

Decent bloke, background in landscape both practical and theoretical, been on committees, chaired public and private meetings, public speaking, successful, some welsh, passionate and intelligent.

Obviously there will be numerous applicants for these roles that are capable of fulfilling the post. What qualities would make me stand out from the rest and therefore the right person for the job. I would suggest the answer to that question is diversity. I applaud the Welsh Government drive to increase diversity. I truly believe that boards of public bodies should represent the public. People 'from all walks of life' is the target. Unfortunately the essential criteria of public roles often specifically exclude many in this target audience. I am on the autistic spectrum so specifically I think in different ways from the average person. I would suggest that diversity of thinking should be a requirement of any board.

We all know that boards appear homogenous. I would suggest that this is because members are largely chosen from successful professionals who have worked in public and private organisations. I have recently spoken to board members who claimed a working class background. What was clear though was that they were no longer working class when they achieved board membership. What I don't see on boards is tradespeople, people living in deprived neighbourhoods, long term unemployed and those on low incomes, the disaffected and anti-establishment. These people, unlike BAME, women, disabled and LGBT, don't have lobby groups in the corridors of power. I am passionate about giving voice to the silent majority.

One of the 'essential' criteria for this post is 'judgement in complex decision making'. I am really not sure how this can be demonstrated except by general success and even then luck has it's part to play. Judgement is usually measured in hindsight and with hindsight we could all point at decisions that appear to have been the right one. In my work as a tree surgeon I have to make critical decisions, life and death even, weighing up risk, practical and aesthetic considerations. Sometimes having to condemn favourite garden trees, sometimes discussing the risks with clients and reaching compromise answers.

The first hurdle which is 'Respect for and understanding of the principals of accountability and good governance'. This, the first essential criteria, introduces two words that ordinary people never hear or use. I am intelligent and well read but had only come across 'governance' because of communicating with government bodies and now coming across the principals of accountability for the first time. My first thought was that obviously I understand them but then realised that it's actually a technical term, The Principals of Accountability.

Then it is asking for 'respect for' The Principals of Accountability. Hmm, where does that leave equality, diversity and inclusion? Does it mean that you aren't suitable board material if you don't respect The Principals of Accountability? Personally as someone who has mainly been a self employed tradesman I have always had to be accountable for my own mistakes.

This is interesting as I tried to hold some people within NRW to account and even had a difference of opinion with Sir David Henshaw about it. I did receive a corporate apology from NRW but no individuals were held to account. I am not claiming right or wrong here but I am pointing out that diversity of opinion is not a bad thing especially when representing the public.

The Principals of Accountability appear, to me, to be a management tool that should be completely superfluous in an organisation that abides by the Nolan Principals. I do entirely respect the Nolan Principals. As long as public officials are acting with honesty and integrity then I am happy. One of The Nolan Principals is, of course, accountability. I am a supporter of good governance, it has helped me run a successful business and been part and parcel of the private members club I have helped to run. Public appointed board members are there to make sure that the principals of good governance are followed. I have no experience in an organisation as large as NRW but I don't see a problem with scaling up my knowledge and experience.

I started out with the intention of applying for this role by explaining how I fulfil the essential criteria. My wife asks me why I am wasting my time. It's a good question. Not that she thinks I wouldn't be good at the job but that she thinks I have got no chance of getting it. That she thinks this demonstrates how far WG have still got to go with their drive for diversity and inclusion. I like truth, it's says as much on my diagnosis. My diagnosis is Semantic Pragmatic Disorder [SPD] it's on the autism spectrum. Semantic pragmatic because I suffer from taking language literally or, as I prefer to say, honesty. This is why it says on my diagnosis that truth is important to me. Hopefully this would be considered an advantage in a board member.

Essential criteria; well covered the first one and the second one, what about financial reports. Well I'm good at maths and can understand reports. Although I have had to produce accounts I have not had to create a financial report for my work. However I have been treasurer of a private members club and had to report back to the committee and the AGM on our finances. In a spirit of inclusion and equality I would like to point out that most people do not need or use financial reports. This does not mean that they are incapable of understanding them. I am sure I can even though I am a landscape specialist not a banker. I should add that my diagnosis helpfully pointed out that I am in the top percentile of intelligence.

Criteria number 4] a focus on future generations. To do that means getting things right now. Not sure how I can demonstrate this except to say I have

children of my own and I will do my best to not to leave a mess behind for them to sort out. I did fight to save a parcel of environmentally sensitive land from aggressive forestry practises. I can say I did that for the future. I also lead a fairly green lifestyle. I am surprised that one of the essential criteria wasn't a commitment to maintain and enhance biodiversity as directed by the Environment Wales Act. I can confirm that I have committed to this. I would just like to revisit 'judgement in complex decision making'. I have, like everybody else, made judgements on complex decisions. Some of my judgements have been the 'right' ones but that would come down to bias on my part and, of course, luck. The whole point of diversity would surely be that different people would make different decisions, Brexit for instance. I watched the board vote on whether NRW land could be used for breeding pheasants for game shoots. I have no doubt that the members brought their own beliefs to the table when making their decisions as that would be the whole point of having a diverse group of people on the board.

My working life has always included an element of environmental and landscape consideration. Much of my tree work has involved making cosmetic decisions about the landscape. I have specialised in cosmetic work. Further to this I completed a sculpture degree in Carmarthen called 3D Art in the Landscape. Visually and environmentally I am passionate about the landscape. I have a keen interest in protecting heretage landscape including industrial landscapes where appropriate. Sir David will know that I fought the forestry scheme on environmental and landscape grounds.

I have given lectures and talks on autism which have been very well received. I was for many years the president of a classic vehicle club. I enjoy the stage and think it would be a progressive step for NRW to promote an openly autistic person to the board.

I am a welsh learner. I read better than I speak.

I have had previous dealings with NRW and WG. Sir David is up to date with this situation. I did manage to stop an application for a forestry grant and received an apology from NRW. An NRW board member said that in over 30 years with large organisations he had never known an individual to make so much difference. I have been assured that rules and guidelines have been changed. To make a difference I had to bring my persistence to the table. I complained to NRW, I appealed their decision, I took my complaint to the ombudsman all to no avail. Eventually I enlisted the help of an NRW board member and following his involvement an internal report was published and NRW admitted that I had been right about some of the issues. If it is the job of

Rubin Irvine BAHons

His Personal Statement

the board to oversee the work of NRW as representatives of the general public then my credentials from this episode are exemplary.

My style is not the same as Sir Davids as, I am sure, he would agree. This should be considered a positive, demonstrating equality, diversity and inclusion, and broadening the debate around the table.