided by the applicant in their application form.

Applicants should contact the DAERA Public Appointments Unit by email at: publicappointments@daera-ni.gov.uk to request a reassessment.

Interview Process

Interviews will be carried out **in person** by the Selection Panel. Requests for remote interviews will only be considered by the panel in exceptional circumstances. **Audio only** interviews will **not** be permitted. If the selection panel agrees that it is necessary to conduct an interview(s) remotely, these will be conducted via the video conferencing facility used by DAERA and candidates will be provided with a link by email to engage in the interview.

At interview stage the criteria will be marked on a scoring framework from **1 to 5**. Candidates need to meet the satisfactory level required, which is obtaining the minimum pass marks for each criterion to be considered suitable for appointment, as detailed below:

- **Strategic Thinking and Direction** (Pass mark 3)
- **Leadership** (Pass mark 3)
- **Communication and Collaboration** (Pass mark 2)
- **Corporate Governance and Accountability** (Pass mark 2)

It is anticipated that interviews will be held on week commencing **17 June 2024 at Greenmount Campus, CAFRE, Antrim**. A valid form of photographic identity will need to be presented to the panel for **all** candidates attending for interview, either in person or remotely.

The interviews will be competence-based interviews which test candidates against the specific selection criteria for a particular appointment. Please see the enclosed Guide to Competency Based Interviewing (**Annex B**).

The application form gives you an opportunity to provide examples relevant to the specific criteria. These, in turn, provide the interview panel with information and evidence about you, and a deeper understanding of your abilities.

The interview is a crucial part of the appointment process and thorough preparation is essential. You can prepare for interview by:

- reading and thoroughly understanding the selection criteria;
- reminding yourself of examples you used in your application form and being prepared to expand on these at interview, if asked;
- rehearsing how you might relate your experiences to the interview panel, emphasising your own role and responsibilities; and
- not assuming that your qualities and experience will speak for themselves.

We aim to notify the candidates of the interview outcome by week commencing **24 June 2024**.

If unsuccessful at interview, candidates may request **feedback** on their performance, this can be arranged by contacting the Public Appointments Unit by email at: publicappointments@daera-ni-gov.uk

Applicants will be able to claim expenses for travel at standard NI Civil Service rates for attendance at interview.

Appointment

Ministerial choice is a key element of public appointment policy that enables Ministers to indicate if they wish to be presented with the names of candidates found suitable for appointment in a ranked (strict merit order) or unranked (alphabetical) list. The Minister has requested that an **unranked** list should be presented in this appointment process. It is anticipated that the successful candidate will take up appointment from **1 September 2024**.

Candidates should be aware that information provided in their application form and at interview stage will be used to compile an “**Applicant Summary**”. The Applicant Summary provides an objective analysis of each applicant’s skills and experience, based on the information provided during the appointment round and the selection panel’s assessment of that applicant. In addition, if they are successful, they will be asked to provide information for a short pen picture for inclusion in the press release to announce the appointment, in line with the Commissioner for Public Appointment’s Code of Practice. This will include:

- their name;
- a brief summary of the skills and knowledge they bring to the role;
- details of current appointments held and any related remuneration received; and
- details of any political activity declared in the last five years.

DAERA will add the following information to the press release:

- a short description of the body to which they have been appointed;
- the period of appointment; and
- any remuneration associated with the appointment.

A **reserve list** may be used to cover any unforeseen vacancies that arise within 12 months following the initial appointment.

Disqualification

Under the terms of the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 and the Northern Ireland Assembly Disqualification Act 1975, existing MPs cease to hold their elected office if they take up an appointment to a public body listed in the aforementioned legislation.

The onus is on the person standing for election to state that they are aware of the provisions of the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 or the Northern Ireland Assembly Disqualification Act 1975 and that, to the best of their knowledge and belief, they are not disqualified from being an MP.

If an individual holding a public appointment decides to stand for election as an MP it is their responsibility to check whether the public body to which they belong or the office that they hold is listed in the appropriate Disqualification Act.

If the public body to which an individual belongs or the office that they hold is listed in the Disqualification Act they must immediately notify DAERA of their intention to stand for election. To avoid any disqualification issues from arising later they should resign their appointment **before** submitting their nomination as candidate in an election. If they have not resigned their public appointment before submitting their nomination as a candidate and are subsequently elected as an MP their election will be void.

Section 5 - Probity and Conflicts of Interest

The highest standards of propriety are expected of the AFBI Chair and independent Members. Public appointees must show a willingness to work under any administration irrespective of public opinion. Public appointees, including the AFBI Members, must adhere to the **Seven Principles of Conduct Underpinning Public Life** as established by the Nolan Committee. A copy is attached at **Annex A**.

Any private or business interests that potential Board members might have, and that may be relevant to the work of the AFBI, must be declared in the application form. Examples of what might constitute a conflict of interest are given on the enclosed leaflet issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments:

<https://www.publicappointmentsni.org/publications/guidance-conflicts-interest-integrity-and-how-raise-complaint>

You should declare in your application form any matter(s) which could cause or could be perceived to cause reputational damage to DAERA or the AFBI Board. Conflicts of interest are not necessarily a barrier to appointment, but both real and perceived conflicts, if viewed as relevant, will be explored by the selection panel to ensure that the public can have confidence in the AFBI's independence and impartiality.

Applicants will be probed on these issues during the application and appointment stages of the process.

A person appointed to the AFBI Board may be removed from office if they:

- i. have become bankrupt or made an arrangement with creditors, or is the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or a debt relief restrictions order; or
- ii. have been absent from more than **two** consecutive meetings otherwise than for a reason approved by DAERA; or
- iii. are otherwise unable or unfit to discharge the functions of a member, or is unsuitable to continue as a member; or
- iv. have during the process leading to their appointment given false information or wilfully suppressed any material fact.

Other Public Appointments

Departments have a duty to satisfy themselves, as far as practicable, that those they appoint to the Boards of Public Bodies will carry out their duties in an effective manner. DAERA will therefore conduct a cross-departmental check on the probity and performance of those candidates who currently hold or have held public

appointment roles. Similar information will be provided by this Department on request about all DAERA associated Board Members.

The Two Terms Rule

You should be aware that if you have already served two terms in the same position on the same board you cannot apply through open competition for a third term.

Double Paying

If you already work in the public sector you need to be aware that:

- you may be ineligible for consideration for this appointment if in the Department's view there is a conflict of interest, the perception of a conflict or a potential conflict, between the appointment and your existing commitments;
- you will be asked to confirm that you have permission from your employer to take up an appointment if one is offered and your Department will confirm this;
- there is a general guiding principle that an individual should not be paid twice from the public purse for the same period of time. As a result, if you already work in the public sector, you may not be entitled to claim remuneration including expenses for this position if the duties are undertaken during a period of time for which you are already paid by the public sector. If in doubt you should contact your employer for advice.

In the interests of minimising the potential for double paying to occur, DAERA reserves the right to contact your employer regarding your candidature.

Access NI Checks

If successful, you should be aware that you will be required to complete a Basic Access NI check. Further details in relation to this can be found in the Access NI Code of Practice at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/accessni-code-practice>

Section 6 – Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form and Complaints Procedure

Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) is committed to equality of opportunity. The NICS monitors the appointment processes to help ensure that processes and procedures promote equality of opportunity as far as possible. Please complete the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form – **Part C** of the application form.

The information provided in the Monitoring Form will be detached from the information on the application form and held separately. It 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 will be analysed independently by staff in the **Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)** in the strictest confidence. NISRA will only collect and hold the personal data required to provide and manage its service in relation to Public Appointments. Anonymised equality monitoring data may also be released to other government Departments; the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland, or in response to Assembly/Parliamentary Questions and other information requests in accordance with applicable law.

Diversity in Public Appointments

DAERA is committed to equality of opportunity and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified people irrespective of religious belief, gender, disability, ethnic origin, political opinion, age, marital status, sexual orientation or whether or not they have dependants. All applications for appointment are considered strictly on merit. The Executive has an ongoing target for achieving gender equality in aggregated public appointments for all appointees in post with equality reflected in both board membership and at chair level.

Complaints Procedure

If you wish to make a complaint about any aspect of this appointment process, you should direct your concerns in the first instance in writing to the Public Appointments Unit, DAERA at the address below:

**Public Appointments Unit
ALB Corporate Sponsor and Public Appointments Branch
Jubilee House
111 Ballykelly Road
Limavady
BT49 9HP**

Or by email to: PublicAppointments@daera-ni.gov.uk

Telephone: 028 7744 2025

Textphone: 1 8001 7744 2025

**If you have a hearing difficulty you can contact DAERA via Text Relay.
Making a call from a text phone dial 18001 7744 2025
Making a call from a telephone dial 18002 7744 2025**

If you are unhappy with DAERA's response, you may wish to write to the office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland. Please be aware that in the absence of a Commissioner currently, there may be a delay in dealing with complaints being considered independently of Departments (see contact details below):

**Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI)
Stormont Castle - Interim
Stormont Estate
Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast
BT4 3XX**

Tel. No: 028 9052 4820

Email: info@publicappointmentsni.org

Section 7 – DAERA’S Public Appointments Privacy Notice

The Department takes data protection, freedom of information and environmental information issues seriously. It takes care to ensure that any personal information received from you is dealt with in a way which complies with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act (2018). This means that any personal information you supply will be processed principally for the purpose for which it has been provided. It may also share this information with other bodies responsible for the audit or administration of public funds in order to prevent and detect crime. In addition, the Department may also use it for other legitimate purposes in line with DAERA’s Public Appointments Privacy Notice and with the UK General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act 2018, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

A full copy of the **DAERA’S Public Appointments Privacy Notice** can be found here: -

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/daeras-public-appointments-privacy-notice>

If you require this in hard copy, please contact DAERA’s Public Appointments Unit as per contact details on page 2.

The Seven Principles Underpinning Public Life

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act 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 and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Guide to Competency Based Interviewing

Competency Based Interviewing (CBI) is currently the most common method adopted for making public appointments in Northern Ireland. CBI is based on the premise that past performance is the best indicator of how someone will perform in a similar situation in the future. The CBI approach places the onus on you, the candidate, to provide evidence from your own experience of specific skills, competencies and behaviours at the required standard of performance. A 'competence' is simply a desirable skill or quality.

CBI provides the opportunity for you to answer questions about how you have reacted to and dealt with previous situations, the lessons you have learned and how you might handle similar situations in the future. CBI gives you an opportunity to illustrate your personality, skill set and individual competencies to the interviewer. During the interview each competence is tested separately and you will be told which competence you are being questioned on. For each competence, the interviewer will begin by asking a **lead question**. These questions are seeking an example of a situation or task which led you to take a certain course of action. Lead questions are standardised and are therefore asked to each candidate in the same way. Some examples of lead questions are:

- *Describe a situation when you have worked as part of a team?*
- *Tell me about a time when you have been faced with a challenge in work?*

Probing questions will then be used to determine the course of action taken, what changes were created by those actions and the effects of those actions on others. Examples of probing questions are:

- *What did you actually do?*
- *What risks did you take?*
- *How did you plan it?*
- *What were the implications of....?*
- *What went well?*
- *What went badly?*
- *What were the outcomes?*
- *What would you do differently?*

You can prepare for the interview by:

- reading and thoroughly understanding the selection criteria;
- reminding yourself of the examples you used in your application form and being prepared to expand on these at the interview;

- rehearsing how you might relate your experiences to the interview panel emphasising your own role and contribution; and
- not assuming that your qualities and experience will speak for themselves.

During the interview:

- listen carefully to the questions, if you don't understand a question ask for clarification;
- answer with good clear examples that provide evidence of your ability and which relate to the criteria the panel is looking for; and
- don't sell yourself short, be positive and show enthusiasm.

The competencies being tested are the criteria indicated in the application form.

Further information on competency-based interviews is available in the 'Public Appointments Guide'. A copy of this Guide can be found at the following link:

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/public-appointments-guide.pdf>