

Recruitment and Selection

1. Vacancy identification

A vacancy may arise in the following ways:

- An employee is leaving, or has left, a post and it is established that there is a continued need for that post.
- A new project or area of work is identified and additional and/or different resources are required.
- Management identifies that a lack of resource is impacting delivery of business objectives.

Vacancies in the Forestry Commission (FC) will be either permanent or fixed term. For more information on the use of fixed term appointments (FTAs) and short term temporary appointments (STTAs), please also refer to [HR Policy – Fixed Term Appointments](#).

1.1 Vacancy approval

All vacancies must be approved before the vacancy holder (recruiting manager) can start the recruitment process.

If a new post is approved, and where there is no other similar post in the FC, the vacancy holder will ensure the post is evaluated by the [Staff Inspector](#) to establish the appropriate pay band.

2. The job description

The job description has four sections: background information; purpose of the job; key work areas; and person specification.

2.1 Background information

This section of the job description provides information about the area of work, the unit and the FC, for example, structure, key functions, geographic area and number of employees.

2.2 Purpose of the job

This section of the job description provides a summary description of the post – what this person will do and how they will contribute to the unit and the FC.

2.3 Key work areas

This section of the job description sets out the main areas of work for the post. The number of key work areas may depend on the scope of the post.

2.4 Person specification

This section of the job description sets out the experience and professional/technical expertise, competencies and behaviours required for the post, along with any additional relevant information. This information will help you to decide if you want to apply for, and produce an application that focusses on how well you meet the requirements of, the vacant post.

3. Re-deployment

In line with [HR Policy and HR Procedure – Re-deployment](#), a FC employee at risk of redundancy will be considered for any approved vacancy, before the recruitment process may start. The relevant HR Team will inform the vacancy holder where this applies.

4. Transfer register

An employee on the [FC's Transfer Register](#) must be considered for an approved vacancy at their substantive pay band, following consideration of re-deployment (see [Section 3](#)) but before the recruitment process may start.

Your HR Team will assess if there are any employees on the transfer register who may be suitable for a vacancy, based on the experience and professional/ technical expertise, competencies and behaviours required for the post. The vacancy holder will then decide whether they wish to discuss the vacancy with the employee(s).

5. Applicants with additional requirements

The FC is working towards further improving the diversity of its workforce, focusing on encouraging applications from people from ethnic and disabled communities. To support all applicants, reasonable adjustments must be considered and, where possible, put in place throughout the recruitment process, in consultation with the applicant concerned, to ensure no-one is disadvantaged, particularly because of their disability.

6. Appointment on merit through fair and open competition

Appointments in the FC are made on the basis of merit through fair and open competition, as described in [HR Policy – Recruitment and Selection](#) and following the process set out in the remainder of this Section.

Appointments out-with this process can **only** be made in specific and limited circumstances, as set out in [Section 7](#).

6.1 Methods of recruitment

The vacancy holder will determine the most appropriate method of recruitment for the specific vacancy, choosing from the options set out in the remainder of this section. There is no requirement to follow any particular sequence.

6.1.1 Internal

This method is used to advertise a vacancy internally, within the FC. If you were recruited to the FC through fair and open competition, you are eligible to apply and have 10 working days to do so. Your HR Team can provide advice if you are unsure about your eligibility.

Expressions of interest

The vacancy holder may decide to check whether the experience and professional/technical expertise, competencies and behaviours required for a post are available within the FC by asking for 'expressions of interest' in the first instance.

Expression of Interest Notices are issued by your HR Team and you have five working days to provide a written statement, setting out the reason(s) you wish to apply for the vacancy and how you meet the requirements of the post.

If any FC employee eligible to apply internally 'expresses interest' in a post, a full internal advert will be issued.

6.1.2 Across Government

This method is used to advertise a vacancy across the Civil Service. If you were recruited through fair and open competition to the Civil Service, or an accredited non-Departmental Public Body, you are eligible to apply. Your HR Team can provide advice if you are unsure about your eligibility.

6.1.3 External

This method is used to advertise a vacancy outside of the Civil Service in external media, including: online recruitment sites; recruitment agencies; the press; the FC website; social media; and Jobcentre Plus. The vacancy holder and the relevant HR Team will consider where and how to advertise vacancies externally, in order to encourage applications from candidates with a diverse range of backgrounds.

Anyone who believes they have the experience and professional/technical expertise, competencies and behaviours required for the post, and is permitted to work in both the UK and the Civil Service, is eligible to apply.

6.2 Applications

The FC uses a standard application form, which you will normally complete online using the e-recruitment system. The application form will reflect the specific requirements of the post and, as a minimum, you will be asked to provide:

- confirmation of your eligibility;
- your personal details;
- your employment history;
- a competence statement, including specific examples that demonstrate your experience and professional/technical expertise, competencies and behaviours
- equality and diversity information; and
- any additional requirements.

Where a vacancy attracts more than 10 applications only certain competencies will be assessed at sift stage, known as Lead Competencies, provided that this is specified in the vacancy advert. However, it is important that you complete the entire application form in sufficient detail as there is no way of knowing that a vacancy would have a high number of applications and only the specified lead competencies will be assessed.

For further guidance on completing a comprehensive application form, please refer to the [Civil Service Learning Resource – Applying for a Job](#).

You should advise your line manager if you are going to apply for a vacancy advertised internally or across Government. Your line manager will be notified automatically when you submit an application via the e-recruitment system.

6.2.1 Internal applications

In order to apply for a vacancy advertised internally (see [Section 6.1.1](#)), you must be “Good Performer” or “Top Performer”.

6.3 The selection process

6.3.1 The selection board

The vacancy holder will appoint a board to undertake the selection process.

The selection board will consist of at least two people, including an independent board member from outside the management chain of the vacant post and, where possible, from a separate cost centre.

It is best practice for the selection board to reflect gender balance; therefore the vacancy holder will ensure that there are both male and female board members, wherever possible.

There is no restriction on the pay band of board members however board members will normally be of a higher pay band than the vacant post.

In order for selection to be fair and open, the selection board must be impartial. Board members will not have, or have had, a personal relationship with any applicant. For more information, please refer to [HR Policy – Workplace Relationships](#).

Board members will not discuss any aspect of the selection process with anyone outside of the selection board, including any applicant(s). Any attempt by an applicant to influence a selection board, or a board member, will result in the applicant's disqualification. Either of these actions may lead to disciplinary action.

Board members will ensure they have the necessary skills to select on the basis of merit through fair and open competition. To support this, the [Learning & Development Team](#) provide a range of training on selection and interview skills.

6.3.2 Shortlisting applications

The selection board will consider all applications received and produce a shortlist of applicants to invite to interview. This is referred to as a 'sift'.

In order to be invited for an interview, you must demonstrate in your application any elements of experience and professional/technical expertise described as essential, along with all competencies and behaviours, in the person specification (see [Section 2.4](#)). Where there is a large volume of applications and only specified lead competencies are assessed at this stage, your application will be considered based on the evidence you provided on the specified lead competencies and their related behaviour.

If this initial sift identifies a high number of suitable applicants, the selection board may decide to refine the shortlist by considering which of these applicants demonstrate any

elements of experience and professional/technical expertise described as desirable, and provide the strongest examples of the competencies and behaviours being assessed.

The “Guaranteed Interview Scheme” (GIS)

The FC is positive about the employment and career development of individuals with a disability.

The GIS ensures that an applicant with a disability is invited for interview, as long as their application demonstrates any elements of experience and professional/technical expertise described as essential, and the competencies and behaviours, in the person specification.

Applicants are eligible to apply via the GIS if they have a disability, as defined by the Equality Act 2010. Specifically, this means:

- a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term (over 12 months) adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities; or
- a long term health condition.

Candidate Scores

Following shortlisting, all applicants will be able to access their scores against each competency and their overall application score via the e-recruitment system.

Appointment after shortlisting

If shortlisting an internally advertised vacancy (see [Section 6.1.1](#)) identifies only one suitable applicant, whose application clearly demonstrates the experience and professional/technical expertise, competencies and behaviours required for the post, then the selection board may decide to appoint this applicant without interviewing them. This is referred to as a ‘Paper Board’.

‘Paper Board’ will not be used where there is a large volume of applications and Lead Competencies are assessed. This is because in order to appoint an individual into a post on the basis of merit through fair and open competition, all the elements of experience and professional/technical expertise described as essential, along with all the competencies and behaviours set out in the person specification must be assessed.

6.3.3 Interview

The selection process will involve a competency based interview, where you will be asked questions and assessed against the requirements of the person specification. The interview provides you with an opportunity to demonstrate you have the experience and professional/technical expertise, competencies and behaviours required for the post.

You will be given sufficient information and at least one week to prepare for your interview. For further guidance on how to prepare for an interview, please refer to the [Civil Service Learning Resource – Applying for a Job](#).

If you are unable to attend your interview due to unforeseen circumstances, it may be possible to arrange an alternative date however this is at the vacancy holder's discretion.

Additional assessment techniques

Additional assessment techniques may be used in addition to the interview. Examples of these techniques include:

- Practical/knowledge assessments
- Presentations
- Aptitude and/or personality tests
- Group discussions
- Assessment centres (combining a range of the above techniques)

The vacancy holder will work with the relevant HR Team to ensure that any additional assessment techniques used are appropriate for the vacant post and will not disadvantage any particular group.

Candidate document requirements

All external candidates will be required to provide a combination of original documents at interview, in order to confirm their identity and establish their right to work in the UK and Civil Service. A list of possible combinations of documents will be provided with the invitation for interview.

All candidates must provide original copies of any qualifications, certificates, licences and memberships required for the vacant post.

For information on pre-employment checks, please refer to [Section 6.4.3](#).

Expenses

Candidates for a vacancy advertised internally (see [Section 6.1.1](#)) may be reimbursed for travel and expenses incurred to attend an interview, in line with [HR Policy and HR Procedure – Travel and Expenses](#). All other candidates should contact their relevant HR Team, before making any travel arrangements, to establish if they may be reimbursed for travel and expenses incurred to attend an interview.

6.4 Appointment

The selection board will appoint the applicant who most clearly demonstrates the experience and professional/technical expertise, competencies and behaviours required

for the post. Candidates who attend an interview will be notified whether or not they are appointed.

The selection board is required to record its decision and ensure this complies with the [Civil Service Code](#), specifically the core values of objectivity and impartiality.

6.4.1 Reserve list

Where more than one appointable candidate is identified at interview, the HR Team may create a reserve list, which can be used for other posts in the FC for up to six months after the date of the interview. A candidate on the reserve list may only be appointed to a vacant post, without further testing of merit, where the new vacant post is within one hour of travel from the original vacant post's location and either:

- the same as the original vacant post; or
- the same pay band, requiring similar experience and professional/technical expertise, competencies and behaviours, as the original vacant post.

6.4.2 Candidate feedback

All candidates who attend an interview will be able to access feedback via the e-recruitment system.

6.4.3 Pre-employment checks

Appointment of an external candidate is conditional upon the satisfactory completion of the FC's pre-employment checks. The checks required include:

- Identity and right to work in the UK and Civil Service
- Qualifications, certificates, licences and memberships that are essential for the post
- Employment and/or character references
- Medical questionnaire, conducted by Health Management Limited
- Basic disclosure, conducted by Disclosure Scotland for all FC posts
- Character enquiry (taking account of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the Exceptions Order 1975 (amended in 1986), as appropriate)

Any appointment to a post that involves working with children and/or vulnerable adults will require an enhanced disclosure check. This will be conducted by the Disclosure and Barring Service for posts in England / Wales and by the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme for posts in Scotland. If you are an existing member of the DBS enhanced scheme or PVG scheme, your HR Team will request a scheme record update to confirm that you are a scheme member and therefore not barred from the relevant type of regulated work.

Information on the pre-employment checks necessary for the vacant post will be provided with the conditional offer of appointment.

6.4.4 Complaints

If you believe that this Policy and Procedure have not been correctly applied, you may submit a written internal complaint to the relevant Head of HR, clearly explaining the way in which you believe HR Policy and HR Procedure - Recruitment and Selection have been breached. The Head of HR will assess compliance with this Policy and Procedure but will not review the decision(s) of the selection board.

If an external candidate (see [Section 6.1.3](#)) believes that the [Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles](#) have been breached, they may submit a complaint to the relevant Head of HR, clearly explaining the way in which they believe the Recruitment Principles have been breached. The Head of HR will assess compliance with the Recruitment Principles but will not review the decision(s) of the selection board.

If the external applicant is not satisfied with the response from the Head of HR, they may submit an appeal to the Civil Service Commission, as set out in the complaint outcome letter from the Head of HR.

7. Appointment without fair and open competition

There are only specific and limited circumstances, as set out in the remainder of this Section, where an individual can be appointed to a vacant post without a fair and open competition (see [Section 6](#)).

7.1 Alternatives to recruitment

All of the alternatives to recruitment set out in this Section apply to **existing FC employees only**.

7.1.1 Management postings

You can be moved into a vacant post to address a specific business or management need. Decisions on management postings can only be taken by a manager in the line management chain of both the existing and vacant post, and may involve the FC enforcing contractual mobility obligations.

If the vacant post is at the same pay band as your substantive post, you can be moved on a permanent or temporary basis. If the vacant post is a higher pay band than your substantive post, you can only be moved on a temporary basis.

7.1.2 Development opportunities

A development opportunity may be made available where a vacancy holder has not identified a suitable employee to 'management post' but believes there may be existing employees who could be developed in the vacant post. The vacancy holder will decide the appropriate methods for publicising the development opportunity and selecting a candidate.

You can only apply for a development opportunity if you were appointed to your substantive post on the basis of merit through fair and open competition. You may not necessarily possess all of the required experience and professional/technical expertise, competencies and behaviours required for the vacant post but you must be able to demonstrate your potential to do so, given appropriate support.

The vacant post may be at the same or a higher pay band than your substantive post but you can only undertake the post as a development opportunity on a temporary basis, even if the post is permanent.

7.1.3 Other circumstances

- Offering suitable alternative work to an employee returning from maternity leave, where required, in line with Section 7.2 of [HR Procedure – Maternity Leave](#).
- Offering suitable alternative work to an employee returning from adoption leave, where required, in line with Section 8.1 of [HR Procedure – Adoption Leave](#).
- Offering suitable alternative work to an employee returning from shared parental leave, where required, in line with Section 7.1 of [HR Procedure – Shared Parental Leave](#).
- Reasonable adjustments, in line with [People Matters Guide – Disability and Reasonable Adjustments](#).
- Disciplinary transfers, in line with [HR Procedure – Discipline](#).
- Re-grading, in line with [HR Policy and HR Procedure – Job Evaluation](#).
- A Forest Research Science Promotion Board, in line with Forest Research Promotion Procedures.

7.2 Exceptions to the Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles

The Civil Service Commission sets out ten specific and limited exceptions to the requirement to appoint all external candidates on merit through fair and open competition. However, in order to apply an exception, the FC is required to report on and justify why it was not possible to appoint on the basis of merit through a fair and open competition.

The eight exceptions allowed by the Civil Service Commission, which apply in the FC, are as follows:

- **Short term temporary appointments (STTAs)**, not appointed on merit through fair and open competition. Used where there is a short term, urgent and/or specialist business need that makes an open and fair competition impractical or disproportionate. Appointments of up to 51 weeks.
- **Support for government employment programmes**, including government programmes to support unemployed people, government schemes to promote the employment of disabled people and sponsored internships for disabled people. Appointments of up to two years.
- **Secondments** from outside the Civil Service, not appointed on merit through fair and open competition. Appointments of up to two years.
- **Reappointment of former civil servants**, in line with [HR Policy – Reappointment](#).
- **Interchange with the Northern Ireland Civil Service**, where the individual was appointed to the Northern Ireland Civil Service on merit through open and fair competition.
- **Transfers from other public bodies** currently accredited by the Civil Service Commission, for example non-Departmental public bodies whose recruitment policies comply with the [Civil Service Commission’s Recruitment Principles](#).
- **Non-TUPE transfers of organisations into the Civil Service**. Used to enable the Civil Service to gain or retain the expertise of the transferring organisation’s staff, under the [Cabinet Office Statement of Practice on Staff Transfers in the Public Sector 2000 \(COSOP\)](#).
- **TUPE transfers of organisations into the Civil Service**.

8. Data protection

All application forms and documentation that contain your personal data, or personal sensitive data, are confidential. They will be kept secure and handled in line with the FC’s data protection and information security requirements.