

Candidate information pack

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Natural England is here to conserve and enhance the natural environment, for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people and the economic prosperity that it brings



1. Our organisation

Natural England is the government's adviser on the natural environment. We are a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) responsible to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Created by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act in 2006, Natural England's general purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.



Natural England is responsible for:

- promoting nature conservation and protecting biodiversity,
- conserving and enhancing the landscape,
- securing the provision and improvement of facilities for the study, understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment,
- promoting access to the countryside and open spaces and encouraging open-air recreation,
- and contributing in other ways to social and economic wellbeing through management of the natural environment.

What drives our work?

The government's 25 Year Environment Plan and Natural England's Conservation 21 strategy (see [useful links](#)) explains how we need to approach our challenge, focusing our efforts on:

- **creating resilient landscapes and seas** - moving beyond sites to think about ecological networks, landscapes and ecosystems, and to become more integrated in our delivery.
- **putting people at the heart of the environment** - helping people recognise the relevance of the natural environment to their day to day lives and the choices they make, inspiring them to be more imaginative and ambitious for the natural world around them.
- **growing natural capital** - a powerful new way to help us all better understand what benefits we get from the natural world, moving towards securing long term and sustainable environmental investment.

Our Conservation 21 mission is to *“restore and recover nature by creating a fair deal between people and nature”*

Working in partnership

Our broad remit is reflected in the huge range of customers and partners we work with, including farmers and landowners, businesses and local authorities, charities and local communities. Some highlights of our work include:

- Increasing opportunities for everyone to enjoy the wonders of England's natural environment;
- Assisting with the recovery of biodiversity, including by helping to protect England's most vulnerable species and habitats;
- Using our environmental and local expertise, provide technical advice and recommendations on agri-environment scheme design and delivery to help farmers manage their land sustainably for nature.

- Designating National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and supporting Government in the creation of Marine Protected Areas;
- Managing National Nature Reserves, notifying Sites of Special Scientific Interest and ensuring they are effectively looked after;
- Working with business, planning authorities, other government departments and NDPBs and a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that we have a resilient natural environment that contributes positively to the well-being of England's people and to the development of the wider economy;
- Managing wildlife licensing to protect species whilst helping planners, developers and the general public get a fair deal.
- Ensuring that any decisions affecting the natural environment are based on the best possible evidence and advice. We are committed to capitalising on the local knowledge and expertise of our staff, for the benefit of decision-makers and ultimately the natural world around us.

Natural England is a national organisation with [offices](#) across England and we have around 1900 people working for us.

Useful Links:

- [25 Year Environment Plan](#)
- [Conservation 21](#)
- [NE Defra Framework Agreement](#)
- [Latest NE Annual Report](#)
- [NE on GOV.UK](#)
- [Natural England blog](#)

2. Benefits

Join us in this role and you will enjoy the following benefits:

Leave entitlement	Your leave allowance in this role will be 33 days annual leave plus option to buy and bank additional leave, 3 days annual leave explicitly reserved for operational requirements between Christmas and New Year, 9 days public holiday per year, and paid and unpaid special leave available by agreement with line managers. A maximum of two days paid special leave per year is available to participate in an unpaid voluntary activity with certain agreed non-profit organisations.
Pension	You will have the opportunity to join Civil Service pension arrangements, which include a valuable range of benefits. To find out more about Civil Service pensions, see the Civil Service pension's website.
Work/life balance	<p>It is Natural England's policy to accommodate both full-time and part-time hours and other flexible working patterns.</p> <p>We support flexible working hours and practices to help you strike a good balance between your work life and your personal life. The policies are family friendly and include alternative working patterns, paid maternity, paternity and adoption leave.</p> <p>Please note that our Apprenticeship schemes are usually full time in order to meet the requirements and expectations of the training programme.</p>
Salary sacrifice schemes	<p>Bicycles - This scheme allows you to sacrifice part of your salary and instead receive the reduced amount as a voucher to pay for a bicycle to cycle to work. As a result you can save money because the salary you sacrifice for a voucher is free from both tax and National Insurance contributions.</p> <p>The Natural England Childcare Voucher salary sacrifice is now closed to new entrants. For details of the new Tax Free Childcare visit: https://www.gov.uk/tax-free-childcare</p>
Civil Service Sports Club	<p>If you work for Natural England you are eligible to join the Civil Service Sports and Social Club.</p> <p>Not only does the CSSC offer the opportunity to get involved in a wide range of indoor and outdoor sports but there are also leisure activities such as theatre trips and there is access to retail discounts.</p>
Employee Discount Schemes	Our Staff Benefits provider offer a wide range of employee retail discounts.
Health cash plans and insurance	Natural England has agreed competitive rates with a number of health insurance/cash plan providers.
Learning and development	Every Natural England employee has ten working days each year allocated for their personal development. This time can be whole or part days, and can be used to develop in their current role or prepare for the future. We will also encourage you to keep developing your skills and professional knowledge throughout your career.

Employee Assistance Service	Natural England's Employee Assistance Service provides professional support and guidance for people experiencing work related emotional, health and social problems.
Diversity	We are committed to creating an environment where everyone feels valued and respected and see this as a good place to work. Natural England has a responsibility to ensure that we have an inclusive culture where discrimination, harassment, bullying and prejudice will not be tolerated. Our selection process is determined on ability and regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership.
Trade Union	Natural England has entered into a partnership agreement with its recognised Trade Unions Prospect, PCS and FDA.

Additional Information:

Secondments

Natural England is a flexible employer and will consider taking individuals on secondment agreements where appropriate.

To note if applying from within Civil Service

Permanent Roles:

If you currently work within Civil Service including the Defra group please note that Natural England (NE) is a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB). For permanent roles, NE is unable to accept transfers from within Civil Service. If successful in this role you would join as a permanent new starter on NE terms and conditions.

However if you are currently a member of the Civil Service Pension, as long as you join NE within 28 days of leaving your previous civil service pension employer, you will be returned to the civil service pension scheme that you were in with your previous employer and your pension service record will be retained. Any queries please email contactcentre@mycsp.co.uk

Fixed Term Appointment Roles:

If the role is being advertised as a Fixed Term Appointment rather than on a permanent contract a secondment to NE may be offered

3. How to apply

Natural England requires all candidates to complete our online application form; CVs will not be accepted. This section provides some guidance on what is required to complete your application.

Read the guidance carefully as it will help you to complete your online application, and please ensure that you complete all sections for your application to be considered.

Login or Register	Login or Register (if using the online recruitment system for the first time) before continuing with your application. When registering you will be asked if you would like to register with tal.net. Agreeing simplifies your job search by enabling you to re-use your data in future applications
Eligibility Pre-Screen	This is a simple Yes/No question regarding your right to live and work in the UK
Eligibility	This is where you provide details of your current employment status e.g. employee of Natural England, Civil Servant/NDPB or non-Civil Servant and complete any associated questions if there are any
Personal Information	This is where you input personal & contact details, plus answer some personal eligibility questions
Civil Servant Detail or Current Employment	This is where you provide details of current employment (whether full or part time employment).
Previous Employment History	You will be asked to enter details of your previous employment history covering the last three years. (If you are a student and have undertaken any part time work, this can be included in this section)
Breaks in Employment	You will be asked to provide any details of breaks in employment over the last 3 years
Competence Questions	This is where you will be asked to provide individual statements against each of the stated competencies for the role. We are looking for you to clearly demonstrate how your skills and experiences meet the competencies by providing real life examples, which will help us to assess your suitability. Further guidance on how to complete this section can be found below. Please read it carefully.
Line Manager Details (Natural England only)	Provide details of your line manager here
Equality and Diversity	<p>Natural England is committed to recruiting, retaining and developing a workforce that reflects the diverse communities that we serve. We monitor and analyse diversity information to help us ensure our processes are fair, transparent, promote equality of opportunity, and do not have an adverse impact on any particular group. Therefore we encourage your cooperation in answering the questions in this section; any information provided on this form will be treated as strictly confidential and will be used for statistical purposes only</p> <p>You will also be asked if you feel you are eligible to apply via the Guaranteed Interview Scheme if you have a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010. This is explained further within the online application form and below</p>

Additional Information	Where you can provide details if you require any additional assistance for any of the selection stages
Declaration	Where you will be asked to declare that the information you have provided is true and you understand pre-employment checks may need to be carried out

There is a **Help Centre** within the application centre for technical queries relating to the application form. For any non- technical questions; Email: enquiries@gov.sscl.com Tel: 0845 603 7262

Guidance on completing the competencies section

The online application form you have been asked to complete requires you to provide statements against each of the stated competencies including technical expertise/knowledge; in which you will need to give evidence showing that you have the capabilities, skills and other personal qualities for the role. Each competency is described by a number of activities/skills taken from the relevant Skills Framework. Please take time to read these thoroughly.

In each of your statements you will need to explain, in your own words, how, when and where you have put these skills, experience and knowledge into practice. That is, *you* must describe the actions that *you* took. It is not enough to have shown that you have relevant experience or skills. You need to show evidence that you have experience of putting into use the particular skills, capabilities, knowledge and personal qualities that are needed for the role for which you are applying.

How to provide evidence on an application form to show that you have the skills and knowledge for the role

Assessors will be looking for statements that are short and to the point. Part of the skill which is required for completing the form is to express yourself clearly in as few words as possible while covering all necessary points.

When completing the form you will need to provide examples of a particular situation or situations from the past where you displayed all or most of the activities/skills making up that required competency. By describing what you did, how you did it, why you did it and the effect this had - you show the assessors who will be marking the application form, that you understand what is required and that you are capable of doing it.

By quoting examples of why and how you demonstrated the competency, knowledge and other qualities in the past you show that you have the potential to apply them in a new role in the future. It is not sufficient proof to say that you have had relevant experience; you must show evidence of making a success of that experience by describing how you acted in particular situations and what the effect of those actions was.

Some useful tips to help you write your statements:-

- You should demonstrate how you would be suitable for the role and what you can contribute
- You need to give very specific examples to support your claims (see STAR technique below). It is not enough to state you possess a certain competency, for example communicating effectively; you need to explain why you think you have the right level and to tell us how you have used it.
- The statements are your opportunity to let us know what you have done and how you have done it, try to think about the 'I' rather than the 'we'.
- Include any other points you want to make but have not been able to explain elsewhere on the form.
- Use concise text – business style rather than essay style, using grammatically correct English
- You may wish to draft your statements off line; and perhaps ask someone else to read them, to give their opinion of the structure and flow of the statements, before submitting online.

Evidence can be drawn from your experience in your current or previous work situation, but can if necessary also be taken from;

- Your school or college work;
- Your family life or home responsibilities; or
- Your leisure activities or voluntary work.

When providing your evidence **you might** want to present it using the STAR technique to describe

- The **Situation** or **Task** you were involved in
- What **Actions** you took in dealing with the situation – what exactly did you do and when (hint: avoid using the word 'we')
- What the **Results** were and how well you met your aims

Summary

1. Briefly describe the setting and what was expected of you
2. Say what *you* did not what others did
3. Describe the outcome and impact of your actions on others and on the situation
4. Say how you could have improved on what you did
5. Give evidence that is relevant to the broad descriptors of the relevant competency
6. Do not spend time and space describing activities that are not relevant to the role
7. Use your own words to describe the activities

How will my application be considered?

The application form will be used to assess the evidence you are offering in respect of your knowledge, experience and skills to meet the requirements of the role description.

Natural England operates “name blind” sifting. By removing the candidate’s name and other personal information, such as their nationality or the university they attended, we aim to ensure that people will be judged on merit and not on their background, race or gender

Applications will be shortlisted to ensure that the strongest candidates are selected for interview. This will be done by a shortlisting panel who will usually (but not always) be the same as the interview panel. The panel chair will be the link between the shortlisting and interviewing panels if they are different.

Do not be disappointed if you are not shortlisted for interview as it does not necessarily mean that your application was unsatisfactory, rather that there were stronger candidates. You can obtain feedback from the panel if you do not get shortlisted by contacting the vacancy manager or our Shared Services provider (SSCL) enquiries@gov.sscl.com

4. About your interview



Guaranteed Interviews

Natural England is a Disability Confident Employer. As users of this scheme, we guarantee to interview all disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for the vacancy.

This is to ensure that people with disabilities can compete on equal terms with non-disabled people by providing an opportunity to demonstrate skills/qualifications and technical/professional abilities at interview.

Natural England's online application forms provide you with the opportunity to tell the selection panel if you feel you have a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010. You have the opportunity to indicate any particular assistance you may need if invited to interview (such as induction loop, wheelchair access, etc.).

Any candidate, who declares a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010, is guaranteed an interview **provided** that they meet the **minimum criteria** for the role in question. For the purposes of the scheme, the minimum criteria to qualify for interview will be the recruitment panels agreed minimum score in each required competency, including technical/specialist knowledge.

It is the job of the selection panel to judge the suitability or otherwise of all candidates in relation to the required skills for the role, as specified in the role description. Beyond this assumptions about what candidates with disabilities might or might not be able to do will not feature in the panel's considerations.

What can I expect my interview panel to be like?

The panel will usually comprise of two or three people. Every effort will have been made to ensure both sexes are represented on the panel and that it is as diverse as possible but this is dependent upon the availability of people to interview.

Interview format

Your interview will usually last about 45 to 60 minutes, but duration may vary slightly as panels differ in how they use their time. The interview panel will review and evaluate all candidates against Natural England's Ways of Working, the competencies/skills framework relevant to the role, and technical/specialist ability described in the role description. Depending on the requirements and the level of the role being filled, supplementary testing and/or a short presentation may be necessary. Should this form part of the selection process, you will be notified beforehand and the timing of the interview adjusted accordingly.

The important thing to remember about the interview is that you can give examples from any aspect of your life. The examples do not need to be based on previous work experience. Natural England recognises that many people may apply who do not have work experience, or who have not worked for a while. You can therefore give examples based on your home life, social life, experience in education, voluntary work or other areas of your life.

You should also talk specifically about things you have done. The interviewers are interested in your skills and experiences. When responding to their questions, be sure to provide a specific example and be prepared to talk about it, detailing what you did and how you achieved your objective. The interviewers will prompt you if they require more detailed information. If you have made notes prior to the interview about your examples you can take these into the interview with you and are allowed to refer to them during your interview.

During your interview you will be asked questions that both demonstrate the skills and competencies required for the role, and the behaviours you applied when delivering your example.

Natural England's Ways of Working

Natural England has a set of Ways of Working that everyone in the organisation will be demonstrating, regardless of their role. We want the people who come to work for us to understand these to be able to start working towards them from day one. The interview panel will be testing for evidence of the Natural England Ways of Working (see Annex A) as well as the relevant competencies and technical skills for the role.

You will therefore need to familiarise yourself with the Ways of Working before interview and prepare examples of where you have demonstrated those behaviours and skills.

The wording of our Ways Of Working will naturally be in the context of Natural England and our work, however we believe that they can equally be applied to any organisation that you have worked for. This could be as an employee, a volunteer, undertaking work experience, or as a student.

For example, when you look at the Way of Working 'People trust Natural England and say we are practical, helpful, trustworthy and impartial, and creative in problem solving, you may want to consider how you have been helpful and trustworthy within your past experience.

Interview questions

The panel will ask open questions aligned to the key competencies, technical expertise/knowledge and tasks as described in the role description, of all candidates to determine their capability to undertake the role. These questions, when asked alongside evidence based questions, can provide a more complete picture of each candidate's performance and capability. You may ask the panel to clarify any questions that seem unclear to you. They will make notes throughout the interview to help them to remember key points you have made.

Examples of an open questioning style;

- *Give an example of a problem you have solved and explain how you reached your decision?*
- *Tell me about a time when you have actively sought an opportunity to learn and develop your own skills and expertise?*

Please give an example when you have used feedback to increase service productivity, efficiency and/or quality.

If the panel is trying to find evidence of knowledge and skills and you have no relevant experience in those areas from the work setting, they may test to see if you have gained such knowledge and skills outside work.

Many people get nervous before an interview but there are a few 'golden rules' that will help you:

- Interview questions do not have right or wrong answers. The interviewers are interested in your experiences and how you dealt with them.
- It is not a memory test. If you struggle to remember an example, it is OK to take your time to think. Ask the interviewers to give you a moment, or ask them if you can come back to that question later on. Doing this will not count against you.
- If you do not understand a question, ask the interviewers to repeat it or rephrase it. Again this will not count against you.
- You can take notes or a copy of your application form into the interview with you if you feel this would be helpful.

End of interview

The panel chair will normally close the interview by asking you if you have any further questions or if you have anything else to add. If you realise you could have given a better answer to one of the panel's earlier questions this is the time to tell the panel **briefly** what you meant to say. If you have a question that needs an answer, then ask it. But do not ask a question just because you think you must.

After the interview - contacting candidates

If you are successful the panel chair may phone you to offer you the role, however the offer (subject to the satisfactory completion of Pre-Employment checks) will be sent in writing. You will then have five working days from receipt of the letter to consider the offer. If you decline the role then it will be offered in merit order to those who passed the interview until the role is accepted. If you have been unsuccessful you will be notified in writing.

Pre-employment checks

All successful applicants must undergo Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) checks before starting work.

Please bring your original ID documents, and if possible, photocopies of them, to your interview. This will then allow the panel to verify your original documents and take photocopies to be used for the checks process if you are successful. A list of acceptable documents can be found at the following web address <https://www.gov.uk/criminal-record-check-documents> . We also require your current valid passport.

All other relevant forms will be sent out by SSCL with the offer letter. This involves obtaining full evidence to support your employment history for the last three years and other employment checks such as health checks. For the great majority of roles this will be sufficient and only certain roles will require a higher level of clearance. Should this be necessary, you will be advised of this during the recruitment process.

British citizens born in the United Kingdom or born abroad, British Citizens by registration or naturalisation, British overseas citizens, British overseas territories citizens, British Nationals (Overseas) and British subjects will require:

- A British passport confirming birth in the UK and showing national status as either “British Citizen” or “Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies”; **or** a letter from the Home Office confirming British citizenship or naturalization or registration certificate to prove nationality.

If any element of the checks proves unsatisfactory Natural England may terminate the offer, as stated in the contract of employment. Natural England must be satisfied that nothing in the recent past of a candidate is likely to discredit Natural England, or suggests the possibility of discreditable conduct in the future. Account must be taken of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the Exceptions Order 1975 (amended in 1986) as appropriate.

Interview expenses

No external candidates will be reimbursed their interview expenses.

Feedback

You do not have to request feedback, but we believe the interview is a learning experience for all candidates and we encourage you to ask for feedback with this in mind. You can contact the vacancy manager or SSCL after you receive your result to arrange for feedback: enquiries@gov.sscl.com

Customer Service Standards

Natural England is committed to continuously improving its customer service and we welcome and value your compliments, complaints, comments and suggestions about our services, including our recruitment process. For further details please visit our Customer Service Standards web-page:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england/about-our-services>

Please consider the environment and only print this document if you really need to

Annex A - Natural England Ways of Working

Ways of Working describe **how** we should be doing things, how we behave as well as our attitude and approach in our work and in our interactions with colleagues, customers, stakeholders and partners. They are, therefore, important and critical to good performance.

Outcome	What do we need everyone to do?	How will it affect the way we work?
The people we work with understand Natural England's purpose, strategic direction and priorities and how it will impact their local area or national interest.	Read and gain a good understanding of our purpose, strategic direction and priorities and through practice, talk about them confidently. Understand how your role contributes to the priorities.	Be able to provide colleagues, customers, partners and stakeholders with common and consistent messages on what we are aiming to achieve, what it means for them and the local area and how we can help each other.
People trust Natural England and say we are practical, helpful, trustworthy and impartial, and creative in problem solving.	Always seek to bring people with us by providing practical and straightforward advice that makes sense and helps them to resolve problems. Be positive, friendly, and objective in your approach even in difficult situations. Look for innovative approaches to solving problems rather than a stock answer or use legal reasons why things cannot be achieved.	Gain a really good understanding of the problem to be solved. Never prejudge a situation. Build mutual understanding and encourage innovation and new ideas. Show people that we are a public body which can be trusted to find mutually beneficial solutions.
Customers say Natural England provides a good service.	Read and understand our customer service standard and how it relates to your role. Make personal contact, meet customers or use the phone wherever possible. Use plain and understandable language when writing. Always look to help customers, and do what you say we are going to do.	Be very clear on the service standards we have committed to providing to our customers, and ensure the customer understands these expectations and any applicable charges. Be professional at all times and aim to build long term sustainable and productive relationships, which encourage them to do more for the natural environment.
People know what is expected of them.	Everyone has a clear understanding of what they are expected to achieve, what the milestones and outcomes will be, and how they are expected to work to achieve those outcomes. You take personal responsibility for documenting agreed expectations and delivering those against agreed milestones. You seek help if required and agree personal development goals. You always use agreed standards and comply with relevant processes.	We all have a clear understanding of how we work together to achieve agreed outcomes. We understand how we will work with people outside the organisation. We plan our work to meet and report against agreed milestones. We devote time and energy to personal development, and help others develop.
People outside Natural England say we work together as an organisation.	We all work as one team. We support each other and the work we do. We share knowledge and expertise to help others achieve their agreed outcomes. We make collective decisions quickly and spot opportunities that help meet the agreed delivery plan.	We work effectively across teams and do not let boundaries become barriers. We make effective use of skills, experience and money. We collaborate to make collective decisions quickly. We all recognise that we are expected to work on organisational priorities and move to different teams when needed.
People say their colleagues listen and respect them.	We all value colleagues and encourage them to have their say. We listen and try to see things through their eyes. We use straightforward language and avoid aggressive or inappropriate behaviour. We challenge colleagues who do not meet these expectations.	We encourage diverse views and ideas, helping everyone to give their best so the team and organisation can move forward positively. We all assume our colleagues' intentions are positive and they are trying to do the right thing.