
Commission for Rural Communities

Appointment of 3 new Commissioners

Information pack for applicants

The closing date for the receipt of applications for this role is:
12 Noon Monday the 3 November 2008



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The Application pack will contain the following documents:

- Application Form
 - Guidance Notes
 - Diversity Monitoring Form
 - Political Activity Form
 - PAU Benefits Leaflet
 - OCPA Complaints Leaflet
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Commission for Rural Communities

Introduction

Defra is seeking to appoint 3 new Commissioners to serve on the Board of the Commission for Rural Communities, an executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) established in October 2006 under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). Successful candidates will be appointed for a term of three years as of 1 April 2009 and will play an important role in helping the Commission to fulfil its role.

What is the Commission for Rural Communities?

The Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) acts as an independent rural adviser, advocate and watchdog, with a particular focus on social disadvantage and economic under-performance. Its role is to provide advice to government and relevant bodies at all levels to improve performance and embed good practice.

The Commission includes a diverse range of members with interest in rural England supported by a range of expert and generalist staff. Although the Commission is an independent body it remains accountable in England to Defra's Secretary of State, who in turn is responsible to Parliament for its performance. Its policy programmes and objectives are published annually in a corporate plan. The CRC has a budget of £6.4 million for 2008/2009.

The CRC non-executive Board currently comprises ten Commissioners plus the Chairman (a full list is attached at Annex A). The Commissioners meet eight times a year and are employed between 2.5 and 3.5 days a month. The Commission's executive Management Board comprises five members including the Chief Executive Officer.

Defra is committed to improving the diversity of the CRC Board.

Further information

For further information about the current role of the Commission for Rural Communities you may wish to visit the Commission website: www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk

In particular, you will wish to see the section on 'Library' for more information about CRC publications. The Commission's Corporate Plan 2008/09 to 2010/11 can be viewed at this address:

<http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/publications/corporateplan200809201011>

Being a Commissioner for Rural Communities

Description of role

As a Commissioner you will have non-executive responsibility for the governance of the organisation, contributing to its strategic direction and providing impartial input into the CRC. Commissioners are required to work 2.5 days per month including attendance at regular Commission meetings and seminars with the potential for up to an additional day per month for ad hoc duties.

Commissioners are required to:

- Ensure that the Commission discharges its duties within the framework specified by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
- Provide an impartial and independent input to discussions.
- Contribute relevant expertise and experience to the work of the executive as requested, including input and advice into reports to Government Ministers, and UK Parliament.
- Assist the Chairman in his role as Rural Advocate.
- Help ensure close working relationship with key stakeholders and institutions.

Essential qualities and experience required

Expertise in specific areas

- Candidates should be able to demonstrate a genuine interest in economic and social issues affecting rural communities (noting that complementary bodies specialise in issues relating to the natural environment and other matters); and commitment to the principles of public life.
- We would particularly welcome applicants with knowledge/expertise in working with regional and local bodies and those delivering services on the ground.
- To complement the knowledge and expertise of existing Commissioners, we would welcome applicants with business background able to join and/or chair the Commission's Audit and Risk Committee.
- Applicants from the East of England, East Midlands and West Midlands would complement current geographical spread of membership. However, there are currently no individual responsibilities for regional representation by Commissioners so applications from all parts of England are welcome.

The following skills and experience are needed to be a Commissioner:

Skills and experience

Communication

- An ability to communicate and build relationships at all levels.

- Strong interpersonal skills, including the ability to negotiate, persuade and build partnerships at all levels.
- Evidence of networking skills.
- An ability to contribute to discussions at a strategic level and an ability to think creatively.

Delivering Results

- Experience of working effectively as part of a multi disciplinary team in delivering results.

Analysis and Decision Making

- An ability to provide impartial, objective and pragmatic advice
- Expert ability to process and interpret complex information, well-developed analytical reasoning skills and judgement.

Desirable experience

- Experience of working in a collective decision-making body is desirable but not essential.

Terms and conditions of appointment

Period of appointment

Appointments are normally for a term of three years. Reappointment may be made subject to satisfactory performance assessment at the discretion of Defra Ministers.

The appointee may resign at any time by giving 3 months notice in writing to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State may terminate the appointment under certain conditions, which will be notified to the successful candidate on appointment.

Commission working methods and procedures

Time input

The time commitment is 2.5 days with the possible option of an additional day per month for agreed ad hoc duties. Some travel and overnight visits may be required including in particular quarterly CRC meetings.

Remuneration

£323.03 per day. Legitimate travel and other expenses will be fully reimbursed.

Location of Offices

The Commission for Rural Communities is located at John Dower House, Crescent Place, Cheltenham, GL50 3RA. There is also a small London base in Whitehall. Meetings are held in Cheltenham and London and occasionally elsewhere in England.

Applying for a role

The Commissioner for Public Appointments

The Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA) regulates and monitors ministerial appointments to public bodies to ensure that they are made on merit after fair and open competition. More information about the role of the Commissioner and her Code of Practice is available from www.ocpa.gov.uk

A copy of the leaflet setting out the OCPA complaints procedure is enclosed where this pack is sent by hard copy, otherwise it may be seen at the OCPA website.

A copy of the 'Seven principles' of public life, to which all Ministerial appointees are expected to adhere, is at Annex B.

How to respond

All candidates are required to complete the following forms:

- Application form
- Diversity Monitoring Questionnaire
- Political Activity Questionnaire

Please note that CVs will not be accepted as an alternative to completing the application form, but they will be considered as supporting evidence and should be limited in length to 2 pages in total.

For applications form please contact: Linda Bailey on 0207 270 6166, alternatively send an email to HR Appointment Team to: publicappts@defra.gsi.gov.uk.

Completed application forms should be returned to the following address by closing date: 12 Noon, **3 November 2008** to publicappts@defra.gsi.gov.uk or post to Linda Bailey Chair and Board Appointment Team, People and Performance Directorate, Defra, Area 3A, 3-8 Whitehall Place, London, SW1A 2HH.

Completed application forms should be returned to the following address by the closing date: 12 Noon, **Monday 3 November 2008** to publicappts@defra.gsi.gov.uk or post to Linda Bailey Chair and Board Appointment Team, People and Performance Directorate, Defra, Area 3A, 3-8 Whitehall Place, London, SW1A 2HH.

Selection Process

Selection Panel

An Independent Assessor provided by OCPA will sit on the Selection Panel for each role to help ensure a process of fair, independent and open assessment. The Chair of the shortlisting/interview panel will be the Defra Director for Rural Affairs, Land Use and Adaptation. The other member of the Selection panel will be the Chairman of the Commission for Rural Communities.

Shortlisting

The shortlisting panel will determine which candidates best demonstrate that they have the specified qualities and experience, who will then be invited for interview.

It is therefore essential for applicants form to give full but concise information/evidence relevant to the appointment.

Application forms must be completed in full, using continuation sheets as necessary.

Interviewing

Interviews will take place at Defra's offices at Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR on **8, 12 and 15 January 2009**. The interview should last in the region of 45 minutes. If selected for interview, candidates will be asked to prepare a five minute presentation. This should be made without the use of visual aids. Defra will notify candidates of the topic in the interview invitation letter.

Candidates will be able to claim for reasonable expenses incurred travelling to and from the interview.

How Defra will handle your application

- We will acknowledge receipt of your application form.
- The shortlisting will take place by mid December 2008 and candidates will be informed if they have been successful soon after that date.
- References will be taken up if candidates are selected for interview.
- The interviews will take place on 8, 12 and 15 January 2009.
- All candidates will be notified of the progress of their application.

Equal opportunities

All public appointments are based on the principle of merit.

These appointments will be governed by the principle of public appointment based on merit with independent assessment and transparency of process. Candidates may come from a wide range of background and experience.

The UK Government and devolved administrations are committed to improving the diversity of their public bodies and welcome applications irrespective of race, ethnic or national origin, sex, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, religion, religious beliefs or similar philosophical belief, age, gender re-assignment or community background.

We would particularly welcome candidates from under-represented groups, for example women, people with disabilities and members from black and minority ethnic communities.

Dealing with your concerns

For queries about your application or the recruitment process, please contact Linda Bailey on 0207 270 6166, alternatively send an email to HR Appointment Team to publicappts@defra.gsi.gov.uk.

For further information on the role of the Commission for Rural Communities, please telephone Kathleen Kelliher on 0207 238 6491. Alternatively, you can send an email to Kathleen.Kelliher@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Current membership of the Commission for Rural Communities

Dr Stuart Burgess (Chairman & Rural Advocate)

Professor Sheena Asthana

Richard Burge

Dr Jim Cox

Norman Glass

Elinor Goodman

Alison McLean

Howard Petch

Professor Mark Shucksmith

John Varley

Professor Michael Winter

The Seven Principles of Public Life

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.