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Permitting Officer

Candidate Information Pack

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

<http://www.gov.uk/environment-agency>

Job title: Permitting Officer
Job location: Warrington
Date: 22 January 2018
Reference: 7445

Contents

1. Our organisation
2. The role
3. Salary and benefits
4. Further information
5. How to apply





1. Our organisation

Our organisation

We are the Environment Agency. We protect and improve the environment. Acting to reduce the impacts of a changing climate on people and wildlife is at the heart of everything we do. We reduce the risks to people, properties and businesses from flooding and coastal erosion. We protect and improve the quality of water, making sure there is enough for people, businesses, agriculture and the environment. Our work helps to ensure people can enjoy the water environment through angling and navigation. We look after land quality, promote sustainable land management and help protect and enhance wildlife habitats. And we work closely with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations. We can't do this alone. We work with government, local councils, businesses, civil society groups and communities to make our environment a better place for people and wildlife.

Of course, none of this will be possible without the professionalism and dedication of our staff. We're committed to helping our people to find new ways of working and to maintain our focus on creating a better place for people and wildlife. For more information on the Environment Agency and what we do, please visit:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/aboutus





2. The role

Role

Being a Permitting Officer is one of the most important roles at the Environment Agency. As a Permitting Officer, you will assess applications for a range of environmental permits located across the country, carrying out technical assessments according to Environment Agency processes and regulatory obligations. By setting appropriate standards during the permitting process, you will enable businesses to operate while protecting and improving air, water and land quality.

You'll pro-actively manage your own workload, seeking support and escalating issues as appropriate, to deliver high quality environmental permitting decisions to tight deadlines. To achieve this, you'll have excellent interpersonal skills to develop and maintain excellent working relationships with internal and external customers. You must be prepared to have challenging conversations with your customers and be able to clearly explain your decisions. You'll also provide mentoring and coaching support to others.

In exchange for your hard work, you'll have the opportunity to further develop your skills, expertise and career in this fast-paced environment, for example by taking on a lead role or getting involved in project work, such as a permit review programme.

The role is office based, although you may be required to travel occasionally to attend meetings, training and site visits.

What skills do you need?

As a Permitting Officer, you will need a number of key skills and personal characteristics. You'll need to be able to:

- Make sound and timely decisions
- Integrate into a team
- Work independently when required
- Organise your workload
- Adapt your behaviour and communication style to different people and situations
- Build strong relationships with a diverse range of people
- Mentor and coach others
- Be computer literate

Top capabilities

As part of the application and interview process, we'll be looking for you to tell us how you:

- Achieve results
- Take decisions and solve problems
- Focus on customers and partners
- Communicate effectively
- Coach others

Please refer to the **Capability Dictionary** appended to this candidate pack, for further information.

What experience do you need?

It is not essential that you have experience of environmental permitting. However, you should have some experience in environmental management and environmental risk assessment. You would ideally also be (or be working towards becoming) a chartered member of a relevant environmental institute or (for Environment Agency staff only) a Practising Environmental Regulator. We also value experience in a customer-focussed role, where you have had to have difficult conversations with others.

Is this the right career for you?

The Permitting Officer role is varied and demanding, but it is very rewarding too. As with all jobs, some people are better suited to the role than others.

To help you decide if this is the right career for you, we've put together a few examples of situations that you might find yourself in as a Permitting Officer. You won't encounter these types of situations every single day, of course. An honest description of the role and tasks will help you to decide if it is something you'll enjoy doing. If you are not sure whether the job is really for you, ask yourself – and be honest – about how you would react to these situations having received the relevant training and development.

- You do not have sufficient information to progress a permit application despite already requesting further information from the applicant. You know that the applicant has been waiting a long time and needs the permit to secure a contract. You need to decide whether you request the information again or return the application and ask them to reapply when they have the correct information, knowing that this may mean that they lose out on the contract.
- You have to make a decision on an environmental permit application when you have conflicting information and / or there is no clear policy.

- A pressure group is unhappy with your decision to grant an environmental permit and has said that they will be pursuing a Judicial Review. You need to be prepared to defend your decision at a hearing.
- You are asked to attend a community engagement event where you will have to explain to a range of stakeholders, including locals who are upset about the prospect of a new chicken farm in their village, how we go about assessing an environmental permit application and how they can get involved in the permitting process.

One of the great things about being a Permitting Officer is that you will be able to see how you've made a difference. The decisions that you'll make will have an outcome and a clear impact on the environment and on business. Here's what else you can expect to get involved in as a Permitting Officer:

- The opportunity to work on a huge range of permit applications - varying in industry type, size and complexity – no two sites are ever the same!
- A continual and varied development programme to help you continually grow your knowledge.
- Working with operators to make environmental improvements on site e.g. increasing stack height to reduce air emissions, cleaning up contaminated land, reducing use of raw materials or improving water quality through better treatment.
- Undertaking permit reviews to ensure that all operators meet the strictest environmental standards.

3. Salary and benefits

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

Grade Rate: £27,138

Location: Richard Fairclough House, Knutsford Road, Warrington, WA4 1HT

Hours of work: 37 hours FTE

Leave entitlement: Your leave allowance in this role will be 25 days plus bank holidays pro-rata.

We also offer up to two days paid environmental outcome days each year. These give you the opportunity to take part in community activities with a clear environmental outcome for people and wildlife.

Pension: We will enrol you into the Environment Agency Pension Fund (EAPF) on commencing employment, if your employment contract is for 3 months or more. The EAPF is part of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). It is a career average scheme, which means you will build up benefits based on your pay each scheme year rather than your final salary.

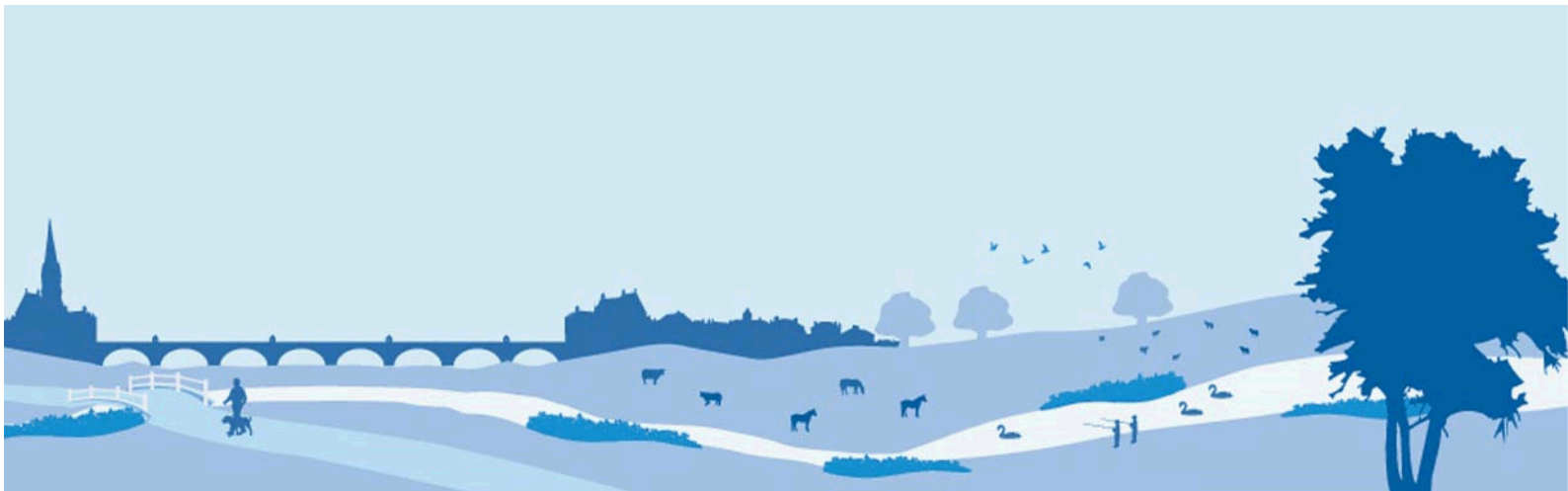
We will base your pension contributions on your actual pay and you will receive tax and national insurance relief on your contributions. The pension contribution rates currently range between 5.5% and 12.5%. Whilst you are in the scheme, we will also pay an employer contribution into your pension pot. We currently pay 17.5%, so this is a very generous scheme.

Work/life balance: We support flexible working hours and practices to help you strike a good balance between your work life and your personal life. We will also encourage you to keep developing your skills and professional knowledge throughout your career.

Diversity: We are committed to diversity and inclusion. We want all our staff to feel valued and respected and to see this as a great place to work. Diversity: it's in our nature.

Relocation: If you need to relocate to take up this role, we might be able to offer financial help with this. This will depend on your circumstances, so if

it's something you are interested in, please discuss it with us to find out what the options are.



4. Further information

For further information, please contact:

Rachel Sauce, Permitting Team Leader - 02030250948-rachel.sauce@environment-agency.gov.uk

Maria Gibbons, Permitting Team Leader - 02030250810-maria.gibbons@environment-agency.gov.uk

Please note that these roles will primarily be office based, although infrequent travel will be required to attend meetings and / or training.

We expect to hold interviews in Warrington, week commencing 5th March 2018

We are fully committed to having an inclusive workforce to reflect the communities we serve. We welcome applications from candidates seeking flexible working patterns, including job share. Please highlight any information regarding preferred flexible working arrangements on your application.

Please note that Environment Agency employees are not civil servants so you may wish to check your eligibility for continuity of employment by contacting your HR department. All eligible bodies are listed in the Redundancy Payments (Continuity of Employment in Local Government etc) (Modification) Order 1999.

Employment agency workers and contractors are considered to be external candidates and should therefore only apply for positions that are being advertised externally. They are also not eligible to claim continuity of employment should they be successful in securing a position with the Environment Agency.

To find out more about what it's like to work at the Environment Agency, please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency/about/recruitment>

<http://www.gov.uk/environment-agency>

Please note all successful applicants must undergo Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) checks prior to commencement of employment. This includes a basic criminal records check.

For the great majority of roles in the Environment Agency 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.

5. How to apply

We use an online recruitment system. To make the application process simple and straightforward, and so that you know how it works and what we need from you, we've put together a few hints and tips.

The first thing you need to do is sign up to our online recruitment system. You'll need a valid e-mail address to log in and apply for jobs, as all communication from us will be via e-mail. You can do this via the vacancy you are interested in by selecting '**Apply**' at the bottom of the advert. Once you've clicked this link you'll then be asked:

1. Do you have the right to live and work in the UK?
2. Do you have the required qualifications or equivalent experience, which were stated in the job advert?
3. Are you currently an employee of this organisation?

Simply answer yes or no and then continue with your application. You'll then see the 'Register' page. Simply complete the details and select 'Submit Registration' and register to the system. You only need to sign up to the system once; you'll just be able to login next time. You can then carry on with your application.

When it comes to the actual application, you need to fill out each section. Please be aware that the system will **automatically time out** if you are inactive for more than 20 minutes. This will result in any unsaved information being lost, so please make sure you save what you are doing regularly. Once you've finished, your details and information will be saved on the system for any future applications – of course, you can edit your details at any point.

When you apply to the Environment Agency for a job we will ask you to provide your personal data on our application form. We need this information so that we can establish your identity and your right to work in the UK. You can read our Data Protection Statement on the application process page of our recruitment system. It is also available for reference on each page of the actual application.

Capability questions

We're keen to know what makes you right for the job you're applying for and why we should invite you for an interview. The capability questions are your chance to convince us! You should demonstrate how your skills, qualities and experience meet the requirements of the job (as described in the job advert and this candidate pack). Instead of simply telling us, show us: use real life examples of where you've used a certain skill or how you've practically applied your experience.

There's a 250 word limit per question. It's a **crucial** part of the selection process so make sure you dedicate plenty of time to completing this part of the application form. Think about what we need to know about you and what you'd bring to the role and our organisation.

How to prepare your answers for a capability based application

Capabilities are high level descriptions of key behaviours, skills and knowledge that underpin effective performance. They are the behaviours, skills and knowledge employees must have, or must acquire, to achieve high levels of performance. Please refer to the **Top Capabilities** document (attached to the vacancy) that describes our capability framework in further detail.

Capability questions target a specific skill, so we will be looking for some key components in your answer:

- an indication that **you** understand the importance of that capability to the role for which you have applied
- evidence that **you** understand the fundamental skills associated with that capability
- an **example** that highlights your possession of that capability
- an awareness from **you** of how the critical skills will be used to good effect in the new role

The STAR approach

STAR stands for:

- **S**ituation
- **T**ask
- **A**ction
- **R**esult

The STAR approach is a universally-recognised communication technique designed to enable you to provide a meaningful and complete answer to questions asking for examples and it has the advantage of being simple.

Step 1: Situation or Task

Describe the situation that you were confronted with or the task that needed to be accomplished. With the STAR approach you need to set the context. Make it concise and informative, concentrating solely on what is useful to the story. For example, if the question is asking you to describe a situation where you had to deal with a difficult person, explain how you came to meet that person and why they were being difficult. If the question is asking for an example of teamwork, explain the task that you had to undertake as a team.

Step 2: Action

This is the most important section of the STAR approach as it is where you will need to demonstrate and highlight the skills and personal attributes that the question is testing. Now that you have set the context of your story, you need to explain what **you** did. In doing so, you will need to remember the following:

1. Talk about yourself, not the rest of the team.
2. Go into detail.
3. Steer clear of technical information, unless it is crucial to your story.
4. Explain **what** you did, **how** you did it and **why** you did it.

What, how and why

When we shortlist your application, we would like to know how you reacted to the situation. This is where you can start selling your skills. For example, you may want to describe how you used the team to achieve what you wanted and how you used your communication skills to keep everyone updated on progress, etc.

This is probably the most crucial part of your answer. We want to know that you are using a variety of transferrable skills in order to achieve your objectives. You must be able to demonstrate in your answer that you took specific actions because you were trying to achieve what you wanted, and that things didn't happen simply by chance.

When discussing a situation where you had to deal with conflict, a good answer might provide an example of how you intervened to diffuse the situation, how you approached it with consideration for both yourself and others. For example:

"I could sense that my colleague was irritated and I asked him gently to tell me what he felt the problem was. By allowing him to vent his feelings and his anger, I gave him the opportunity to calm down. I then explained to him my own point of view on the matter, emphasising how important it was that we found a solution that suited us both."

This answer helps us understand what drove your actions and reinforces the feeling that you are considering the needs of others before acting. It provides much more information about you as an individual and is another reason why the STAR approach is so useful.

Step 3: Result

Explain the positive outcome of your action(s) – how it all ended. Use the opportunity to describe what you **accomplished** and what you **learnt** in that situation. This helps you make the answer personal and enables you to highlight further skills.

An example

For example, a strong answer to this capability question might be constructed in the following way:

“Can you tell us of an occasion when you demonstrated strong leadership in order to produce a positive outcome?”

1. Consider an introductory sentence or two about the importance of strong leadership in general terms.
2. Explain what strong leadership looks like to you. Make this personal to you; express an opinion on leadership rather than regurgitate leadership theory.
3. Talk about how you exhibited strong leadership. Draw upon a couple of real life examples which shows good evidence that you have the skills that you say you do.
4. Don't dwell too much on the details of the situation – word count (and time in interviews) is limited; we want to hear about what you did and how you contributed, added value, and drew on your skills, and how your leadership intervention was critical.
5. Discuss how these skills would transfer to the new position that you are applying for.

The key in answering all capability questions is that you are required to **demonstrate** that you have the right skills by using an example (or examples) based on your work or life experience, and not just talk about the topic in a theoretical, general or impersonal manner.

How are the capability answers scored?

Answers are scored on scale of one to seven, with seven being the highest score:

Score	Category	Comment
1	Not demonstrated	No positive evidence
2	Minimal demonstration	Limited positive evidence
3	Moderate demonstration	Moderate positive evidence
4	Acceptable demonstration	Adequate positive evidence
5	Good demonstration	Substantial positive evidence
6	Strong demonstration	Substantial, positive evidence of the capability and includes some evidence of exceeding expectations
7	Outstanding demonstration	Evidence provided wholly exceeds expectation at this level

The minimum benchmark score for each answer is four, but to stand out from the crowd you should be aiming for a score of five or above.

It should be noted that the score is cumulative. This means that if an application is

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scored over three capability questions, the minimum score needed to be considered for interview will be 12 (three times four). If you score highly on two of the capabilities but poorly on the third, you may still pass the minimum benchmark score of 12.

How we shortlist

We will shortlist your application based on the information you've provided in your application form. If you choose to attach your CV (this is not necessary), please note that your **CV is not visible to us at the shortlisting stage**.

Application questions

For some roles, we'll ask you some specific questions, like if you have a preferred work location. If you're disabled and you'd like to be part of our Guaranteed Interview Scheme, you can add this information in here.

Equality and Diversity

We're committed to reflecting the communities we serve and we'd like you to tell us about yourself and your background.

Submitting your application

Once you've filled out and completed everything, you'll be prompted to submit your application. Simply click the button and you're done. If, at any stage, you have questions or problems, please contact the recruitment team on 0845 602 6099 or email ea_recruitment@sscl.gse.gov.uk

Sign up for job alerts

If you have been unsuccessful with your application you can set up email alerts for future vacancies. You will automatically receive an email when a job that matches your criteria becomes available. To do this simply click on '**create a new job alert**', enter your job criteria and save.



