



Candidate Information Booklet

Appointment of a Chairperson and up to nine Members
to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and
Rural Affairs' High-Level Science Advisory Group



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

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department o'

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

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

Candidate Information Booklet

This information booklet has been produced to help you provide the relevant information when completing the application form for the Chairperson or Member of the High-Level Science Advisory Group and should not be taken as constituting conditions of appointment.

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

The criteria required for each role and how to complete an application are set out within this booklet. It is recommended that you read this information carefully before completing an application form.

Equal Opportunities

DAERA is committed to equality of opportunity and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified individuals irrespective of religious belief, gender, race, political opinion, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or whether or not they have dependents. Reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the needs of candidates with a disability.

The Guaranteed Interview Scheme will apply to this selection process. If you would like to speak to someone in connection with any aspect of the selection process please contact via email to HLSAGsecretariat@daera-ni.gov.uk or telephone the HLSAG Secretariat on 028 9052 2194.

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Section 1: Introduction

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is seeking to appoint a Chairperson and up to nine Members to its High-Level Science Advisory Group (HLSAG). The HLSAG is a new expert science advisory Group which will play a vital role in assisting the DAERA Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) to make decisions by advising on and challenging the evidence that DAERA uses in its policy development.

The HLSAG is a non-statutory expert science advisory group and is not a Public Appointment. The selection process for these appointments will follow the spirit of the best practice guidelines where practicable as set out in the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI)¹. This means that appointments for each scientific discipline will be made after a fair, open and transparent process. All appointments will be made on merit and in order to achieve a balance across the science disciplines as broadly described in **Annex A**.

¹ Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Northern Ireland, The Commissioner for Public Appointments, Northern Ireland (CPANI), December 2016. https://www.publicappointmentsni.org/files/publicappointmentsni/media-files/CPANI_Code_of_Practice_JL2_December_2016.pdf

Section 2: Background Information

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

DAERA is one of nine Departments in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) and has responsibility for food (a range of aspects, but not all), farming, climate, environmental, fisheries, forestry and sustainability policy and the development of the rural sector in Northern Ireland.

DAERA is currently leading on the Executive's overarching multi-decade Green Growth Strategy and Delivery Framework for Northern Ireland and on the implementation of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, including development of Northern Ireland's first Climate Action Plan. Research and development needs are identified by DAERA on an ongoing basis and are currently categorised into the following six high-level thematic areas:

- Climate,
- Sustainable Agri-Food Systems,
- One Health,
- Natural Environment,
- Air, Water, Waste and Wastewater Management, and
- Rural Affairs.

More information on DAERA's areas of responsibility is available at: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/>

Climate Change, Science & Innovation Group (CCSIG)

The Chief Scientific Adviser's Office (CSAO) is one of four Divisions within DAERA's Climate Change, Science & Innovation Group (CCSIG). The Group's remit brings together the policy and delivery aspects of DAERA's climate change work as well as recognising the role played by science and innovation across DAERA. The CCSIG is responsible for developing policy and legislation in respect of climate change, leading on the Executive's Green Growth Strategy and development of Northern Ireland's Climate Action Plan, leading on the implementation of the Science Transformation Programme (STP), as well as responsibility for DAERA's Chief Scientific Adviser's Office (CSAO) and progressing DAERA's Science Strategy Framework and operational strategies relating to research and monitoring and surveillance.

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Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) and Chief Scientific Adviser's Office (CSAO)

The role of the CSA is strategic, as a leader and DAERA's senior science adviser and champion of science internally, and as a senior representative for DAERA's science externally. The CSA role also provides oversight, co-ordination and governance for DAERA science across the whole Department, focusing on strategic issues that impact across DAERA's remit and, where appropriate, across other Northern Ireland departments.

The Chief Scientific Adviser's Office (CSAO), supports the CSA as DAERA's senior science adviser, and is responsible for:

- commissioning of research and development for programmes and projects to meet the needs of DAERA policy makers;
- overseeing the monitoring and evaluation of all commissioned research and development;
- oversight of the science system within the Department and external collaborations with other Departments and stakeholders;
- provision of specialist advice on science-related issues and priorities, including in the event of emergency; and
- representing DAERA on scientific matters.

The HLSAG will principally advise and report, through its Chairperson to the CSA. The HLSAG will sit within the CSAO and is supported by a Secretariat within the CSAO.

Section 3: Role Profile

DAERA High-Level Science Advisory Group (HLSAG)

Role and Remit

The HLSAG's remit is broad, focusing primarily on the strategic direction of DAERA's scientific evidence. Diversity of thought within its members is encouraged. The HLSAG's focus is on science advice, where science includes social and economic disciplines, and its role includes:

- providing independent strategic advice and recommendations to the CSA on science policies and priorities and the integration of science needs across DAERA;
- assisting DAERA shape its policy development by ensuring it understands the full range of scientific information, can react to external changes, and contribute to DAERA's horizon scanning to identify the opportunities and challenges;
- assisting the CSA in assuring and challenging the process for evidence gathering that DAERA uses in its policy development and identify any gaps in its science or evidence base at present or likely in the foreseeable future;
- advising, supporting and constructively challenging the CSA on the implementation of the DAERA Science Strategy Framework; and
- maintaining and developing links with other external scientific institutions, the Devolved Administrations and the Republic of Ireland to further its work, aims and objectives.

Chairperson's Role

The appointed Chairperson will take responsibility for the leadership and output of the HLSAG. In doing so, the Chairperson will work in partnership with DAERA's CSA to plan and agree the HLSAG's annual programme of work. The Chairperson will also work in partnership with the CSA and Members to ensure the Group provides high-level, strategic advice and constructive challenge on DAERA's use of evidence, ensuring the scientific advice given by the Group and the evidence used in DAERA's policy development and delivery is effective and high-quality. The Chairperson must ensure the HLSAG also provides advice on how DAERA should look to further improve its use of evidence and external advice.

By leading discussions with the Members and DAERA officials (through a mixture of formal meetings and smaller working groups), the Chairperson will ensure that all members are able to contribute to discussions and that the Group arrives at clear outcomes.

The Chairperson is responsible for completing the annual appraisal of the Members' performance and will act as the spokesperson for the HLSAG when engaging with the media. The Chairperson will fully participate in an annual appraisal of their performance with the CSAO.

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Member's Role

Appointed members will have a broad range of expertise across DAERA's areas of interest, including but not limited to agricultural science; animal science; marine, fisheries and aquatic systems; plant science; natural environmental sciences; climate adaptation and mitigation science; social sciences; and data science.

Members will provide high-level strategic advice, support and assurance to the Chairperson, along with constructive challenge to ensure the science and evidence used in DAERA's policy development and delivery is both effective and high-quality. Members will provide strategic oversight and advice on how DAERA should look to further improve its use of evidence and external advice. Members will also advise on broader issues such as how DAERA obtains its advice, its access to the scientific community, and on developing and maintaining its capabilities into the future. Members may also be required to join sub-groups if the CSA aims to focus on a specific area of DAERA's portfolio.

These duties will be performed through discussions and engagement with DAERA officials and key stakeholders, and a mixture of meetings and smaller working groups. All Members must work together to produce an annual report on the work of the HLSAG.

Members will fully participate in an annual appraisal of their performance with the Chairperson.

Relationship with Existing DAERA Advisory Groups

The HLSAG's provision of independent expert scientific advice to all DAERA's sectors and policies will complement the more specific advisory groups that provide detailed independent advice to the relevant parts of the Department.

Time Commitment

The Chairperson and Members must ensure they have sufficient time to meet the expectations of the role. During the year, HLSAG members are required to make themselves available for approximately 10 days, consisting of:

- four full day meetings each year (quarterly);
- a day to prepare and study papers in advance of each meeting;
- ad hoc meetings that the Chairperson/Members may be invited to; and
- additional time that may also be required to provide input to the work of any HLSAG subgroups.

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Term of Appointment

Appointments will be for a period of three years. The appointment may be renewed for one further period of three years, subject to satisfactory performance.

Remuneration

A daily fee of £350 will be paid to the Chairperson and Members will be paid a daily fee of £250 for attendance at each HLSAG meeting. Appropriate tax and National Insurance deductions will be made. In addition, the Chairperson and Members will be entitled to one full day paid preparation time per HLSAG meeting.

Reasonable travel and subsistence expenses incurred on official business will be reimbursed in accordance with the NICS Travel and Subsistence Policy.

Section 4: Person Specification

In making these appointments DAERA wants to ensure a broad range of skills and experience that reflect the breadth of DAERA's full remit.

*Before applying for these positions, 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. All candidates must complete Essential Criteria 1-3 of the application form. Candidates applying for the Chairperson role must also complete Essential Criterion 4.*

Essential Criteria 1-3 (to be completed by all Candidates)

Applications are invited from candidates who can demonstrate both on the application form and, at interview if invited, the following skills, experience and knowledge:

Essential Criterion 1 - Skills, experience and knowledge

You need to demonstrate your recent experience and knowledge in the science discipline you are applying for as evidenced by a wide portfolio of scientific publications (and/or) participation on expert scientific groups:

- **Agricultural Science**
- **Animal Science**
- **Climate Adaptation & Mitigation Science**
- **Data Science**
- **Marine, Fisheries & Aquatic Systems**
- **Natural Environmental Sciences**
- **Plant Science**
- **Social Sciences**

Further information, including a broad description of each science discipline, can be found at **Annex A**.

Examples of the types of evidence the Selection Panel will be looking for are listed below:

- An excellent record for your career stage in conducting, leading or directing internationally respected research.
- Information regarding a senior position of responsibility in academia, a science organisation, education or public service in a scientific role you hold or recently held.
- A broad understanding of the ecosystem of science organisations in Northern Ireland, along with knowledge of UK and international science programmes relevant to DAERA.

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- Experience of advising government on science issues.
- Some experience and/or understanding of working in a policy-making environment.

Note: Recent experience and knowledge is defined as within the last 3 years.

Note: The term 'organisation' is defined as a body operating in the public, community, voluntary or private sectors.

Essential Criterion 2 - Strategic thinking and direction

You need to demonstrate your ability to provide strategic scientific advice on matters relating to the use of evidence in policymaking and to strategically assess the application of evidence in policymaking and recognise where and how science can enhance policymaking. This will include the ability to analyse issues in an impartial way and work across a range of topics drawing on, but not limited to, your expertise.

Examples of the types of evidence the Selection Panel will be looking for are listed below:

- Strong analytical skills with the capacity to examine issues in an impartial way and the ability to provide high-level science advice not limited by your area of expertise.
- Ability to understand how evidence from different science disciplines can be combined to deliver more rounded and comprehensive advice.
- Ability to take a strategic long-term vision and see the bigger picture, with an appreciation of how policy levers can have an impact on more than one policy area.
- Ability to anticipate future trends accurately.
- Experience of working with the research community to provide strategic advice, beyond the scope of your own domain expertise, for the development of long-term priorities for science.

Essential Criterion 3 - Communication and partnering

You need to demonstrate how you have, within a personal, voluntary or employment context, contributed effectively as part of a team, put forward views in a clear and concise manner and shown an ability to influence others to achieve desired outcomes.

Examples of the types of evidence the Selection Panel will be looking for are listed below:

- Proven track record of building and enhancing relationships, making good use of science networks, collaborations and connections across the UK and Ireland and further afield.

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- Experience of engaging with a diverse set of scientists (within and across disciplines) and stakeholders (including policy makers) to develop strategic, transdisciplinary partnerships.
- Experience of developing positive and productive partnerships leading to effective collaboration to achieve agreed outcomes.
- Ability to work effectively within similar advisory or committee bodies.
- Experience of representing the views of research and innovation and facilitating two-way communication within the research community or similar organisations.

Essential Criterion 4 - Leadership: (must be completed by candidates applying for the Chairperson role)

You need to demonstrate your ability to show engaged leadership, successfully promoting cohesion among group members, and working with colleagues, senior management/scientists and other stakeholders to achieve the desired outputs.

Examples of the types of evidence the Selection Panel will be looking for are listed below:

- The ability to lead a diverse team including the ability to manage relationships, guiding, persuading and constructively challenging others, driving the decision-making process and exercising personal authority.
- The ability to chair complex multidisciplinary discussions, drawing out the views of all members, arriving at consensus, being clear on areas of uncertainty and producing relevant and clear outcomes.
- A collaborative style and an aptitude for partnership working.
- Building strong networks to develop and deliver a strategic vision which is supported by a broad range of stakeholders and delivers mutually beneficial outcomes.
- Ability to monitor and evaluate progress towards and the successful achievement of objectives.

Section 5: Guidance for Chairperson and Members

Evaluating Performance

The Department will review the overall operation of the HLSAG at the end of the Chairperson's first three-year term of office, as well as completing an annual appraisal of the Chairperson and Members' performance. Reviews will include an assessment of the Chairperson's and Members' ability, the HLSAG's range and level of knowledge and expertise, along with the quality of advice provided. The actual costs of the HLSAG in relation to the value derived will also be reviewed.

Sharing Information with other Departments

DAERA may share any concerns about the performance or probity of individual members with other Departments to ensure that these concerns are considered in future applications to public positions.

General Conduct

The Chairperson and Members are expected to comply with, and abide by 'The Seven Principles Underpinning Public Life', which are listed in [Annex B](#).

Attendance

The Chairperson and Members are required to attend all meetings, whether it is in-person or online. There is a requirement to attend at least one meeting in-person per year.

Conflicts of Interests

Candidates must declare in their application form any personal or business interests which may, or may be perceived to, cause a conflict of interest by influencing them and their decisions. Any potential conflicts of interest detailed will not prevent candidates from being interviewed but may, if appropriate, be explored at the interview stage, to establish how this would be addressed should the candidate be successful. Further guidance for candidates regarding Probity and Conflicts of Interest can be found in [Annex C](#).

Political Activity

The Chairperson and Members of the HLSAG must be, and be seen to be, politically impartial, therefore, they must not occupy a paid post within a political party, hold particularly sensitive positions of responsibility in a political party, or hold a position of elected Member of Parliament (MP), Member of the European Parliament (MEP) or Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA).

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If a Chairperson or a Member has any intention of accepting a prominent role within a political party, they must inform the HLSAG Secretariat. The Chairperson/Member must also understand that they may lose their HLSAG membership if they accept the role, provided the Department believes the positions are not compatible.

Section 6: Application & Selection Process

Making Your Application

The application form is designed to ensure candidates provide the necessary information to determine how they meet the competition requirements. Only those candidates who meet the eligibility criterion, based solely on the information provided in the application form, will be invited for interview. It is important that candidates indicate fully in their application how and to what extent they meet the eligibility criteria.

Please note:

- when completing the application form, **a maximum of 400 words** for each eligibility.
- the application form should not be amended in any way.

Submission of Application Form

- All completed applications must be submitted no later than **noon on 22nd August 2024, GMT.**
- It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for their application to arrive with DAERA on or before the deadline.
- Candidates using Royal Mail should note that 1st Class mail does not guarantee next day delivery.
- We will not accept any application where we are asked to pay any shortfall in postage.
- Applications will be individually date-stamped and the time of receipt formally recorded.

You should retain a copy of this booklet for your reference in the event that you are invited for interview. Please be aware that the Department may decide to extend the closing date for this competition. If this is the case, all candidates who have submitted an application by the original closing date/time will be informed.

Feedback

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

All interviewees will be advised of the outcome of their interview as soon as possible once a decision has been reached. Feedback to candidates will be provided on request.

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Changes in Contact Details

Please ensure you inform us immediately of any changes in personal circumstances, such as name, address, email address or telephone number.

Applications from civil servants/former civil servants/public sector employees

Civil servants, or former civil servants, are welcome to apply for these roles. Candidates who currently work in the public sector need to be aware that:

- a judgement may be made by the Selection Panel, 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 their appointment as the HLSAG Chairperson or Member, an unmanageable conflict of interest.
- where applicable they will be asked to confirm that they have permission from their employer to take up an appointment if one is offered; Civil servants, or former civil servants, who wish to apply, should check their eligibility to do so with their Departmental employer Human Resources; and
- there is a general guiding principle that candidates who already work in the public sector need to be aware that if appointed, they will be asked to obtain confirmation from their employer that any remuneration due and time worked for this position are truly additional to their existing job role and is not a duplication with salaried employment (unless allowed under the terms and conditions of employment).

Guaranteed Interview Scheme

All reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the needs of candidates with a disability. We are operating the Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) in this competition. The aim of the GIS is to provide applicants with a disability the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities beyond the initial application stage. Candidates 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.

Nationality Requirements

In general, you should have the right to work in the UK to be eligible to apply. Please note:

- Republic of Ireland (RoI) citizens may apply to any post.
- Commonwealth citizens who have immigration status allowing them to work in the UK may apply to any post.

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Selection Process

The appointment process for the chair and members positions will be overseen by a Selection Panel. It is essential that your application form gives full but concise information relevant to the appointment, clearly demonstrating how you meet each of the essential criteria. Please specify the role for which you are applying.

Sift and Shortlisting

An anonymised sift of all application forms received will be carried out by the Selection Panel. It is intended that the eligibility sift will take place during week commencing **16 September 2024**.

Candidates should note that when the Selection Panel is carrying out the sift of application forms, candidates will be awarded a score out of five for each criterion. Candidates must score a minimum of four in criterion 2 (Strategic thinking and direction), and a minimum of three in each of the other criteria to progress to interview stage. Only those applicants assessed as meeting the eligibility criteria will be eligible to proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

If, following the sift exercise, the number of candidates meeting the essential criteria are, in the Selection Panel's view, too many to be interviewed, shortlisting may be applied. Shortlisting is an extension of the sift process, and in this competition will be done by considering the strength and quality of the evidence provided in the candidate's application form to assess how well they meet the eligibility criteria.

Interviews

Successful candidates will be invited to attend an interview online. Interviews are expected to take place via Microsoft Teams and will last for no longer than 45 minutes. Invitations for the interview and all relevant information including the MS Teams joining instructions, will be issued with the invitation to interview letter. It is intended that interviews for these roles will start during the week commencing **14th October 2024** and will continue over a three-week period. Candidates should make themselves available during this time. Requests for rescheduling interviews will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

If any candidate has specific requirements (regarding the interview) that they wish to raise, they should contact HLSAGsecretariat@daera-ni.gov.uk in advance of the interview date.

Competence-based interviews will be used to interview candidates. This is a form of interviewing which tests candidates against the specific eligibility criteria for a particular appointment. Please see **Annex D** for "A Guide to Competence-Based Interviewing".

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Once the Selection Panel has interviewed candidates, appointments will be made strictly on the order of merit and to achieve a balance across the science disciplines. This competition may be used to fill future vacancies that may arise within two years following the initial appointment.

Appointment

Candidates should be aware that, if they are successful, they will be asked to provide further information for a short pen picture for inclusion in a press release to announce the appointment. This will include:

- your name;
- a brief summary of the skills and knowledge you bring to the role;

DAERA will add the following information to the press release:

- a short description of the HLSAG to which you have been appointed;
- the period of appointment.

Pre-Employment Checks

Before a conditional offer of appointment is confirmed by DAERA, successful candidates will be subject to an Access NI Check as part of the Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) assurance 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>

Bankruptcy

HLSAG Chairperson/Members 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.

Section 7: Equal Opportunities Monitoring & 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 and return to the address supplied along with the application form.

The information provided in the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form will not be available to the Selection Panel 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.

Complaints

DAERA is committed to providing its candidates with high quality standards of service.

If you wish to make a complaint about any aspect of this appointment process, you should in the first instance send an email to: HLSAGsecretariat@daera-ni.gov.uk.

If, after receiving a response you remain dissatisfied, you can submit your complaint to the Department using the DAERA Complaints Procedure, details of which can be found on the DAERA internet site using link below:

www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/how-do-i-make-complaint-if-i-am-unhappy-quality-service-i-received

If you remain dissatisfied with the Department's final response to your complaint, you can refer your case to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman's Office. The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman provides a free and independent service. However, it is expected that you will have exhausted the full extent of the Department's Complaints Procedure before your case will be considered.

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You can write to:

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN

Or contact by:

Telephone: 028 9023 3821
Free phone: 0800 34 34 24
Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk
Freepost NIPSO

ANNEX A - Broad Description of Science Disciplines

Scientific Discipline	Broad Description
Agricultural science	Agricultural science is a broad multidisciplinary field of biology that encompasses the parts of exact, natural, economic and social sciences that are used in the practice and understanding of agriculture.
Animal science	Animal science is concerned with the science of producing domestic livestock species (cattle, pigs, goats, sheep, poultry) and science relating to companion animals. Examples of animal science include animal genetics, production systems, animal nutrition, animal welfare, pathology, immunology, parasitology, microbiology, epidemiology, anti-microbial resistance (this list is not exhaustive).
Climate adaptation & mitigation science	Climate science includes the science around climate change mitigation and climate change adaptation. Climate change mitigation describes efforts to reduce or remove emissions of greenhouse gases which are causing our planet to warm. Climate change adaptation involves adjusting our behaviour and building improved infrastructure to better cope with changing weather patterns.
Data science	Data science analyses and extracts knowledge from Big Data - data sets that are enormous and require special techniques and tools to overcome logistical challenges to handle them. Data science incorporates mathematics, statistics, computer science and programming, statistical modelling, database technologies, signal processing, data modelling, artificial intelligence and learning, natural language processing, visualization and predictive analytics etc.
Marine, fisheries & aquatic systems	Different types of aquatic zones, which include marine and saltwater ecosystems as well as freshwater ecosystems such as rivers, lakes and streams. An ecosystem is a community of organisms that live and interact within a particular environment. In an aquatic ecosystem, that environment is water, and all the plants and animals in the system live either in, on or around that water.
Natural environmental sciences	The study of the interactions between the physical, chemical, and biological components of nature. As such, it is a multidisciplinary science: it involves a number of disciplines such as geology, hydrology, soil sciences, plant physiology, and ecology. For example, this includes biodiversity; earth science (including soils) and terrestrial (this list is not exhaustive).

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Scientific Discipline	Broad Description
Plant science	The range of scientific and research studies of plant life. Plant science is the study of how plants are used to produce food, alter environments, restore damaged landscapes, improve human health and well-being, improve community environments, and provide recreational and practical benefits to the public. Plant science includes pathology (plants), immunology, parasitology, microbiology, epidemiology and anti-microbial resistance (this list is not exhaustive).
Social sciences	The broad, transdisciplinary study of society including the interrelations between humans and the natural environment. Drawing on various disciplines, from sociology and psychology to communication and economics, social sciences can be used to inform, monitor and evaluate policies (this list is not exhaustive).

ANNEX B - 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. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

ANNEX C - Probity & Conflicts of Interest - Guidance for Candidates

What is a conflict of interest?

DAERA expects that those they appoint to serve on the HLSAG will have 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 HLSAG 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 position on the HLSAG 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 and the HLSAG that members of the public have confidence in their independence and impartiality. Even a perceived conflict of interest on the part of a member can be extremely damaging to the Group'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 a member 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 Section 7 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. Candidates who progress to the interview stage, the Selection Panel will explore with you how far the conflict might affect your ability to contribute effectively and impartially on the HLSAG and how this might be handled, if you were to be appointed. For example, it may be possible to arrange for you to step out of meetings where an issue is discussed, in which you have an interest. However, if, following the discussion with you,

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the Selection Panel believes that the conflict is too great and would call into question the probity of the HLSAG 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 candidate is not familiar with the broad range of work which the HLSAG covers and therefore does not realise that a conflict might exist. In some cases, the Selection Panel, with their wider knowledge of the Group, 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 in the HLSAG becomes apparent. The second is where a member is unfamiliar with the range of the work of the HLSAG, but after appointment, it becomes clear that a conflict exists where none had been envisaged during the appointment process.

Where potential conflicts of interests exist for a Chairperson, these should be discussed in the first instance with the HLSAG Secretariat who will consider how these are dealt with.

A Member should discuss any potential conflicts of interests with the Chairperson who will discuss with the HLSAG Secretariat. Each case will be considered individually.

It may be that the conflict is such that it would be impractical for the member to remain part of the HLSAG for example if they would have to withdraw from a considerable amount of the Group's routine business. In such cases, the Member/or Chairperson may be asked to stand down from the HLSAG.

ANNEX D - Guide to Competency Based Interviewing

Competency Based Interviewing (CBI) is currently the most common method adopted for making 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.

The competencies being tested are the criteria indicated in the application form. During the interview each criterion will be assessed separately and you will be told which criterion you are being questioned on. For each criterion, 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?*

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

Further NICS guidance on Competence Based Interviews can be found at:

[Interview Guidance \(nigov.net\)](http://nigov.net)

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