

INFORMATION BOOKLET

Open Competition for Appointment to the Position of

Ecologist (Senior)

Closing date for applications

27 June 2025 @ 3.00pm

June 2025

AN BORD PLEANÁLA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES EMPLOYER

Senior Ecologist 2025

An Bord Pleanála

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TITLE OF POSITION: Ecologist (Senior) Permanent Position

GRADE: Professional Engineer Grade 1

NATURE OF POST Permanent, full-time position

LOCATION: 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1

Background Information

An Bord Pleanála plays a critical role in the Irish planning system and has a quasi-judicial role in deciding appeals of planning decisions made by local authorities, direct applications for strategic infrastructure and other categories of development. An Bord Pleanála is a quasi-judicial body with a mandate to provide high quality professional planning assessments and decisions in a timely manner having regard to the principles of transparency, impartiality, and independence.

The wider and increased operational demands on An Bord Pleanála will require a newly focused organisational approach to enable effective operation of the systems and procedures of the Board. This follows the Office of the Planning Regulator Review¹ and the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage's Action Plan for An Bord Pleanála² (October 2022), alongside proposed structural changes which will arise from legislative reform currently underway in expected new primary and secondary legislation.

Further details on the role and work of An Bord Pleanála can be found at www.pleanala.ie

The appointed senior ecologist will be a member of the Planning Operational Division working on cases which come before the Board under the provisions of the

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¹ Office of the Planning Regulator Publishes Report on Second Phase of An Bord Pleanála Review - The Office of the Planning Regulator (opr.ie)

² gov.ie - Minister O'Brien publishes Action Plan for reform of An Bord Pleanála (www.gov.ie)

Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended and the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 and accompanying regulations.

The senior Ecologist will be required to provide expert advice, support and input, where required, to the inspectorate and the Board in relation to biodiversity and ecological assessments and particularly in the relation to Appropriate Assessment and/or Environmental Impact Assessments in accordance with national and European legislation evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development. Expertise in ornithology (terrestrial and/or marine), protected species, freshwater ecology or marine ecology would be particularly beneficial.

They will also be responsible for organising training initiatives as well as knowledge sharing and communicating the latest advances in their area of expertise as well as guiding and mentoring the inspectorate.

Staff Structure and Reporting Relationships

An Bord Pleanála currently has over 290 employees including 15 full time Board members. An organogram is included at the end of this booklet (Appendix 1).

The specialist roles are Senior Planning Inspector equivalents and will be members of the Environmental Unit within the Planning Operations Division with a day-to-day reporting relationship to an Assistant Director. The role will also involve interaction with the Directors of Planning, other Assistant Directors, Senior Planning Inspectors, Planning Inspectors, other environmental and ecological specialists, planning administration sections, board members and staff across the organisation.

Current Organisational Context

An Bord Pleanála upholds its standing as the independent arbiter of planning and sustainable development matters in Ireland. The challenging organisational context encompasses the following:

- Implementation of recommendations arising from the review by the Office of the Planning Regulator and the Minister's Action Plan of October 2022.
- Implementation of the provisions of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 to deal with the range of significant Marine infrastructural development applications as specified in the Act, together with the proposed developments

- coming under the Climate Action Plan relating to the marine environment and renewable energy sector.
- Implementation of the comprehensive planning legislation reform which significantly reforms the Board under the recently enacted Planning and Development Act.
- Strategic infrastructure developments relating to energy, transport, waste, and other facilities expected in the coming years.
- Large Scale Residential Developments (LRD) appeals arising from the Planning and Development (Amendment) (Largescale Residential Development) Act 2021 and the challenges associated with these new case types.
- An increasingly complex planning regulatory environment with an emphasis on environmental protection, including protection of habitats and biodiversity.
- Ongoing implementation of the new Case Management System project providing a bespoke case management system for the organisation.
- Enhanced on-line services to the public and GIS capabilities.
- Imperatives for change and reform initiatives to drive improved outcomes across the public sector.
- Adapting to and meeting the challenges presented by a new blended working environment.
- Continual performance improvement with regard to the operational requirements of An Bord Pleanála.

Key Responsibilities

This is a senior role, and the ecologist will be expected to provide expert advice and support, where required, to the inspectorate in the preparation of Appropriate Assessment and/or Environmental Impact Assessments in accordance with national and European legislation.

Responsibilities will include but are not limited to, the following:

Operational

 Provide sound expert ecological technical support, professional advice and analysis to the inspectorate and Board in relation to specific cases and issues, particularly biodiversity, ornithology, environmental and/or marine matters,

- Environmental Impact Assessment, Appropriate Assessment, Ecological Impact Assessment and the Water Framework Directive;
- Assist in the reporting of Planning Appeals, Strategic Infrastructure
 Development, Marine and Climate cases including participation in pre-application consultation meetings as required;
- Assist in the reporting and assessment on proposed developments, where required, arising from such consultations;
- Development of in-house training materials and guidance documents and organising appropriate training modules with the inspectorate and Board;
- Deliver support and guidance to staff and professional planners in An Bord Pleanála, setting excellent standards of knowledge and best practice in a rapidly evolving environment;
- Ensuring access to high quality technical/environmental and/or marine data,
 information and guidance within An Bord Pleanála;
- Assist the inspectorate in identifying when assistance is required from our external panels of specialist consultants and provide technical support to the inspector in calling upon this expertise.
- Keeping abreast of best practice and new developments in biodiversity and ecological/environmental impact assessment and Appropriate Assessment, policies and legislation at a national and international level, including judgements in the European and Irish Courts;
- Ensure expertise is appropriate to handle all stages of priority in complex casework;
- Be available for consultation with the Directors of Planning, any other Directors and Assistant Directors, Planning Inspectors, Board members and Administrative staff on a daily basis.

Where expertise allows, specialists may be asked to:

- Carry out technical ecological assessments in the context of Environmental Impact Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and the Water Framework Directive:
- Identify data sources and collate, analyse and interpret data;
- Review survey work and advise on methodological approaches in submitted planning applications;

- Write technical papers and issue recommendations;
- Contribute to discussions about changes to policy and legislation, as may be required (and in liaison with relevant Government Departments through the Assistant Director);
- Mentor and advise the inspectorate on issues relating to technical and environmental matters, including EIA, AA and biodiversity.
- Provide input to training initiatives;
- Peer review of inspectors reports in relation to environmental matters.

Continual Improvement of Organisation

- Partake in groups/committees as required, which are established for the many consultation functions which the staff perform, e.g. Planning Operational Division Committees, Inspectorate Committees, working groups, monthly inspectorate meetings, etc.
- Carry out research/analyses as required either individually or as a member of a team and as directed by the Directors of Planning and/or the Assistant Directors. This may involve mentoring student research projects.
- Contribute to developing and implementing in-house CPD/training initiatives.
- Contribute to initiatives to support public sector reform and continuous improvement in areas of expertise.

Qualifications and Experience

Essential Requirements

Candidates must on or before 27 June 2025:

- An Honours Degree (level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications or equivalent) in
 - Zoology
 - Botany
 - Ecology/Ornithology
 - Marine Ecology
 - Marine Science
 - other equivalent

The above is not an exhaustive list of the qualifications which may be suitable to the post.

- II. A minimum of **7 years post-qualification** experience within the relevant area of expertise, **at least two years** of which must relate to the preparation /management/review of statutory Environmental Impact Assessment and/or Appropriate Assessment processes and associated environmental reports and the interpretation and implementation of relevant environmental policies and legislation as a key day-to-day responsibility.
- III. Be able to demonstrate an understanding of the terrestrial and/or marine ecological constraints and challenges associated with a wide range of projects that come before the board including renewable energy and other large-scale projects.
- IV. Be a member or eligible for membership of the professional body relevant to their area of qualifications and / or expertise.
- V. Have knowledge of planning, its nature, objective, and place in public policy in Ireland and in the international context.

Desirable Qualifications

Specialist expertise and/ or post graduate qualifications in the following areas would be particularly beneficial.

- Ornithology
- Protected species/mammals/marine mammals
- Freshwater ecology
- Marine Ecology
- Marine Science

Essential Experience

Note: applicants with similar experience from other jurisdictions (and who meet the 'eligibility to compete' requirements set out further on in this document) will also be considered / are encouraged to apply

- Have expert knowledge and experience on environmental issues and relevant legislation both at national and European levels including knowledge and experience of Irish (or similar European) policy as it relates to EIA, AA and/or WFD.
- Have knowledge of the Planning and Development Act and the role,
 responsibilities and issues arising for An Bord Pleanála under this legislation.
- Have working knowledge of the Climate Act 2021, and Climate Action Plan 2025.
- Have experience of dealing with infrastructural projects, for example, transport, energy infrastructure, water, waste and housing projects.
- Have the ability to assess and analyse complex case work and possess or display good analytical skills in making recommendations to colleagues supporting proper planning and sustainable development, resulting in reports that are clear and concise and are presented to a high standard.
- Have effective oral communication skills coupled with the ability to build strong interpersonal relationships across the organisation and with relevant external stakeholders.
- Have the ability to work without guidance and on own initiative without excessive support.
- Excellent report writing skills.
- Have the ability to manage, plan and organise workload in an efficient and effective way which supports the achievement of overall organisational objectives.

 Have a clear understanding of and commitment to the role of An Bord Pleanála, and the challenges it faces.

Person Specification

The ideal candidate should:

- Be committed to always maintaining professional public sector standards and values.
- Be reliable and flexible with the ability to work on a variety of case types.
- Demonstrate initiative and an interest in furthering the on-going evolution and improvement of the organisation in line with its strategic goals.
- Possess strong interpersonal skills, ability to communicate effectively with senior management, internal and external customers.
- Be thorough and accurate in their work.
- Self-motivated, with a proven ability to get things done and work to deadlines.
- Have the ability to work both individually and as part of a team.
- Have the ability to work without guidance and on own initiative without excessive support.

Key Competencies for Effective Performance (appendix 2)

- Specialist Knowledge Expertise and Self Development.
- Interpersonal and Communication skills.
- Drive and Commitment.

Selection Process

The Selection Process <u>may</u> include some or all of the following:

- A shortlisting of candidates, on the basis of the information contained in their application.
- A competitive interview.

Normally, the number of applications received for a position exceeds that required to fill existing and future posts. While candidates may meet the eligibility criteria of the competition, if the numbers applying for a post are such that it would not be practical to progress all candidates to the next stage of the selection process, An Bord Pleanála may decide that only a certain number may be called for interview.

In this respect, a short-listing process will be employed, based on an examination of the application forms and the essential and desirable requirements for the posts, to select a group for the next stage of the process who appear to be the most suitable for the position. It is, therefore, in your own interest to provide a detailed and accurate account of how your skills, personal qualities, qualifications and experience meet the essential and desirable requirements of the post.

- If candidates are required to attend testing and/or interview(s), it is at their own expense. It is not possible to alter the allocated testing and/or interview date(s) or time(s). Candidates who do not attend for testing and/or interview(s) etc., when, and where required, will have no claim for further consideration and their candidature will be deemed to be withdrawn.
- Any candidate who supplies false or misleading information in their application may be disqualified or have their employment terminated.
- We will endeavour to keep candidates informed of the progress of their application at the earliest possible date.

Candidates should note that canvassing will disqualify and will result in their exclusion from the process.

Application Process

The Senior Ecology Application Form must be fully completed and submitted correctly to the specified e-mail address. Incorrectly submitted application forms will not be accepted, so please note the following information carefully:

The application form must be in an editable Word document or in PDF format. Upon completion, please save the document as "Ecologist - your name.docx". You will be required to attach it to an e-mail for submission once completed.

Submitting the form:

On completion, you are required to submit the form to the following address recruitment@pleanala.ie

Only applications fully completed in the appropriate format and submitted online will be accepted into the competition process. If you have difficultly completing or accessing the application form, please email recruitment@pleanala.ie

We acknowledge receipt of all applications. If you do not receive an acknowledgement within 3 working days of applying, please email s.byrne@pleanala.ie

Please do not submit a Curriculum Vitae with your application as it will not be considered.

Closing Date:

27 June 2025 @ 3.00pm

Please Note

We endeavour to give as much notice as possible for interview dates etc. It is expected, however, interviews would take place during July/August. Candidates should make themselves available around this time.

References

Please consider names of people you feel would be suitable referees that we might consult (2 - 3 names and contact details). The referees should include your current employer. Please be assured that we will only collect the details and contact referees should you come under consideration after the interview stage.

Principal Conditions of Service

General:

The appointment is to an established position in the Public Service. A probationary period of twelve months from the date of appointment will apply. Notwithstanding this paragraph and the paragraph immediately following below, this will not preclude an extension of the probationary period in appropriate circumstances up to a maximum of a further 6 months. During the period of probation, the appointee's performance will be subject to review by an Assistant Director of Planning to determine whether the appointee:

- (I) has performed in a satisfactory manner,
- (ii) has been satisfactory in general conduct, and
- (iii) is suitable from the point of view of health with particular regard to sick leave.

Prior to completion of probation, a decision will be made as to whether or not the appointee will be retained. This decision will be based on the appointee's performance being assessed against the criteria set out in (i) to (iii) above. The detail of the probationary process will be explained to the appointee and the appointee will be given a copy of An Bord Pleanála's guidelines on probation.

Salary:

The salary for this position is as follows: (with effect from 01 March 2025)

Pay - PPC scale

€84,937	€87,605	€90,279	€92,945
€95,611	€98,782	€102,391 (LSI1)	€106,004 (LSI2)

Long Service Increment 1 (LSI1) after 3 years' satisfactory service at the maximum. Long Service Increment 2 (LSI2) after 6 years' satisfactory service at the maximum.

Candidates should note that the rate of remuneration may be adjusted from time to time in line with Government pay policy. Increments may be awarded annually subject to satisfactory performance.

Important Note:

Different pay and conditions may apply, if, <u>immediately prior to appointment</u> the appointee is already a serving Civil Servant or Public Servant.

Payment will be made fortnightly in arrears by Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) into a bank account of an officer's choice. Payment cannot be made until bank details have been supplied.

Tenure:

This position is permanent and pensionable. The employment may be terminated at any time by whichever is the greater of three months' notice in writing on either side, or as set out in the Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Acts, 1973 to 2005. In the event of misconduct, employment may be terminated at any time without notice or payment in lieu of notice. In any other case, any termination of employment by the Board must be for stated reasons.

Duties:

The officer will be required to perform any duties appropriate to the position which may be assigned from time to time.

Organisation of the Working Time Act, 1997:

The terms of the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997, will apply, where appropriate, to this appointment.

Hours of Attendance:

Hours of attendance will be fixed from time to time but will amount to not less than 41 hours 15 minutes gross per week – 35 hours net of lunch breaks. The position holder will be required to work a five-day week. The hours of attendance are normally Monday to Friday 9.15 am to 5.30 pm. However, where extra attendance is required to carry out designated duties or assignments, no overtime or additional remuneration is payable. Blended working is available to staff subject to the requirements of the role and section you are assigned to.

Annual Leave:

The annual leave allowance will be **30** working days a year. This allowance (which is subject to the usual conditions regarding the granting of annual leave) is on the basis of a five-day week and is exclusive of the usual public holidays.

Health:

A candidate for and any person holding the office must be fully competent and capable of undertaking the duties attached to the office and be in a state of health such as would indicate a reasonable prospect of ability to render regular and efficient service. Those under consideration for a position will be required to complete a health and character declaration.

Absence due to illness:

Pay during properly certified sick absence, provided there is no evidence of permanent disability for service, will apply on a pro-rata basis, in accordance with the provisions of the An Bord Pleanála's Absence Management Policy and relevant sick leave circulars as amended from time to time.

Appointees, who will be paying the Class A rate of PRSI, will be required to sign a mandate authorising the Department of Social Protection to pay any benefits due under the Social Welfare Acts direct to An Bord Pleanála. Payment of salary during illness will be subject to the terms and conditions of sick leave in respect of the civil service and/or public service generally and the appointee making the necessary claims for social insurance benefit to the Department of Social Protection within the required time limits.

Assignment/Location:

The successful candidate will be based in the Offices of An Bord Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1 D01 V902. When obliged to travel on official duty the appointee will be paid appropriate travelling expenses and subsistence allowances, subject to normal civil service regulations. Blended working is available subject to operational requirements.

Superannuation

The successful candidate will be offered the appropriate pension terms and conditions as prevailing in An Bord Pleanála at the time of being offered an appointment. In general, and except for candidates who have worked in a pensionable (non-single scheme terms) public service job in the 26 weeks prior to appointment, (please see important note below) this means being offered appointment based on membership of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme ("Single Scheme"). Candidates will be

notified of which scheme will apply to them, at the time of being offered an appointment.

The Single Scheme, as provided for in the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012, came into effect on 1 January 2013. From that date onwards, new public servants will be members of the Single Scheme, which will provide CPI-linked defined-benefit pensions based on career-average pay. The Scheme's minimum pension age will be linked to the State Pension age (66 years initially, rising in line with the state pension age). Retirement for most members will be compulsory on reaching age 70. For further information in relation to the Single Public Service Pension Scheme for Public Servants please see: http://www.per.gov.ie/pensions.

Pension Accrual

A 40-year limit on total service that can be counted towards pension where a person has been a member of more than one existing public service pension scheme will apply. This 40-year limit, which is provided for in the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and other Provisions) Act 2012 came into effect on 28 July 2012. This may have implications for any appointee who has acquired pension rights in a previous public service employment.

Additional Superannuation Contribution (ASC)

This appointment is subject to the ASC in accordance with the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017 which is chargeable on pensionable income only.

Important Note

The above represents the principal conditions of service and is not intended to be the comprehensive list of all terms and conditions of employment, which will be set out in the employment contract to be agreed with the successful candidate.at the time of being offered an appointment, An Bord Pleanála will, in the light of the appointee's employment history, determine whether he or she is a "new entrant". Appointees will be required to disclose their full public service history.

Declaration:

Applicants will be required to declare whether they have previously availed of a public service scheme of incentivised early retirement. Applicants will also be

required to declare any entitlements to a Public Service pension benefit (in payment).

For further information in relation to the pension scheme for Established State Employees please see the following website: http://www.cspensions.gov.ie

Confidentiality and Standards of Behaviour:

An Ecology Specialist is required to comply with the provisions of Sections 113 and 114 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 as amended which relate to the disclosure of confidential information and to the prohibition of certain communications in relation to any matter which falls to be considered or decided by the Board, or any of its committees or consulting groups. The appointee will agree not to disclose to third parties any confidential information either during or subsequent to the period of employment.

Ethics in Public Office Act 1995:

The appointee will be subject to the Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995.

Code of Conduct – Political Activity:

In accordance with the Board's Code of Conduct an Ecologist must make a declaration to the Secretary regarding membership of any political parties.

Staff Requirements:

All employees are required to comply with policies and procedures in place and as may be laid down by the Board from time to time.

Outside Employment:

The position will be whole time and the appointee may not engage in private practice or be connected with any outside business, which conflicts in any way with his/her official duties, impairs performance or compromises his/her integrity.

Eligibility to Compete:

Candidates should note that eligibility to compete is open to citizens of the European Economic Area (EEA). The EEA consists of the Member States of the European Union along with Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway.

Incentivised Scheme for Early Retirement (ISER):

It is a condition of the Incentivised Scheme for Early Retirement (ISER) as set out in Department of Finance Circular 12/09 that retirees, under that Scheme, are debarred from applying for another position in the same employment or the same sector. Therefore, such retirees may not apply for this position.

Department of Health and Children Circular (7/2010):

The Department of Health Circular 7/2010 dated 1 November 2010 introduced a Targeted Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) Scheme and Voluntary Redundancy Schemes (VRS). It is a condition of the VER scheme that persons availing of the scheme will not be eligible for re-employment in the public health sector or in the wider public service or in a body wholly or mainly funded from public moneys. The same prohibition on re-employment applies under the VRS, except that the prohibition is for a period of 7 years, after which time any re-employment will require the approval of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. People who availed of either of these schemes are not eligible to compete in this competition.

Declaration:

Applicants will be required to declare whether they have previously availed of a public service scheme of incentivised early retirement. Applicants will also be required to declare any entitlements to a Public Service pension benefit (in payment or preserved) from any other Public Service employment and/or where they have received a payment-in-lieu in respect of service in any Public Service employment.

GDPR Privacy Statement- Recruitment Process

Purpose of Processing Personal Information

An Bord Pleanála conducts a competency-based recruitment process to fill vacancies within the organisation. To complete this, interested individuals are asked to submit an application form for assessment by an interview panel. For the successful candidate, some of the personal information provided will form the basis of the contract of employment (e.g. name and address) and their personnel file.

<u>Legal Basis for Processing Personal Information</u>

- Necessary for performance of a contract or to enter into such a contract.
- Compliance with legal obligation (Terms of Employment Information Act) 1994
 2014

Recipients

The following shall receive your personal information for reasons outlined below:

Recipient	Reason
HR	Storing application, acknowledging responses, and corresponding
	with applicants
Interview	The Interview Panel will receive your applications to conduct
Panel	shortlisting and assessing of applicants
Referees	Successful candidates will be asked to provide referees who can be
	contacted to validate work records and comment on suitability of the
	applicant for the post applied for. They shall be contacted to
	complete a form and the applicants name/address will need to be
	provided to receive the reference.
Chief	We may use your personal details to refer you to the CMO if any
Medical	issues are highlighted in your Self-Assessment Health form. A copy
Officer	of the declaration form will also be sent to CMO in the event of
(CMO)	referral.

Details of Data Transfers Outside the EU

No data is processed outside the EU.

<u>Automated Decision Making</u>

This does not apply to this process.

Retention Period for Personal Data

Applications shall be retained for 12 months for unsuccessful candidates. A successful candidate will have their application placed on their employee file and retained during their employment and for an appropriate period thereafter.

Your GDPR Rights in Relation to this Process

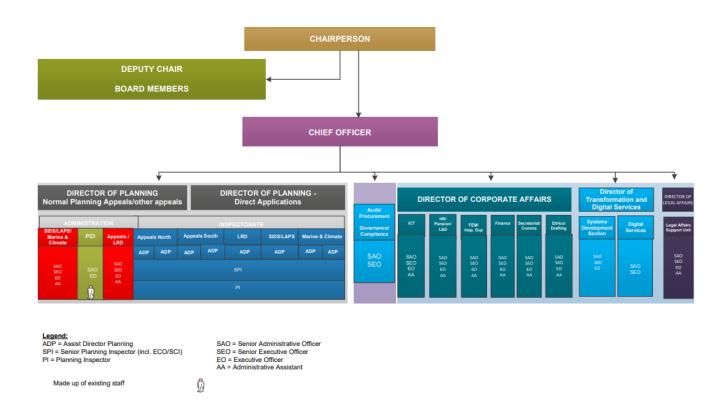
Right	Explanation
Access	You can request and receive access to the information requested
	in the process at any time.
Portability	You can request and receive a copy of this data, in
	electronic/transferable format, at any time
Erasure	You can request the data held be erased. We have outlined the
	anticipated retention period above.
Rectification	You can have any incorrect information, due to this being updated
	or otherwise, to be corrected. It should be noted that deadlines for
	applications still apply so no information except for contact
	information can be changed after the closing date for applications.
Objection	You can object to this information being processed and ask for your
	application to be removed from process.
Complain	You can make a complaint to our internal Data Protection Officer
	(contact details outlined below) and/or make a complaint to the
	relevant supervisory authority – Data Protection Commission in
	Ireland.

Contact Details

Name: Data Protection Officer

Email: <u>dataprotection@pleanala.ie</u>

Appendix 1 – Current An Bord Pleanála Organogram



Appendix 2 – Key Competencies for Effective Performance

Specialist Knowledge, Expertise and Self Development

- Has a clear understanding of the roles, objectives, and targets of self and how they fit into the work of the organization.
- Has a breadth and depth of knowledge in their technical field and how this relates to the Board and is sensitive to wider political and organisational priorities.
- Is considered an expert by stakeholders in own field/ area.
- Is focused on self-development, seeking feedback and opportunities for growth to help carry out the specific requirements of the role.

Interpersonal & communication Skills

- Presents information in a confident, logical, and convincing manner.
- Encourages open and constructive discussions around work issues.
- Promotes teamwork within the section, but also works effectively on projects across the organisations.
- Maintains poise and control when working to influence others.
- Instils a strong focus on Customer Service in his/her area.
- Develops and maintains a network of contacts to facilitate problem solving or information haring.
- Engages effectively with a range of stakeholders.

Drive and commitment

- Is self-motivated and shows a desire to continuously preform at a high level.
- Is personally honest and trustworthy and can be relied upon.
- Ensures that quality customer service is at the heart of all services provided.
- Through leading by example, fosters the highest standards of ethics and integrity.