

Advisory Assessment Panel (AAP) Guidance

Thank you for agreeing to act as a member of the Advisory Assessment Panel (AAP) for the recruitment of [three members to the Board of Natural Resources Wales](#).

Background to a public appointment

The Advisory Assessment Panel's role is to provide the Minister with the names of candidates who are capable of undertaking the roles. The Minister will make the decision about who to appointment.

In undertaking this role, you should be familiar with the Minister's requirements and views at every stage and decide, objectively, who meets the published selection criteria for the role. In other words, who is able to do the job and therefore is appointable to the role.

Public Appointments must be carried out in line with the [Governance Code for Public Appointments](#). At the conclusion of the appointments process, the Panel members must certify that the appointment has been made in accordance with the Code. The public appointments system is regulated by the [Commissioner for Public Appointments](#), Peter Riddell. The Commissioner provides independent assurance that public appointments are carried out in accordance with the Governance Code and Public Appointment Principles.

It is your duty to highlight any material breaches of the Code. In the first instance any concerns should be raised with a senior Departmental official. However, if you feel it is appropriate you may speak directly to an official from the [Welsh Government's Public Appointments Unit](#) or the Commissioner for Public Appointments who is always available to discuss any matters arising in respect of the Code.

Managing conflicts of interest

The Code requires that "If one or more of the selection panel knows one or more of the candidates, then this fact must be declared (together with the nature and extent of any relationship with a candidate) to the department and recorded. At the beginning of each meeting you should make any necessary declarations of interest in respect of knowledge of any of the applicants. The Sponsor Team will record the declaration.

Each case will be different and should take account of factors such as how the panel member knows the applicant, how long they have known them and the degree and frequency of contact between them. If the panel Chair considers there are relationships or circumstances which are likely to affect a panelist's judgment then he will ask the member to withdraw from assessing the candidate concerned in order to avoid accusations of bias.

No panel member should have any private discussions or meetings with individual candidates (whether private or public, for example, for the purpose of providing

information about the appointment). Doing so could be suggested or perceived as improper, for example for an applicant to gain an advantage.

Logistics

The campaign is being supported by [*Gatenbysanderson Official*] and [*Gatenbysanderson Official*], recruitment consultants from Gatenby Sanderson. [*Gatenbysanderson Official*] and [*Gatenbysanderson Official*] will also both attend panel meetings. Please note the scheme will need to be halted following the short list meeting, until there is a Minister in place to agree those to be interviewed. Therefore the timings may need to be adjusted.

All meeting will be attended by a member of the Sponsor Team to record decisions and agreements. The important dates for your diaries are:

21 April – Panel introductory and planning meeting
10 May - Long list meeting
26 May - Short list meeting
w/c 21 and 28 June - Interviews

All documents will be available online via Objective Connect, Welsh Government's encrypted file sharing facility. You should have receive an automated email asking you to create an account. All exchanges involving candidate information should be carried out via this method.

Planning meeting – 21 April

This is your opportunity to meet everyone and agree the planning of the requirements for longlist, shortlist and interview. In preparation for the planning meeting, the Sponsor Team will send through all relevant documents such as the candidate information packs, an assessment system and draft interview questions. The system agreed by all panel members at the planning meeting will be used from the shortlist meeting for the remainder of the campaign.

There are three different roles available, and so the applications, reports, meetings and interviews will be organised by role. As panel Chair, [*Welsh Government Official*] role on the panel is to share with the other panel members any requirements and views the Minister has.

Long list meeting – 10 May

The advertisement closes on 30 April. The applications will be uploaded to Objective Connect on a regular basis as they arrive in Welsh Government with the full set of applications available on Tuesday 4 May. Gatenby Sanderson will arrange for a sift report to be produced to aid the Panel in your deliberations at the long list meeting. This will be available to you on 7 May via Objective Connect.

The long list report will set out all applicants in one of three groups: A: those who meet the criteria and whom GS recommend you consider for taking forward; B: those candidates who are marginal against the criteria; C: those who do not meet the criteria. In advance of the meeting, you should review the long list report and make a note of any applicants you would wish to discuss at the meeting.

At the meeting, you will express views and reach consensus on each applicant, to agree who will be approached by Gatenby Sanderson for a preliminary interview. The Sponsor Team will take a note of the salient points of the discussion and send this to you for agreement. Following the preliminary interviews Gatenby Sanderson will provide you with a short list report in preparation for the meeting on 26 May.

Short list meeting – 26 May

Gatenby Sanderson will arrange for a report to be produced to aid the Panel in the deliberations at the long list meeting. This will be available to you on 24 May via Objective Connect.

The short list report will set out any pertinent issues Gatenby Sanderson has encountered in their preliminary interviews. In advance of the meeting, you should review the short list report alongside with the assessment form, and make your individual assessments.

When panel members complete their individual sift they should consider non-traditional career paths and backgrounds. No applicant should pass the sift stage unless the you are satisfied they have met the essential criteria. However, it is important “merit” is interpreted widely. For example, formal qualifications, traditional work experience and/or specialist knowledge need form only one aspect. Other aspects could include:

- demonstrable involvement within a community;
- practical experience of relevant issues;
- transferable skills gained in a variety of ways (communication, negotiating and influencing, ability to think strategically, etc).

At the meeting, you will express views and reach consensus on each applicant. Using the agreed assessment system you should individually score and make comments for each applicant using the agreed scoring matrix. The chair will summarise the agreed conclusions.

It is very important that all decisions are supported by a full audit trail so the Sponsor Team will record the panel’s agreed position for each candidate. The Sponsor Team will make a note of any issues identified by the panel which may need to be explored with candidates at interview (e.g. conflicts of interest, time commitment, etc). The Sponsor Team will also provide the panel with a note of those applicants who are guaranteed an interview. Finally, the panel should agree the arrangements for the interviews including the scheduling, interview questions and who will ask each of the questions.

The Sponsor Team will draft the sift report. Very soon following the meeting, panel members will be asked to agree the report before it is submitted to the Minister. Once the sift report has been agreed, panel members should destroy their individual sift scores and comments so the sift report is the only official record.

If the number of candidates for interview is fewer than expected the sift report should ask the Minister to i) consider extending the deadline or halting the competition in order to re-advertise before proceeding to interview stage; or ii) ask Ministers if they want to put additional names forward to the Advisory Assessment Panel for interview.

The reasons for seeking additional applications must be fully recorded. If too few applications have been received the panel should consider whether the publicity was wide enough; whether it was correctly targeted; or whether the selection criteria contained unnecessary requirements. Again this should be detailed in the sift report.

Before interview

The following tasks should be undertaken before interview:

Task	Responsibility of
Agree scoring evaluation system;	To be drafted by the sponsor division and agreed by the panel.
Agree interview questions	To be drafted by the sponsor division and agreed by the panel.
<p>Take up references and due diligence checks</p> <p>Please note that references can be taken up over the phone as long as a note of the conversation is kept for audit proposes.</p> <p>Due diligence checks should include a google search and a search of Twitter and other social media. Checking what has been said when large media events are ongoing is a good idea e.g. during elections, the EU referendum etc.</p>	<p>Gatenby Sanderson to obtain references and undertake checks. These should be available prior to interview.</p>

At Interview

The panel Chair will remind members of the Ministers views and requirements. If the Minister has issued any other comments or instructions since receiving the sift report then these should also be communicated. The Chair will also ensure a record of any conflicts of interest.

During each interview, an Interview matrix **must** be completed by **each** panel member. Following the conclusion of the interviews for each role the panel should discuss the performance of each candidate. Remember to compare the candidate to

the criteria drawn from the person specification and job description. Do not compare candidates directly with each other.

After interview

The Sponsor Team will use the interview matrices and summary discussions to draft the interview report and recording the panel's description of how the candidates performed at interview. It is important that the information is detailed enough to provide the candidate with detailed interview feedback. This should set out in objective fashion the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate against each of the published selection criteria for the role. The report should identify any candidates who were not appointable but with a little help and support could reach an appointable standard. Any disagreements between panel members should also be recorded.

The Sponsor Team will produce the interview report, to be agreed by the advisory assessment panel prior to submission to the Minister. The report will set out the appointable candidates to allow the Minister to take a decision on who to appoint. All members of the interview panel must agree the content of the report, with final approval from the panel Chair.

GatenbySanderson is responsible for providing sift and interview feedback requested by candidates.