

DEFRA CIVIL SOCIETY ADVISORY BOARD

Guidance for applicants

Background

1. Civil society organisations share the common characteristics of being non-governmental organisations which are driven by their values and which principally reinvest any financial surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. The sector encompasses voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals both large and small. Many civil society organisations play an important role in relation to Defra's areas of responsibility, including: helping to protect our natural environment; helping individuals and communities to choose greener lifestyles; helping businesses to choose greener practices; supporting sustainable food and farming industries; promoting the welfare of animals; defending the public from environmental risks such as flooding and animal diseases; and supporting strong rural communities.

2. Defra's Civil Society Advisory Board was established in April 2009 as a non-executive advisory group. As a result of Board members stepping down, there are now four vacancies on the Board which we are seeking to fill by the end of April 2011. We are, therefore, inviting applications from interested people with the required understanding and experience of civil society and its interface with government, especially in the area of environmental policy.

The Role of the Board

3. The full remit of the Board and its terms of appointment are attached at **Annex A**. The role of the Board is to:

- provide advice to Defra's Ministers, Management Committee and policy officials about the most effective ways of engaging with civil society in England, to contribute to the delivery of Defra's priorities and related Departmental Programmes;
- provide support and challenge to the Department on the decentralisation of power and responsibility and the effective promotion of Big Society approaches;
- provide advice about the civil society implications of Defra's policies or operations;
- provide advice about the ways in which Defra can further embed the principles of the Compact into its day to day operations.

Person Specification

4. Successful applicants will need to demonstrate that they can make an effective contribution to providing authoritative, high level advice to Defra Ministers and senior officials about a broad range of policy issues relating to Defra's relationship with civil society. They will have a deep and current understanding of such issues which could

have been gained in a variety of activities. Whether from within civil society or from outside, applicants should have a track record of significant impact at the national level.

5. Applicants will be appointed because of their personal qualities, not as representatives of the organisations which currently employ them.

Experience, Knowledge and Skills

6. Applicants should have the following qualities:

an ability to make the links between environmental, social and economic perspectives, and an ability to contribute to strategic, collective decision-making;

a deep and current knowledge of civil society (i.e. its operation, diversity, funding and governance at national, regional and local levels);

an understanding of the principles enshrined in the Compact agreement and how they can be operationalised and/or an understanding of the distinctive needs and characteristics of social enterprises;

an understanding of the machinery of government and experience of operating in a political environment;

an ability to analyse complex information and make sound judgments.

Terms of Appointment

7. Board members would be expected to serve a three year term (eg from April 2011 – March 2014) and to attend four Board meetings per year, and other Board activities as and when appropriate.

8. Board members will be able to claim eligible travel and subsistence expenses for attending Board meetings and other Board activities. Where Board members are not paid to perform strategic influencing or liaison roles as part of their current salaried position, they may be reimbursed for their time in order to enable the Board to benefit from the frontline or practitioner expertise they are able to provide. The Department will advise Board members of the precise arrangements for reimbursement at the start of each financial year.

9. Members of the Advisory Body are expected not to occupy a paid role or hold a particularly sensitive or high profile unpaid role in a political party, and not engage in specific party-political activities on matters directly affecting the work of the Advisory Board. When engaging in other lower level political activities, they should be conscious of their role and exercise proper discretion. Members must act according to the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles).

10. Members must not misuse information gained in the course of their service for personal gain or for political purpose, nor seek to use the opportunity of service to promote their private interests or those of connected persons, firms, business or other organisations.

How to Apply

11. An application form can be downloaded here. Applications should be sent by email to: [**thirdsector@defra.gsi.gov.uk**](mailto:thirdsector@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

The closing date for applications is **Friday 1st April 2011**.

12. Please include in your application:

the application form, including daytime, evening and/or mobile telephone numbers (to be used with discretion)

a statement of not more than 75 words answering the question:
How have you worked at the interface between civil society and government?

a CV of no more than 2 pages with a full employment history, including paid and unpaid activities, showing the more significant positions and responsibilities held, relevant achievements, budgets / staff managed, and anything else you consider relevant to the role for which you are applying.

For further information please contact:

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REMIT OF DEFRA'S CIVIL SOCIETY ADVISORY BOARD

1 ROLE OF THE BOARD

The Board:

provides advice to Defra's Ministers, Management Committee and policy officials about the most effective ways of engaging with civil society in England, to contribute to the delivery of Defra's priorities and related Departmental Programmes;

provides support and challenge to the Department on the decentralisation of power and responsibility and the effective promotion of Big Society approaches;

provides advice about the civil society implications of Defra's policies or operations;

provides advice about the ways in which Defra can further embed the principles of the Compact into its day to day operations.

2 SUCCESS CRITERIA

The Board will have:

achieved demonstrable improvements in effective partnership working between Defra and civil society, and the mainstreaming of the Compact principles into Defra's activities;

strengthened Defra's approach to the furtherance of the decentralisation and Big Society agendas in ways which enable civil society to make an enhanced contribution to the delivery of Defra's strategic priorities;

improved Defra's understanding about the distinctiveness of social enterprises within civil society, and the importance of intelligent commissioning and effective business support for this part of the sector to thrive;

created increased opportunities for civil society organisations to inform and influence Defra policy development and implementation;

influenced capacity-building within both the public sector and civil society in order to achieve improved outcomes in relation to promoting sustainable development, protecting the environment, supporting sustainable food and farming industries, and creating strong rural communities.

3 STATUS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Board is a non-executive advisory group. The Board will be accountable to Defra Ministers. The remit of the Board will be reviewed annually. The Board will meet four times per year – with additional Board work programme activities happening as and when necessary.

4 MEMBERSHIP

The Board shall have a maximum of 16 members including its chair. The chair will be appointed by the Department following consultation with Board members.

Defra's representation on the Board will nominally comprise the Director level 'civil society champion'. Defra's Civil Society Minister will attend Board meetings where possible.

The Board will meet twice per year with Defra's Secretary of State.

Board meetings will, in part or whole, be open to senior representatives from Defra's NDPBs or delivery partners.

5 TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

Board members will be appointed on the basis of their personal expertise, experience and knowledge of civil society; they will not act as representatives of their employing organisations.

Board members appointed after March 2011 will be expected to serve a three year term. Board members appointed before March 2011 will serve a maximum further two years (until March 2013 at the latest).

Board members will be expected to attend four Board meetings per year, and other Board activities as and when necessary. Board members will be able to claim eligible travel and subsistence expenses for attending Board meetings and other Board activities. Where Board members are not paid to perform strategic influencing or liaison roles as part of their current salaried position, they may be reimbursed for their time in order to enable the Board to benefit from the frontline or practitioner expertise they are able to offer. The Department will advise Board members of the precise arrangements for reimbursement at the start of each financial year.

Members of the Advisory Body (including the Chair) are expected not to occupy a paid role or hold a particularly sensitive or high profile unpaid role in a political party, and not engage in specific party-political activities on matters directly affecting the work of the Advisory Board. When engaging in other lower level political activities, they should be conscious of their public role and exercise proper discretion. Members must act according to the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles).

Members must not misuse information gained in the course of their public service for personal gain or for political purpose, nor seek to use the opportunity of public service to promote their private interests or those of connected persons, firms, business or other organisations.