



Rural Payments
Agency

Appointment of Rural Payments Agency (RPA) Non-Executive Directors and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Chair (ARAC)

Briefing pack for applicants

Closing Date: 31 October 2025

Reference: APPT

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Defra's mission statement

Defra Group leads on the fundamentals: the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe. It encompasses food, environment, biosecurity, trade and more. Defra is a policy, growth, science, delivery and international department.

Defra's work is fundamental to delivering the government's five missions – by building economic resilience through better flood defences, protecting against biosecurity risk, climate adaptation and nature-based solutions; creating jobs and attracting investment in our water and waste sectors; working with our sectors, such as food and drink; and ensuring that all missions are rural-proofed.

To achieve these goals, we are committed to appointing high-calibre individuals from diverse backgrounds to the boards of our public bodies. By drawing on a wide range of skills, knowledge, and experiences, we can make our work more effective, resilient, and accountable to the public.

Appointing high-calibre people from diverse backgrounds with relevant skills, knowledge, and experience to the department and the boards of our public bodies will help us to ensure that our work is more effective, resilient, and accountable.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity

The UK government is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and ensuring that no one experiences unfair discrimination or harassment on the grounds of race, ethnicity, national origin, colour, sex, gender identity, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or age.

We actively encourage applications from individuals of all backgrounds and are committed to fostering diversity in public appointments. All appointments are made on merit, following a fair and open competition process regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Disability

We are dedicated to supporting candidates with disabilities and are proud to hold Disability Confident Leader status. We guarantee an interview for any applicant with a disability whose application meets the minimum criteria for the post.

To ensure an inclusive process, we are committed to making reasonable adjustments where possible for candidates with disabilities. If you require any adjustments to support your application, please refer to the 'How to Apply and Submit Your Application' section below. Further information about the Disability Confident Leader scheme is available via the Disability Confident logo displayed below.



Introduction from RPA's Non-Executive AMB Chair

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Non-Executive Director / ARAC Chair at RPA.

The successful candidates for these roles will be joining RPA at an exciting time as the organisation embarks on a programme of transformation which will shape the future of the agency, helping it reach its full potential and deliver ambitious outcomes alongside our partners across Defra Group. It is recognised that farming and rural affairs have changed and continue to change, and as a customer focused agency, it is important that RPA consistently adapts and improves for farmers, landowners and rural communities. Our nation needs quality food, a healthy environment, and a thriving rural economy, and these are the things that RPA is here to support. We want to improve our outcomes for the environment and economy, our customer experience and our people.

RPA is looking for Non-Executives Directors and an ARAC Chair who are passionate about growing the agricultural sector and improving the environment. The ability to engage and act as an

advocate for the agency within the highest levels of Defra and across government will be vital. In addition, you must be willing to develop a deep understanding and commitment to RPA's remit as well as being ready to demonstrate how your own experience can add value to achieving agency's objectives.

If you think that you can take on these rewarding roles, I strongly encourage you to apply. I particularly encourage applications from talented people from all backgrounds to ensure the Board reflects our diverse society and takes an inclusive and equitable approach. Boards of public bodies are most effective when they reflect the diversity of the society they serve.

Potential candidates are encouraged to have an informal conversation with me about the role before submitting their application. Please contact Alison Morgan (alison.morgan@rpa.gov.uk) to arrange this.

I look forward to hearing from you.



Adrian Belton, RPA Non-Executive Agency Management Board Chair

About RPA

The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) is an executive agency of the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). We are a Civil Service Operational Delivery Profession organisation, with the majority of our people delivering day to day services to our customers and stakeholders. We are an organisation of c2500 colleagues, based at various sites across England. We're a dispersed team, and many of our colleagues live in the communities we serve.

Our roles:

- We deliver vital support to the rural economy by administering a wide range of farmer and trader led schemes. Paying out over £2 billion in payments each year.
- We support and advise customers, both virtually and on the ground, helping them navigate schemes and make informed decisions that benefit their businesses, the environment, and Defra outcomes.
- We engage in collaborative delivery, by assuring the effective management of schemes delivered in partnership with Defra, Natural England and the Forestry Commission
- We safeguard animal health and food security through the management of livestock identification and traceability services across Great Britain.

To achieve across such wide range of schemes, the RPA manages information on more than two million land parcels and 13 million cattle movements, carries out over 23,000 inspections or visits each year and holds data on 120,000 customers.

We will continue to evolve, ensuring we support the growth of environmentally and economically sustainable businesses across the country. Over the coming years our strategy will improve our service and develop our people to drive outcomes aligned to the government's objectives. This will reinforce our role as more than just a paying agency, but as a key delivery partner of government policy.

Our values underpin the way we approach our work and drive us daily as we strive to be an outstanding place to work. Our values are: Visible, Engaging, Respectful, Inclusive, Trusted, Accountable and Supportive (VERITAS).

About RPA's Agency Management Board (AMB) and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

The role of the Agency Management Board:

The RPA Management Board plays a vital advisory and support role to the Chief Executive. While it is not a decision-making body, it contributes significantly by helping to manage the Agency's reputation, build influential networks, provide operational delivery expertise, and offer strategic challenge where appropriate.

The Board is responsible for setting and advancing the strategic aims and objectives of the RPA, ensuring alignment with the agency's overall direction established by the Secretary of State. It also ensures that a robust framework of effective and prudent controls are in place to assess and manage risk.

In addition, the Board provides strategic advice on policy implementation and key objectives, scrutinises performance, and supports the Chief Executive Officer in fulfilling their responsibilities as Accounting Officer, ensuring value for money and effective delivery of the agency's remit.

The role of the RPA Audit & Risk Assurance Committee:

Chaired by a Non-Executive Director who also sits on the Agency Management Board (AMB), ARAC is responsible for advising both the AMB and the Chief Executive (as Accounting Officer) on the adequacy and effectiveness of the agency's accounts and internal control systems. This includes oversight of both internal and external audits. The Chair of RPA's ARAC also serves as a member of the Defra Audit and Risk Committee.

ARAC reviews the agency's Annual Report and Accounts, its approach to risk and fraud risk management, the EU Accounts, and planning for the National Audit Office's audit of the UK accounts.

Role specification

The role of a Non-Executive Director:

We are seeking to appoint new Non-Executive Directors to serve on both RPA's Management Board and the ARAC. These roles are critical to supporting the agency through a period of significant transformation and strategic development.

Candidates are sought with expertise aligned to the challenges RPA is expected to navigate over the next three years. In particular, we are looking for individuals with experience in:

- Large-scale operational delivery – bringing insight into managing complex, high-volume services with a focus on efficiency and impact.
- Digital transformation – supporting innovation, modernisation, and the effective use of technology to improve service delivery and internal processes.
- Customer insight and experience – ensuring that the needs and expectations of farmers, landowners, and rural communities are at the heart of RPA's operations.

The role of the Non-Executive Chair of ARAC:

The Non-Executive Chair of RPA's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee plays a pivotal role in providing independent oversight of the agency's financial management and risk assurance processes. This includes ensuring that the organisation's financial controls are robust, transparent, and subject to rigorous scrutiny.


The Chair leads the committee in reviewing the effectiveness of internal control systems, financial reporting, and audit arrangement, both internal and external. The successful candidate will also ensure that the agency's risk management framework is fit for purpose, with appropriate mechanisms in place to identify, assess, and mitigate strategic and operational risks.



Role description

- Support the RPA in delivering its objectives by providing independent scrutiny, support and assurance.
- Providing strong, constructive challenge and support to the Executive Team to ensure that the Agency achieves high levels of delivery performance for customers
- Drive a culture of accountability, innovation and continuous improvement to ensure improved customer experience.
- Support the digital transformation of systems including greater use of technology such AI to simplify processes and deliver services more effectively and efficiently.
- Provide mentorship and advice to agency staff, supporting them to develop their capability.
- Act as ambassador for the Agency, building and maintaining effective working relationships with a broad range of networks and stakeholders.
- Actively contribute to Board and Committee meetings, fostering high-quality debate and collaborative working.
- Ensure adherence to the Corporate Governance Code, Managing Public Money, Public Bodies Handbook and all relevant standards governing public funds and conflicts of interest.
- Support the development and delivery of the Annual Report and Accounts and the agency's strategy.
- Maintain open and effective communication with senior officials, Board colleagues, and key stakeholders to support the Agency's objectives and values.

For the ARAC Chair role, the successful candidate will also be required to:

- Provide expert, independent advice to the RPA Management Board Chair and Chief Executive on finance, risk and governance matters.
 - Lead the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, ensuring effective oversight of internal controls, risk management, and audit processes.
 - Represent the RPA on the Defra Group Audit and Risk Committee, contributing to cross-departmental assurance and governance.
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Essential Criteria

- Significant experience and insight in business or industry, particularly within agriculture, farming, or related sectors.
- A proven ability to operate effectively at Board level, offering both strategic guidance and constructive challenge to the Executive Team, with a clear focus on driving performance and achieving measurable outcomes.
- Strong strategic thinking skills, with the capacity to assess complex issues, encourage innovative approaches, and support the Board in identifying and managing risks.
- Exceptional interpersonal and communication skills, with a track record of building trusted, influential relationships across senior leadership, Ministers, delivery partners, and a wide range of stakeholders.
- A sound understanding of the Public Sector environment, including the structure and function of Public Bodies and the key challenges they face in delivering services and maintaining public trust.
- The ability to respond with agility and sound judgement in fast-moving or sensitive situations, demonstrating a pragmatic and solutions-focused approach.
- In-depth knowledge of corporate governance, including risk management, internal controls, and regulatory compliance.

For the ARAC Chair role, candidates must meet the following additional essential criteria:

- A formal accounting qualification and substantial experience in accounting, forecasting, auditing and risk management.
- Significant experience in the application of recognised approaches to risk management, internal control, and corporate governance.
- An ability to analyse issues and emerging risks at a strategic level in ways which are impartial, creative, innovative, and focused on finding solutions.
- Proven experience of working with internal and external audit functions.

The successful candidate must abide by the Nolan principles of public service and the 12 Principles of Governance for all Public Body NEDs (attached at [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#)) and the [Code of Conduct for Board members](#).

Desirable criteria

- A record of achievement in a Non-Executive role.
- Practical experience of complex payment systems and IT procurement
- Farming or related industries knowledge and experience.

Personal Attributes

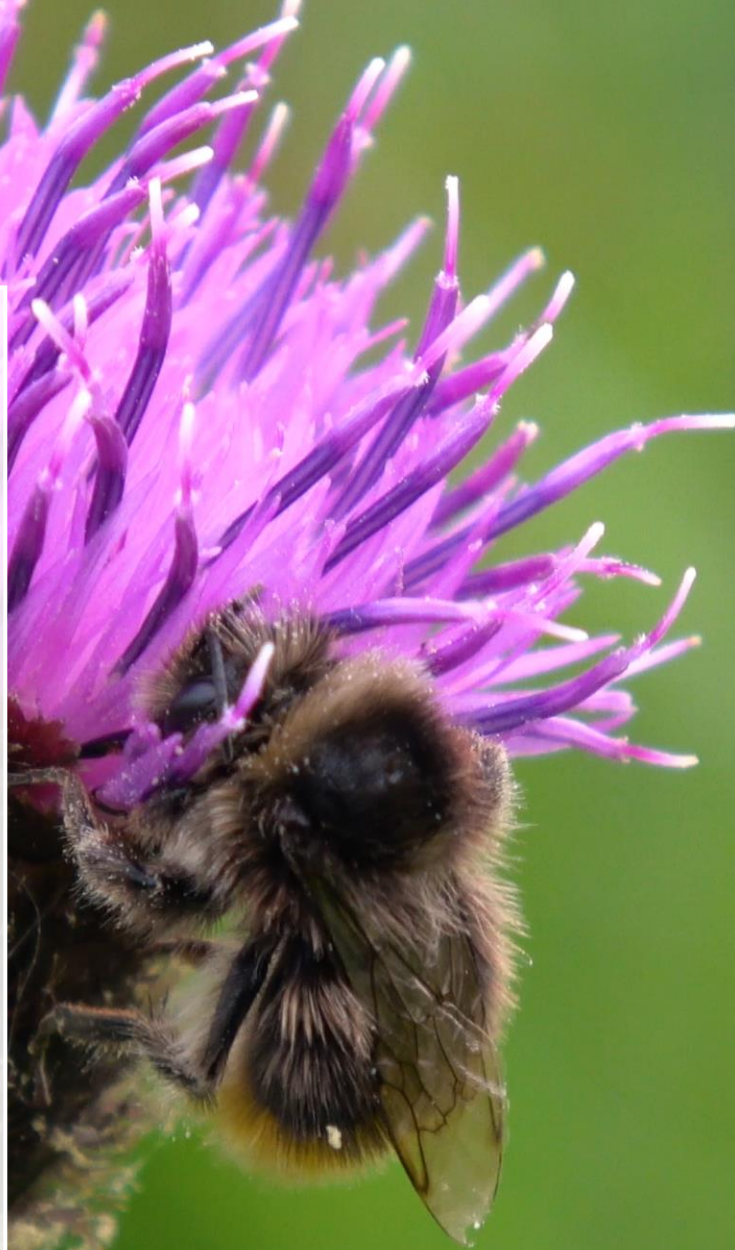
- Demonstrates unwavering integrity, probity, and high ethical standards, underpinned by a strong grasp of governance principles and control systems, and the ability to apply them appropriately and effectively.
- Possesses the ability to maintain perspective, identify critical issues, and engage in intelligent questioning, constructive debate, and rigorous challenge.
- Brings independence of thought and sound judgement, offering impartial, objective, and pragmatic advice.
- Exhibits the strength of character required to seek and secure comprehensive and satisfactory answers within a Board environment.
- Highly effective communicator with strong relationship-building skills, including the ability to influence, negotiate, challenge appropriately, and listen with sensitivity and respect.
- Committed to the Seven Principles of Public Life, with the dedication and availability to invest the necessary time to understand the organisation's dynamics and strategic context.



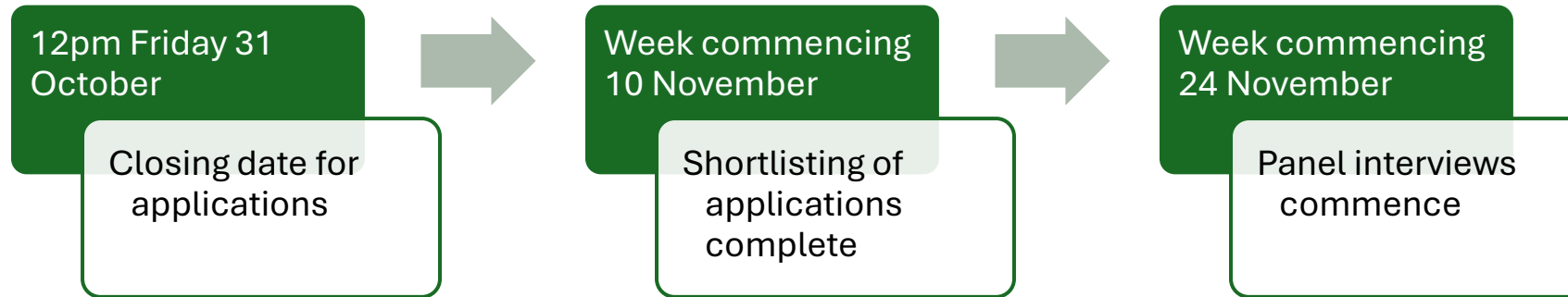
Time commitment

You will be expected to devote approximately 20 days for the Non-Executive Director roles and 25 days for the ARAC Chair per year to your duties. This allows for attendance at Board meetings, involvement in Board sub-committees, associated preparation time and other ad hoc Management Board events/advisory support to executives. Meetings generally take place either at RPA's main sites or virtually via MS Teams. Remuneration will be £500 per day along with reimbursement of travel and subsistence.

The successful candidates will be appointed for a period of two, three or four years to ensure long-term continuity of the board.



The recruitment process



The closing date for applications is noon on Friday 31 October. We expect to have these shortlisted by week commencing 10 November with Panel interviews during week commencing 24 November. It is essential that your statement of suitability gives full but concise information relevant to the appointment, clearly demonstrating how you meet each of the essential criteria.

The Advisory Assessment Panel will consist of Adrian Belton (Non-Executive Chair of RPA Management Board) as Chair, Mike Rowe (Director of Farming & Countryside Programme) an independent panel member.

Interviews are expected to take place at one of RPA's main sites. Further details about the format will be provided in advance.

You will be able to claim reasonable travel expenses incurred travelling to and from the interview (please note you may be asked to justify travelling costs if RPA considers the claims excessive). Please let RPA know beforehand if you are likely to claim, along with the approximate costs by contacting CEO.Secretariat@rpa.gov.uk

How to apply

In order to apply you will need to [create an account](#) or [sign in](#). Once you are logged into your account, click on '**apply for this role**' and follow the on-screen instructions. Completed applications should be submitted by the deadline of **midday on Friday 31 October 2025**.

To apply, all candidates are required to provide:

- a Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- a supporting statement or no more than 1,000 words, setting out how you meet the essential criteria – make sure you refer to the contents of this document and provide specific examples
- diversity information
- information relating to any outside interests or reputational issues

Candidates are encouraged to have an informal conversation with RPA's Non-Executive AMB Chair, Adrian Belton, prior to submitting their application. Please contact Alison Morgan (alison.morgan@rpa.gov.uk) to arrange this.

You will also have the opportunity to make a reasonable adjustment request or apply under the disability confident scheme before you submit your application.

The Advisory Assessment Panel reserves the right to only consider applications that contain all of the elements listed above, and that arrive before the published deadline for applications.



Ineligibility criteria, conflicts of interest and due diligence

You cannot be considered for a public appointment if:

- you become bankrupt or make an arrangement with creditors;
- your estate has been sequestrated in Scotland or you enter into a debt arrangement programme under Part 1 of the Debt Arrangement and Attachment (Scotland) Act 2002 (asp 17) as the debtor or have, under Scots law, granted a trust deed for creditors;

you are disqualified from acting as a company director under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986;

- you have been convicted of a criminal offence; the conviction not being spent for the purposes of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (c. 53);
- you become subject to a debt relief order or a bankruptcy restrictions order;
- you fail to declare any conflict of interest.

If you have any interests that might be relevant to the work of RPA, and which could lead to a real or perceived conflict of interest if you were to be

appointed, please provide details in your application. If you have queries about this and would like to discuss further, please contact CEO.Secretariat@rpa.gov.uk

Given the nature of public appointments, it is important that those appointed as members of public bodies maintain the confidence of Parliament and the public. If there are any issues in your personal or professional history that could, if you were appointed, be misconstrued, cause embarrassment, or cause public confidence in the appointment to be jeopardised, it is important that you bring them to the attention of the Advisory Assessment Panel and provide details of the issue(s) in your application.

In considering whether you wish to declare any issues, you should also reflect on any public statements you have made, including through social media.

As part of our due diligence checks we will consider anything in the public domain related to your conduct or professional capacity. This will include us undertaking searches of previous public statements and social media, blogs, or any other publicly available information. This information may be made available to the Advisory Assessment Panel, and they may wish to explore issues with you should you be invited to interview. The information may also be shared with ministers.

Data Protection

Defra is committed to protecting the privacy and security of your personal information and does so in accordance with data protection law including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). All the information you provide will be used to proceed with the public appointment listed in this information pack and in the case of diversity monitoring information may be anonymised and used solely for monitoring purposes.

For more information about the way we collect and hold your information, please read the Privacy Notice accessible through the Cabinet Office's Public Appointments Website (<https://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk>) or request a copy of Defra's Public Appointments Privacy Notice from publicappts@defra.gov.uk.

Annex A – The Seven Principles of Public Life

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

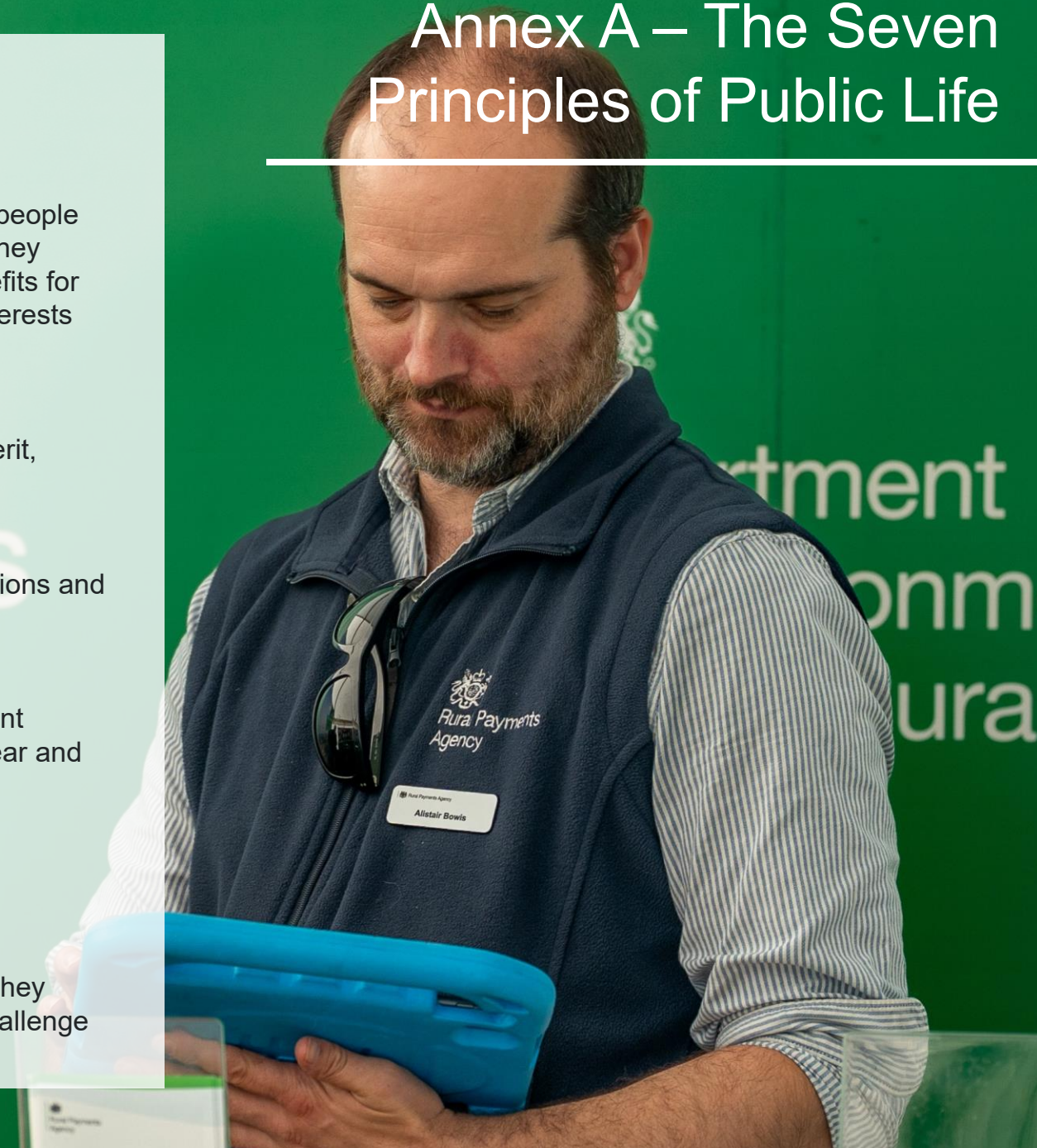
Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.





Annex B – 12 Principles of Governance for Public Body NEDs

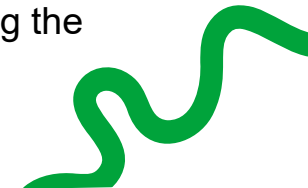
1. Expertise

- Consider and act in the best interests of your organisation and its objectives; delivering the outcomes expected by your sponsor department, ministers and ultimately the public.
- Consider the broader mission and duties of your sponsoring Secretary of State, his or her Department and the Government.
- Ensure compliance with statutory duties and the organisation's Framework Document and act within its powers.
- Exercise reasonable care, skill, and diligence in the exercise of their authority and judgement.

2. Scrutiny and challenge

- Maintain independence from the executive to allow scrutiny of management and in meetings agree goals and objectives and monitor performance and the reporting of performance so that the public who use your organisation receive a high-quality service.
- Satisfy yourself on the integrity of budget setting to deliver objectives and financial information and reporting against budgets, and that financial controls and systems of risk management are robust and defensible. Meet the requirements of Managing Public Money, including supporting the Accounting Officer in fulfilling their duties to provide propriety and value for money in the use of public funds.
- Champion high standards of risk management by ensuring your organisation has effective risk reporting, controls and governance, risk expertise and risk tolerances to effectively manage risk.
- Represent your organisation to the department and to Ministers, as well as ensuring Ministers' views are considered by the executive team of the organisation, as appropriate.

3. Support

- Support the board in succession planning and be prepared to put yourself up for re-appointment, as well as promoting the need for a diverse board.
 - Participate in and promote regular reviews of your organisation, as well as the board's own effectiveness, with particular focus on the organisation's purposes and its efficiency in meeting these purposes. Engage in the appraisal process, including self-reflection on your own abilities.
 - Listen carefully to, ask appropriate questions of and support management to encourage discussion in a manner that promotes a culture where all perspectives are listened to, while fulfilling the individual Director's duties and responsibilities and respecting and valuing the expertise of the executive team.
 - Promote the success of the entity having regard to the interests of all members and stakeholders, and all risks
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