**Candidate**

**Information Booklet**

**Agricultural Wages Board**

**Appointment of Chair and Two Independent Members**



**CONTENTS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Section 1** | **Outline of the public body and its role** |
| **Section 2** | **Role profile** |
| **Section 3** | **Person specification** |
| **Section 4** | **Application and Selection Process** |
| **Section 5** | **Probity and Conflicts of Interest** |
| **Section 6** | **Equal Opportunities Monitoring and Complaints Procedure** |
| **Section 7** | **DAERA’s Public Appointments Privacy Notice** |
| **Annex A** | **The Seven Principles of Public Life** |
| **Annex B** | **Guide to Competency Based Interviewing** |

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:

**Public Appointments Unit**

**ALB Corporate Sponsor and Public Appointments Branch**

**Jubilee House**

**111 Ballykelly Road**

**Ballykelly**

**Limavady**

**BT49 9HP**

**Tel: 028 7744 2025**

**Or by email to:**

**[PublicAppointments@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:PublicAppointments@daera-ni.gov.uk)**

**Section 1 – Outline of the Public Body and its role**

**Appointment**

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is seeking to appoint a **Chair and two Independent Members** to the Agricultural Wages Board (AWB) from **8 January 2024.**

Under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 (the Order), appointments to the AWB can **only** be made by a **Minister**. The AWB was added to the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2022 on 10 July 2023. This allows appointments decisions to be made by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in the absence of local Ministers who would normally carry that responsibility.

A Minister may also choose **not** to make an appointment.

Further information about the organisation can be obtained from the DAERA website at:

**[www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/agricultural-wages-board-northern-ireland-awb](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/agricultural-wages-board-northern-ireland-awb)**

**A Regulated Appointment**

The procedure for these appointments 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**](http://www.publicappointmentsni.org)**.**

**Overview of the Agricultural Wages Board**

The Agricultural Wages Board for Northern Ireland (AWB) is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) which sets the minimum rates of pay for agricultural workers. The Board operates under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 (the Order) and may also set overtime rates, holiday entitlement, sick pay and rates for piecework.

The Order states that the AWB should have **15** members consisting of:

1. **Three** Independent members appointed by the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, one of whom will be appointed chair;
2. **Six** members representing employers in agriculture nominated by the Ulster Farmers’ Union (UFU); and
3. **Six** members representing workers in agriculture nominated by Unite the Union.

The term of office for DAERA-appointed members is currently **three** years. A re-appointment may be made for a second term subject to effective performance and continued adherence to the principles of public life.

**Procedures**

The AWB usually meets **three** times per year at Greenmount College Campus, Antrim, with each meeting lasting approximately half a day. In practice the wage negotiations take up two of these meetings.

1. At the meeting in **January** a claim submitted by Unite the Union is discussed and a vote taken on the proposed award to agricultural workers. Any proposed increase in rates of pay, or other changes, is decided by the majority vote.
2. The proposed rates are advertised in the press. A further meeting is held in **March** to consider any objections received and to confirm the rates.
3. A meeting will generally be held in **October,** to enable the Board to review the state of the agricultural industry, to better inform members of the situation in advance of the annual wage negotiations.

**Independent Members Appointed by Minister**

Since they are independent of the interests of the representative groups, the **three** independent members appointed by the Minister have a pivotal role in ensuring that the AWB operates effectively and their votes may be critical in deciding on proposals. Successful candidates will be aware of the issues involved, the opposing arguments of the two industry groups, and will be able to reach informed decisions on a totally fair and reasonable basis.

Members appointed by the Minister must be impartial with no vested interest in relevant agricultural matters. In particular, they should have no connection with employers of agricultural labour, or with agricultural workers, nor may they belong to either of the organisations that nominate representative matters.

**Section 2 – Role profile**

**The AWB Role**

The function of the AWB is principally to set rates of wages and related conditions for agricultural workers. The work of independent members involves examining all of the relevant factors in determining fair and reasonable settlement of the annual pay award.

**The Role of Chair**

The Chair fulfils a key role in the effectiveness of the AWB as the person responsible for managing all meetings thus enabling a successful outcome of proceedings.

In particular the Chair is required to:

* oversee the direction of the AWB to ensure that its statutory obligations are performed;
* provide for the views of representative members to be freely taken into account in reaching decisions;
* co-ordinate discussion, negotiations and where necessary arbitrate, amongst members;
* act in agreement with the other independent members to establish equitable policy;
* act in accordance with statutory and any other binding provisions relating to the conduct of the AWB’s affairs;
* oversee the delivery of results of the AWB’s deliberations to the public;
* ensure high standards of conduct are observed at all times;
* take a leading role in liaison with the AWB Secretariat; and
* complete annual assessments of the two Independent Members.

**The role of the Independent Members**

The role of the independent members is to support the Chair in carrying out the above functions.

**Other Information**

**The following are the key terms and conditions for the Chair position**:

* **Location**: The AWB meetings are normally held at Greenmount College Campus, 45 Tirgracy Road, Antrim BT41 4PS.
* **Period of appointment**: DAERA is seeking the appointment of a new Chair to the Agricultural Wages Board from week commencing **8 January 2024**. The appointment will be for a period of **three** years. Should the AWB cease to operate in its present form at any time within a period of appointment, then appointments would also cease from the date operations cease.
* **Performance Appraisal:** An annual assessment of the performance of the Chair is completed by the senior Sponsor in DAERA.
* **Re-appointment**: Re-appointment for a second term may be considered subject to an appropriate standard of performance and attendance having been achieved during the initial period in office and evidence of continued adherence to the **Seven Principles of Public Life** **(see Annex A**). Re-appointment for a second term requires the approval of the Minister.
* **Time commitment**: The total time commitment for the AWB Chair is approximately **up to five days per annum.** The AWB usually meets **three** times per year, each meeting lasting approximately half a day. In practice the wage negotiations take up **two** of these meetings.
* At the meeting in **January**, the claim submitted by Unite the Union is discussed and a vote taken on the proposed award to agricultural workers.
* The proposed rates are advertised in the press. A further meeting is held in **March** to consider any objections received and to confirm rates.
* A meeting will generally be held, in **October**, to enable the Board to review the state of the agricultural industry, to better inform members of the situation in advance of the wage negotiations.
* **Remuneration**: Remuneration for the AWB Chair is **£294** per meeting to include preparation and attendance.
* **Expenses**: In carrying out the role as Chair you are entitled to claim the following expenses:
  + Travel expenses incurred on the AWB business. This includes travel between your home and Greenmount to attend Board meetings;
  + Reasonable expenses incurred in relation to the care of dependants (including childcare costs); and
  + Any other appropriate expenses such as particular costs associated with disabilities.
* **Training**: There is no specific training associated with the role although a formal induction will be arranged by the Department on appointment.
* **Indemnities for personal liability:** The Chair, acting honestly and in good faith, will not have to meet out of his/her own personal resources any personal civil liability which is incurred in the execution of his/her function, save where the person has acted recklessly.
* **Conduct:** The Chair has a duty in relation to conduct, propriety and confidentiality. He/she 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 Agricultural Wages Board. They must notify the Board if he/she becomes the subject of a police investigation or is arrested by the police.
* **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 Secretariat. They must take personal responsibility to ensure that a record is placed in the appropriate hospitality register**.**
* **Conflicts of Interest:** The Chair must declare any personal or business interests which may, or may be perceived to, influence his/her judgement when performing his/her duties as a Chair of AWB.These interests will be included in an appropriate register of interests maintained by the Board and the member must ensure that his/her 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, he/she must inform the Board. If, at a meeting of the Board, a particular issue arises that could give rise to a potential conflict, the Chair should disclose his/her interest and withdraw from any discussion or consideration of the matter. He/she is encouraged to register his/her own non-pecuniary interests and the interests of close family members and persons living in the same household that are closely related to his/her activities as a member of AWB. 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 Board in advance of any new appointments which may impinge on his/her duties.

* **Political Activity:** The Chair of AWB cannot occupy paid party-political posts, hold particularly sensitive positions of responsibility in a political party, or hold a position of elected MP under the terms of the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 and the Northern Ireland Assembly Disqualification Act 1975.He/she is expected to inform the Board of any intention to accept a prominent position in any political party and to understand that his/her appointment as a Chair of AWB may be terminated if the Department feels that, in the case of the AWB Chair accepting such a role, the positions are incompatible. Subject to the foregoing, the AWB Chair is free to engage in political activities provided that he/she is conscious of his/her general public responsibilities and exercises proper discretion, particularly with regard to the work of AWB.
* **Bankruptcy:** The AWB Chair may be removed from office before the end of his/her term of appointment if he/she becomes bankrupt, makes 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 AWB Chair. Unauthorised disclosure of any information gained in the course of his/her appointment, or its use by him/her or others for personal gain or advancement, could result in his/her 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 and DAERA will seek information on performance from the relevant Department(s).

**Independent Member’s Role**

Independent Board Members must have an appreciation of the importance of his/her responsibilities and have the competence and skills which would allow him/her to:

* become familiar with the Order and regulations applicable to the AWB;
* operate and take decisions on a fair and responsible basis;
* liaise and co-operate with DAERA staff who provide administrative support;
* work closely with the other AWB members to ensure the Board reaches fair decisions by consensus;
* make effective preparation for discussions; and
* act in good faith and in the best interests of achieving a fair settlement.

**Other Information**

**The following are the key terms and conditions for the Independent Member positions:**

* **Location**: The AWB meetings are normally held at Greenmount College Campus, 45 Tirgracy Road, Antrim BT41 4PS.
* **Period of appointment**: DAERA is seeking the appointment of **two** independent members to the Agricultural Wages Board from week commencing **8 January 2024**. The appointments will be for **three** years. Should the AWB cease to operate in its present form at any time within a period of appointment, then appointments would also cease from the date of cessation of operations.
* **Performance Appraisal:** An annual assessment of the performance of Independent Board Members is completed by the Chair.
* **Re-appointment**: Re-appointment for a second term may be considered subject to an appropriate standard of performance and attendance having been achieved during the initial period in office and evidence of continued adherence to the **Seven Principles of Public Life** **(see Annex A).** Re-appointment for a second term requires the approval of the Secretary of State.
* **Time commitment**: The total time commitment for an AWB Independent Member is approximately up to **five days per annum.** The AWB usually meets **three** times per year, each meeting lasting approximately half a day. In practice the wage negotiations take up **two** of these meetings.
* At the meeting in **January**, the claim submitted by Unite the Union is discussed and a vote taken on the proposed award to agricultural workers.
* The proposed rates are advertised in the press. A further meeting is held in **March** to consider any objections received and to confirm rates.
* A meeting will generally be held in **October** to enable the Board to review the state of the agricultural industry to better inform members of the situation in advance of the wage negotiations.
* **Remuneration**: Remuneration for the AWB Independent Member is **£152** per meeting to include preparation and attendance.
* **Expenses**: In carrying out the role as an Independent Member you are entitled to claim the following expenses:
  + Travel expenses incurred on the AWB business. This includes travel between your home and Greenmount to attend Board meetings;
  + Reasonable expenses incurred in relation to the care of dependants (including childcare costs); and
  + Any other appropriate expenses such as particular costs associated with disabilities.
* **Training**: There is no specific training associated with the role although a formal induction will be arranged by the Department on appointment.
* **Indemnities for personal liability:** The Independent Member(s), acting honestly and in good faith, will not have to meet out of his/her own personal resources any personal civil liability which is incurred in the execution of his/her function, save where the person has acted recklessly.
* **Conduct:** The Independent Member(s) has a duty in relation to conduct, propriety and confidentiality. He/she 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 Agricultural Wages Board. They must notify the Board if he/she becomes the subject of a police investigation or is arrested by the police.
* **Gifts and Hospitality:** The Independent Member(s) 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 Secretariat. They must take personal responsibility to ensure that a record is placed in the appropriate hospitality register**.**
* **Conflicts of Interest:** The Independent Member(s) must declare any personal or business interests which may, or may be perceived to, influence his/her judgement when performing his/her duties as a member of AWB.These interests will be included in an appropriate register of interests maintained by the Board and the member must ensure that his/her 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, he/she must inform the Board. If, at a meeting of the Board, a particular issue arises that could give rise to a potential conflict, the member should disclose his/her interest and withdraw from any discussion or consideration of the matter. He/she is encouraged to register his/her own non-pecuniary interests and the interests of close family members and persons living in the same household that are closely related to his/her activities as a member of AWB. Should the member be in any doubt, it is best to err on the side of caution and disclose the information. The member must inform the Board in advance of any new appointments which may impinge on his/her duties.

* **Political Activity:** The Independent Member of AWB cannot occupy paid party-political posts, hold particularly sensitive positions of responsibility in a political party, or hold a position of elected MP under the terms of the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 and the Northern Ireland Assembly Disqualification Act 1975.He/she is expected to inform the Board of any intention to accept a prominent position in any political party and to understand that his/her appointment as a member of AWB may be terminated if the Department feels that, in the case of the AWB Independent Member accepting such a role, the positions are incompatible. Subject to the foregoing, the AWB Member is free to engage in political activities provided that he/she is conscious of his/her general public responsibilities and exercises proper discretion, particularly with regard to the work of AWB.
* **Bankruptcy:** The AWB Independent Member(s) may be removed from office before the end of his/her term of appointment if he/she becomes bankrupt, makes 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 AWB Independent Member. Unauthorised disclosure of any information gained in the course of his/her appointment, or its use by him/her or others for personal gain or advancement, could result in his/her 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 and DAERA will seek information on performance from the relevant Department(s).

**Requirements of the Roles**

**The AWB Chair and Independent Members must be able and willing to:**

* commit to attending meetings;
* communicate effectively and lead discussions at meetings;
* read and comprehend papers in advance of meetings;
* weigh up the arguments put forward by representative members;
* consider proposals from a detached and neutral point of view;
* balance the interests of workers and employers;
* consider the implications of any particular course of action;
* use any personal or professional skills or knowledge to the benefit of the AWB;
* display high standards of honesty and integrity to ensure impartial decision making; and
* develop a working knowledge of the relevant legislation and Regulations applicable to the AWB.
* In addition, the AWB Chair will be responsible for engendering corporate responsibility and cohesion among Board members and for providing leadership to AWB. This will involve working with Board colleagues and senior management team, senior civil servants, the Minister, and other stakeholders.

**Section 3 – Person specification**

No formal qualifications are required. Applicants must be effective communicators with good interpersonal skills. This will be tested at interview stage.

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.

**Essential Criteria: Applicable to both the AWB Chair and Independent Member positions**

Applications for the position of the AWB Chair and independent members are invited from candidates who can demonstrate both on the application form and, if invited for interview, that they can bring the following skills, experience and knowledge to the work which the AWB undertakes.

**Relevant Experience**

**Please provide evidence that demonstrates your experience of industrial relations and negotiations.**

Applicants should provide details of their knowledge and experience in the fields of industrial/employee relations, formal negotiations and demonstrate highly developed skills in negotiation, conflict resolution and facilitation, including working with formal representative bodies.

**Communication and Collaboration**

**Please provide evidence that demonstrates your ability to communicate effectively and work collaboratively with others to achieve objectives, including dealing with conflicting positions and opinions.**

Applicants should provide details of their ability to build and manage working relationships to deal with conflict in an impartial and constructive manner, using their communication skills.

**Influencing**

**Please provide evidence that demonstrates your ability to influence others within the context of applying legislative guidance on employment and human resources matters.**

Applicants should provide details of their ability to interpret and apply relevant legislation and guidance in order to influence others and reach a balanced decision.

**Leadership (Chair position only)**

**Please provide evidence that demonstrates your ability to provide strong and engaged leadership and deploy excellent communication skills to ensure that effective decisions are reached in a challenging environment.**

Applicants should provide details of their ability in a leadership capacity to effectively manage relationships, provide constructive challenge and drive decision making, while guiding, listening, and exercising personal authority to ensure effective decisions are reached.

**Shortlisting Criteria**

Applicants should be aware that after an eligibility sift, should it be necessary to shortlist candidates to go forward to interview, the following criterion will be applied listed below to determine those candidates to be invited for interview:

**Essential Criterion (1): Relevant Experience**

**Please note:**

No formal qualifications are required for any of these positions. Details of previous employment are **not** required.

1. You should ensure that you provide evidence in your application form which outlines how your experience matches the essential criteria detailed above.
2. 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.
3. If you do not provide sufficient detail under each of the criteria the selection panel may reject your application.
4. 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**](http://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**](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**](mailto:publicappointments@daera-ni.gov.uk)

Alternatively, you can download the information pack at:

[**https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/appointment-chair-and-two-independent-members-agricultural-wages-board-awb**](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/appointment-chair-and-two-independent-members-agricultural-wages-board-awb)

**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.

**Please note:**

* Forms should be submitted electronically. However, where 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 [**publicappointments@daera-ni.gov.uk**](mailto:publicappointments@daera-ni.gov.uk)
* 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**.
* We will **not** accept CVs, letters, or any other supplementary material in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms.
* 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.
* Application forms should **not** be amended in any way.
* Braille, large print, and audio formats are available on request.

**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 former Department and the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Human Resources. (*Standards of Conduct Policy Sections 8, IRO Public Appointments: Error! Filename not specified.Kelly, Dolores14:25*

*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 a AWB Chair, or Board Member, an unmanageable conflict of interest.

**Timetable / Time Frame**

The **revised closing time and date** for receipt of completed application forms by post or e-mail is **Noon on** **Thursday 2nd November 2023.**

Completed applications should be returned to DAERA’s Public Appointments at [**publicappointments@daera-ni.gov.uk**](mailto:publicappointments@daera-ni.gov.uk) (for full contact details see the Contents page of this document).

**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 sufficient time is allowed for their application to arrive with DAERA on or before the deadline.

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.

Applicants who send their application form electronically are also required to meet the closing deadline for receipt in this office.

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.

**Selection Process**

The appointment process for the AWB Chair and Independent Member positions will be overseen by a Selection Panel. The Selection Panel will have an independent panel member who has been allocated by 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 Secretary of State.

Your application will be made **anonymous** before the Selection Panel conducts the sifting exercise.

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. The Selection Panel will assess **Part B** of all application forms.

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

**Part C** – while encouraged, the Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form is **not** compulsory and non-completion will not result in your application being withdrawn.

**Sift Process**

An **anonymised** sift of all applications will be carried out by the selection panel.

The selection panel will assess **Part B** of all application forms. Only information supplied under each of the 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 essential criterion.

Only those applicants who are deemed to meet **all** ofthe 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 13 or 20 November 2023.**

At sift stage the criteria will be marked out of a scoring framework of **1 to 6.**

Each individual criterion needs to meet the satisfactory level, which is obtaining a minimum pass mark of **2** to be considered for the next stage of the selection process. Only those applicants assessed as meeting all the criteria will be eligible to proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

**Shortlisting**

If, following the sift exercise, the number of applicants meeting the essential criteria, are in the Department’s view, too many to be interviewed, shortlisting may be applied. Shortlisting in this competition will involve incrementally increasing the value of the pass mark in the following criterion:

* **Criterion 1 – Relevant Experience.**

Only those applicants who are deemed to meet **all** of the essential criteria will be invited to interview, subject to any shortlisting as above.

If an applicant challenges a decision not to short-list them for interview the Department will refer the matter to the same selection panel that made the original decision not to short-list the applicant for interview.

**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**](mailto:publicappointments@daera-ni.gov.uk) to request a reassessment.

**Interview Process**

Interviews will be carried out in person.

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 out of a scoring framework of **1 to 6.**

Each individual criterion needs to meet the satisfactory level, which is obtaining a minimum pass mark of **2** to be considered suitable for appointment.

It is anticipated that interviews will be held in **early to mid-December 2023** **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.

Interviews for these positions will take place at **Greenmount Campus, CAFRE, Antrim.**

The interview panel is:

* **Mr David Simpson, Director of Corporate Services, DAERA (Chair)**
* **Mrs Alison Caldwell, Director of Estate Transformation, DAERA**
* **Mr Tom Irvine, Independent Assessor for the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI)**

We aim to notify the successful candidates by **31 December 2023** so that the appointees can take up their positions from week commencing **8 January 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**](mailto:publicappointments@daera-ni-gov.uk)

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

**Appointments**

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. Under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 (the Order), appointments to the AWB can **only** be made by a **Minister.** The AWB was added by Statutory Instrument to the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2022 on 10 July 2023. This allows for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to take appointments decisions in the absence of NI Ministers who would normally carry that responsibility. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will be asked for his preference on the presentation of results and agreement to a reserve list.

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.

The SoSNI may decide to create a **reserve list** to cover any unforeseen vacancies that arise within 12 months following the initial appointments.

**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 AWB Chair and independent Members. Public appointees must show a willingness to work under any administration irrespective of public opinion. Public appointees, including the AWB 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 AWB, 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 AWB.

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 AWB’s independence and impartiality.

Applicants will be tested on these issues during the selection stage of the appointment process.

A person appointed to the AWB may be removed from office if he/she:

1. has become bankrupt or made an arrangement with creditors, or is the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or a debt relief restrictions order; or
2. has been absent from more than **two** consecutive meetings otherwise than for a reason approved by DAERA; or
3. is otherwise unable or unfit to discharge the functions of a member, or is unsuitable to continue as a member; or
4. has 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**](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/accessni-code-practice)

**Section 6 - Equal Opportunities Monitoring 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. (Voluntary).

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 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.

Furthermore, some of the personal information you supply may be disclosed to other government departments, the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland, or anonymously in response to Assembly/Parliamentary Questions and other enquiries.

**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. Since women, young people, people from ethnic backgrounds and people with disabilities are currently under-represented on the Agricultural Wages Board, applications from these groups would be particularly welcome.

**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**](mailto:PublicAppointments@daera-ni.gov.uk)

**Telephone:** **028 7744 2025**

**Textphone: 1 8001 7744 2025**

If you are unhappy with DAERA’s response, you may wish to write to the office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Northern Ireland (see contact details below):

**Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments NI (CPANI)**

**Dundonald House**

**Annexe B, Stormont Estate**

**Upper Newtownards Road**

**Belfast, BT4 3SB**

**E-mail:** [**info@publicappointmentsni.org**](mailto:info@publicappointmentsni.org)

**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**

**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 Statement 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 Statement** can be found here: -

[**https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/daeras-public-appointments-privacy-notice**](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.

**Annex A**

**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.

**Annex B**

**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**](https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/public-appointments-guide.pdf)