



Appointment of

# Chief Scientific Adviser

November 2024 – Project Code: OFRM



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

Saxton Bampfylde



# Contents

Page 3	Opening message from Tamara Finkelstein
Page 4	Context
Page 5	What does the role involve?
Page 7	What experience will you need?
Page 9	The recruitment process
Page 10	Terms of appointment
Page 11	How to apply



# Introduction from Tamara Finkelstein, Permanent Secretary, Defra

---

I am delighted to invite applications for the role of Chief Scientific Adviser for the Defra Group. This is a critical time to join Defra as we continue to deliver our ambitious agenda, setting global standards in protecting and enhancing our natural environment for future generations and leading the world in food, farming and fisheries, and animal welfare. At a time when public and political interest in the environment has never been higher, the successful applicant will have an unprecedented opportunity to contribute to issues that profoundly impact people's lives.

The role offers the opportunity to become a senior member of the Department and give advice directly to senior officials as well as the Secretary of State and other Ministers, whilst also updating them on scientific developments. You will need to be a leader and to be collaborative, working across the wider Department and many other parts of government. You will play a key role in the Chief Scientific Adviser Network across government, ensuring that policy decisions are evidence based and underpinned by the highest-quality science and engineering evidence and understanding. You will also act as Head of Profession for science and engineering within Defra and build Defra's wider science capability within and across teams.

We are looking for an outstanding scientist or engineer to join the cadre of CSAs across government and to provide strong scientific leadership for Defra. If you have the passion to deliver outcomes for the public and share our ambition for the future, and feel your skills are a good match, then we very much look forward to hearing from you.

Tamara



# Context

Our work profoundly affects people's lives. In the UK and globally we face an ever more complex set of external challenges, from climate risks to global food security and supply chain fragility, to cost of living pressures for our citizens. What we do in Defra is vital for human health and happiness, for our economic growth, resilience and wellbeing, and for all the wondrous and diverse forms of nature we share the planet with. We have a vital role to play across government on the economy and Net Zero, on climate adaptation and on national security risks and resilience.

The challenges may be large, but we are optimistic. The UK has bound itself to ambitious targets: our legal commitment to Net Zero and our statutory environmental targets on biodiversity, air, water and waste. These outcomes will drive the way we work as an organisation for years to come. We are making headway. Our pioneering reforms to the way we give financial support to farmers are garnering interest from around the world. Our success will mean we protect and sustain farmers' livelihoods, invest in the countryside as part of our shared heritage, enable the vital transition to Net Zero in the agriculture sector. We have a critical role to play in our nation's biosecurity. Our vets and scientists perform vital surveillance and monitoring of animal and plant disease to prevent and contain outbreaks, and we work closely with the UK Health Security Agency on biosecurity implications for human health, as well as being key contributors to the UK's first Biological Security Strategy.

We have an ambitious plan to renew the UK's biosecurity capabilities through new world-class laboratories in the years to come. We maintain strong relationships with the food sector and work closely with the sector to build resilience to shocks. We have an important role to play in a growing international dialogue on food security, sharpened by the conflict in Ukraine. We have grown our trade capability to match our needs as an independent trading nation and have an important role in promoting UK exports. We are a science-oriented organisation, building up our investment in Research and Development (R&D) and supporting the UK's innovative agri-tech and life sciences sectors. In the next phase of our organisational development, we want to focus more on the growth and innovation potential of these hugely creative sectors, harnessing technology in our mission to secure sustainable growth and an economy that treats its natural ecosystems as a vital asset.

This role is a Director General role. If you have never worked in the Civil Service, as a general guide, each Department is headed by a Permanent Secretary, and their direct reports (usually the Departmental Board or functional leadership) are our Directors General. Although comparisons are not always straightforward, that means this role is equivalent to an Executive Committee role in the private sector. The size and shape of Director General portfolios varies by Department, but each role will have its own delivery priorities, plus a contribution to Departmental leadership - and a broader commitment to collective leadership across the Civil Service as part of our Civil Service Leadership Group (the most senior 250 civil servants).



# What does the role involve?

The Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) occupies one of the most senior and influential positions within the department reporting to the Permanent Secretary and sitting on the Defra Executive Team. The role has expanded in recent years to bring Science together with the Analysis and Insight profession, with Defra's Director of Analysis and Director-level Chief Data Officer now both reporting into the CSA. The role also holds line management for the Deputy CSA and has dotted lines to Lead Scientists in policy directorates across the core department and to Chief Scientists in Defra's seven Public Sector Research Establishments (e.g. Animal Plant Health Agency, Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science). Direct line management in the DG Group extends to around 220 people with a budget responsibility of circa £200m annually.

The CSA is responsible for ensuring that science and engineering evidence and advice is robust, relevant and high quality and that there are mechanisms in place to ensure that policy making is evidence-driven and underpinned by science and engineering. They do this through providing expert advice and leadership directly to the Defra Secretary of State, Ministers, Permanent Secretary and Senior Officials across business areas, by promoting a scientific and evidence-driven approach to decision-making, and through building scientific capability. The CSA also works as part of the cross-government Chief Scientific Adviser network to resolve issues that cut across departments and is departmental Head of the Government Science and Engineering (GSE) Profession.



# What does the role involve?

## Key responsibilities will include:

- Overall responsibility for the strategic and operational quality and availability of scientific and analytical evidence across a broad range of environmental and agricultural areas (including: climate mitigation and adaptation; air and water quality; biodiversity; marine and fisheries; agri-food innovation; animal and plant health, and; resources and waste);
- Advising ministers directly and ensuring overall quality of science advice to Ministers;
- Oversight, coordination, and quality control of Defra's central R&D budget (£236m, 2024/25), including at fiscal events and in allocation to evidence and policy teams via appropriate governance systems;
- Representing Defra's science and innovation interests across UK Government as a member of the cadre of Departmental CSAs and at relevant cross-HMG R&D and innovation boards;
- Providing science input on security and at times of emergency, including serving (and preparing to serve) on Science Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), the CSA Subgroup for the Biosecurity Strategy, and through the NSRA process;
- Representing UK environmental and agricultural science and innovation interests internationally, including through G20, G7 and UN processes and through relationship building with key partner nations;
- Acting as Head of Profession for Science and Engineering in Defra Group with responsibility for professional development of ca. 3,000 scientists;
- Playing an active role in the appointment to senior positions in Defra Arm's Length Bodies and elsewhere across HMG.

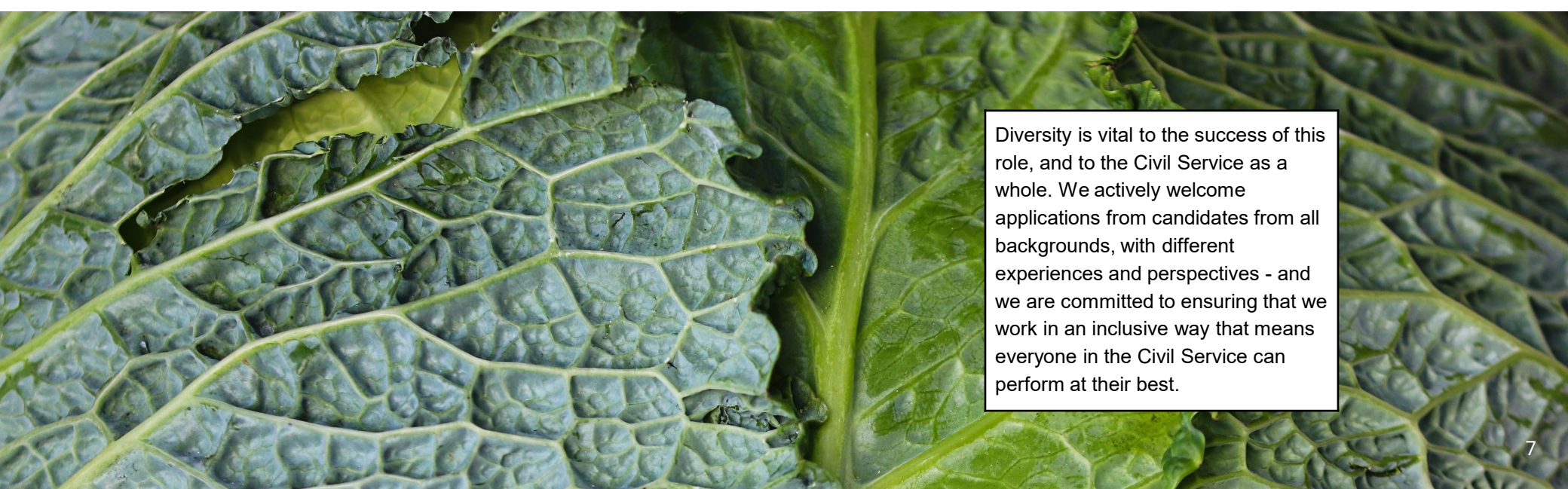




# What experience will you need?

The Civil Service is open to talented people from any career background; where possible we will always seek to identify transferable skills from the individual's experience. To help you succeed in this role, you will have:

- A thorough understanding of the use of science and evidence in policy and operational decision-making. This might have been gained through working with government or membership of an advisory committee supporting business decisions;
- An outstanding and recognised track record in a scientific area relevant to Defra policy;
- Proven experience of setting strategic direction for science and research programmes, which are clearly linked to policy or delivery outcomes and have the right mix of applied and 'blue sky' elements;
- The ability to communicate complex scientific and evidence issues clearly and succinctly to decision makers, the public and media;
- Evidence of an ability to work collaboratively in a multidisciplinary evidence and analytical environment and to produce identifiable and effective outcomes;
- Experience of managing substantial budgets and/or scientific facilities and demonstrable leadership abilities (including scientific programmes, organisations or institutes);
- Widely recognised leadership skills, an ability to inspire and mobilise teams, even in times of crisis and uncertainty, and excellent organisational skills with an ability to strategically prioritise over a wide portfolio of work.



Diversity is vital to the success of this role, and to the Civil Service as a whole. We actively welcome applications from candidates from all backgrounds, with different experiences and perspectives - and we are committed to ensuring that we work in an inclusive way that means everyone in the Civil Service can perform at their best.







# The recruitment process

Civil Service recruitment processes at Director General level are regulated by the [Civil Service Commission](#), and we follow clear guidelines to ensure that our recruitment is fair and open. We also design our recruitment processes to reflect our values-based approach to HR and to ensure that shortlisted candidates have the opportunity to meet key stakeholders for the role, before they join us.

We expect the process for this role to be as follows:

- **The closing date for applications will be 23:55 on 1 January.**
- Longlisted candidates will be invited to meet with Saxton Bampfylde for a preliminary interview sometime during w/c 13 - 20 January 2025.
- A shortlist of the applications will take place on w/c 27 January.
- Between **3 – 20 February**, shortlisted candidates will then be invited to:
  - a meeting with an existing Director General and a staff member of Defra. This is an opportunity for candidates to build their understanding of what it's like to work in the Civil Service and at the same time an opportunity for the DG and staff member to ask you about your leadership experience
  - a meeting with a key external stakeholder who you will be expected to build a successful relationship with if successful. This will be an opportunity for you to gain a better understanding of the importance of different stakeholders in making this role a success and at the same time an opportunity for the key stakeholder to ask you about leadership experience
  - a meeting with a senior Minister of Defra.

- Inputs from all of those steps will then form the basis of a panel interview, chaired by **Martin Spencer** from the Civil Service Commission **w/c 17 or 24 February 2025**.

Other panel members at the interview will include but may not be limited to **Tamara Finkelstein CB**, Permanent Secretary at Defra, **Professor Dame Angela McLean**, Government Chief Scientific Adviser and **Heather Hancock**, Lead Non-Executive Director at Defra.

Please note that references and open-source due diligence checks (including into social media accounts) will be undertaken for all short-listed candidates.

Full details will be provided to shortlisted candidates and recognising that there are a number of steps in the process, we will do our best to arrange the sessions in a way that works for you. This process will be conducted in face-to-face sessions, but if you need any adjustments do let us know.



# Terms of appointment

- This role is being offered as a **three year fixed term** appointment with the possibility of extension. A loan or secondment will also be considered.
- If you are successful and are from outside of the Civil Service, you can expect your salary on appointment to be **£149,000 per annum (pro rata)**. If you're an existing Civil Servant, your salary will be agreed in line with the Civil Service pay rules in place on the date of your appointment.
- This role is available on a **full or a part time basis** (minimum of four days). Flexible working arrangements are welcomed and will be considered (including existing job share arrangements). You can be **based in any Defra Policy Hub** (Bristol, London, Newcastle or York) - but realistically this role will require travel to London on a weekly basis.

To ensure the integrity of the judgements and decisions they make every day, all civil servants must make sure that no conflict arises - or could be perceived to arise - between their public duties and their private interests when joining, or leaving, the civil service. This is a requirement of our Civil Service Code and is designed to protect both individual civil servants and their employing departments. If you believe you have any interests that might be relevant (or be perceived as relevant) to your ability to undertake this role, please let Saxton Bampfylde know early in the process. Such interests may be financial or may be related to the relationships you have with specific individuals, organisations, or employers. Saxton Bampfylde will be able to discuss those interests with you and help work through potential next steps.

Please note that:

- **Civil Service pension** arrangements will apply and you will have the option of joining the Civil Service Alpha Pension Scheme, a defined benefit (DB) pension scheme. The current employer contribution rate for this salary level is in excess of 30% of salary as explained at [Civil Service Pension Scheme](#).
- The role includes **25 days annual leave (pro rata)**, increasing on a sliding scale to 30 days after 5 years' service. (This is in addition to 8 public holidays and one privilege day).
- If successful you must hold, or be willing to obtain, security clearance up to **Developed Vetting** level. More information about the vetting process can be found [here](#).
- You will need to hold the right **immigration status and nationality requirements for this role** (this is not a reserved post) – please email [Maria.Dodson@saxbam.com](mailto:Maria.Dodson@saxbam.com) if you have any questions.
- Unfortunately we will not be able to reimburse you for any **expenses** incurred as part of this recruitment process.



# How to apply

**Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to Defra on this appointment.**

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at [www.saxbam.com/appointments](http://www.saxbam.com/appointments) using code **OFRM**.

You will need to complete and/or attach the following information:

- **Your CV**, with educational and professional qualifications and full employment history, including an explanation of any gaps in your employment history, and details where possible of budgets and numbers of people;
- A short covering statement of **no more than two A4 sized pages (1000 words)** explaining why this appointment interests you and how you can evidence your suitability for the role, with particular reference to the criteria in the 'relevant experience' section on page 7;
- A **diversity monitoring form**. All applicants are invited to complete this information to assist the Civil Service with monitoring its recruitment process. All data is reported in an anonymous and aggregate format and will not be seen by anyone assessing your application;
- A **declaration of interest form**.

The closing date for applications is 23.55 on **Wednesday 1 January 2025**.

This vacancy is part of the [A Great Place to Work for Veterans](#) initiative. For further information on whether you are eligible to apply under this scheme please follow the link.

In addition to this, Defra is an accredited 'Disability Confident Employer' under the government's **Disability Confident Scheme** which denotes organisations that have a positive commitment towards disabled people. We guarantee to interview anyone with a disability whose application meets the minimum criteria for the role, as outlined on page 7 of this pack. If you wish to claim a guaranteed interview, you should declare so at the point you submit your application.

## GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Saxton Bampfylde

The law requires that selection for appointment to the Civil Service is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition as outlined in the [Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles](#). If you feel your application has not been treated in accordance with the Recruitment Principles, and you wish to make a complaint, you should contact Sarah Vale in the Senior Talent and Resourcing Team, Government People Group [sarah.vale@cabinetoffice.gov.uk] in the first instance.