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# Phytoplankton Taxonomist

Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science

**Apply before 11:55 pm on Monday 9th March 2026**



**Reference number**

446262

**Salary**

£29,744

A Civil Service Pension with an employer contribution of 28.97%

**Job grade**

Executive Officer

**Contract type**

Permanent

**Business area**

CEFAS Science

**Type of role**

Science

**Working pattern**

Flexible working, Full-time, Job share, Part-time

**Number of jobs available**

1

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# Location

Lowestoft

# About the job

## Job summary

We are seeking a motivated and enthusiastic phytoplankton scientist. The successful candidate will contribute to the generation of quality assured phytoplankton data delivering national Official Controls to ensure the safety of bivalve molluscs for consumers, and the health of the environment. The post offers the opportunity to help in maintaining and expanding Cefas scientific capabilities in harmful algal monitoring and ecology. A key aspect of the post is undertaking identification of phytoplankton in water samples, building critical skills in taxonomy and enumeration of marine and freshwater plankton species and reporting of results. The position is based in the Lowestoft microscopy suite, with opportunities to collaborate across Cefas teams and with external partners. After training the postholder will contribute to Cefas strategic science priorities, helping to protect the health of the public, supporting the aquaculture industry and providing evidence for environmental health assessments. Additionally, the post offers opportunities to engage in the research and development of novel monitoring tools and technologies.

The Civil Service is committed to attract, retain and invest in talent wherever it is found. To learn more please see the [Civil Service People Plan](#) and the [Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#).

[Welcome to Cefas \(youtube.com\)](#)

## Job description

Your main duties and responsibilities will include, but are not limited to:

### Phytoplankton taxonomy:

The postholder will provide technical delivery in the field of phytoplankton taxonomy. This will require the use of light microscopes to identify phytoplankton (and other potentially toxic organisms, e.g., cyanobacteria) in environmental samples, to provide cell count data, and to calculate biovolumes. It will also require accurate reporting of results and preparing summaries of findings for short reports.

### **Uphold Cefas quality framework:**

The postholder will work within the ISO 17025 accreditation quality framework, contributing to the ongoing successful delivery of accredited work, the streamlining of processes in compliance with the quality standard, and assisting in the digitising of the phytoplankton monitoring efforts to ensure robust future delivery.

### **Develop Cefas phytoplankton monitoring capabilities:**

The postholder will contribute to the growth of Cefas expertise in phytoplankton monitoring by working alongside researchers in the development, deployment and testing of new technologies and techniques within the field of phytoplankton ecology.

### **Develop technical skills:**

Phytoplankton taxonomy is a valuable technical skill which requires specialist training to achieve. The postholder will be supported with extensive in role training as well as the opportunity to participate in the IOC UNESCO international training programme on Harmful Algal identification.

In addition, Cefas reserves the right to ask staff to take on additional duties and responsibilities which are commensurate with their grade. Management will have a discussion with staff to explain the changes that are to be made. A new job description will be issued if required.

## **Person specification**

### **Person specification and essential criteria section**

The following are essential criteria required for this post and you must be able to demonstrate your skills and experience in the following areas:

Experience, work or education, in the field of phytoplankton taxonomy or ecology.

Ability to use light microscopy to visualise samples.

Experience or understanding of internationally recognised formal quality frameworks (e.g., ISO or GLP).

Excellent communication and teamwork skills, with a collaborative approach to working.

Competence in Microsoft Office programmes such as Excel and Word.

## **Behaviours**

We'll assess you against these behaviours during the selection process:

Delivering at Pace

Developing Self and Others

Working Together

We only ask for evidence of these behaviours on your application form:

Delivering at Pace

## **Benefits**

Alongside your salary of £29,744, Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science contributes £8,616 towards you being a member of the Civil Service Defined Benefit Pension scheme. [Find out what benefits a Civil Service Pension provides.](#)

Generous annual leave entitlement Cefas offers 25 days' annual leave on entry (rising to 30 days over first 5yrs) for full-time new entrants to the Civil

Service Employees receive 8 public holidays a year, plus an additional day to mark the King's birthday.

Access to learning and development tailored to your role.

A working environment that supports a range of flexible working options.

A working culture which encourages inclusion and diversity.

Eligible to join the Civil Service Pension scheme more information can be found on the CSP website <http://www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk/>

Skills and Personal Effectiveness Allowances (SPEA) to recognise the development of capability and enhanced responsibility that it is possible to build up over time spent working at a particular grade (minimum of two years). These are non-consolidated.

Biannual Personal Performance Payments (non-consolidated) linked to individual performance.

Spot Performance Payments (non-consolidated) linked to outstanding work delivered, outstanding results achieved or outstanding contribution.

## Things you need to know

### Artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence can be a useful tool to support your application, however, all examples and statements provided must be truthful, factually accurate and taken directly from your own experience. Where plagiarism has been identified (presenting the ideas and experiences of others, or generated by artificial intelligence, as your own) applications may be withdrawn and internal candidates may be subject to disciplinary action. Please see our [candidate guidance \(opens in a new window\)](#) for more information on appropriate and inappropriate use.

### Selection process details

This vacancy is using [Success Profiles \(opens in a new window\)](#), and will assess your Behaviours and Experience.

### Application Process

As part of the application process you are asked to provide a CV (job history, qualifications, past skills and experience), a maximum 750-word personal statement on how you meet the essential criteria as stated in the person specification and essential criteria section, and a maximum 250-word response to the advertised question below concerning the advertised lead behaviour Delivering at Pace.

Further details around what this will entail are listed on the application form.

The question for applicants to respond to on their application form is:

**Describe a situation where you had to manage multiple priorities. How did you ensure everything was completed on time?**

For guidance on Civil Service Success Profiles, this video tells you what you'll need to provide throughout the assessment process with supporting guidance on each step. Link [Success Profiles - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/success-profiles)

For guidance on how to construct your CV, you are encouraged to visit Civil Service Careers. Link - [CV](#)

For guidance on how to construct your personal statement, you are encouraged to visit Civil Service Careers. Link [Statement](#)

For guidance on how to construct your lead behaviour statement, you are encouraged to visit Civil Service Careers. Link [Behaviours](#)

We would recommend the STAR model to structure your answers. We find this allows you to best demonstrate your skills and experience, we can get to know you and can support you to show your skills and experience to answer questions linked to the advertised success profiles.

**What STAR stands for**

Situation - the situation you had to deal with

Task - the task you were given to do

Action - the action you took

Result - what happened as a result of your action and what you learned from the experience

## **How to use STAR**

You can use the STAR method to structure the examples you give to questions. You can use it to highlight particular skills and qualities you have that the employer is looking for.

When using STAR, remember:

- you can use examples from work, home or volunteering

- keep examples short and to the point

- if shortlisted be prepared to answer follow-up questions about the examples you give at the interview stage

## **Sift**

The sift panel will use the information in your CV and personal statement to assess your experience and how you meet the essential criteria as stated in the person specification and essential criteria section. The sift panel will also assess the lead behaviour statement for Delivering at Pace.

Should a large number of applications be received, an initial sift may be conducted using the lead behaviour Delivering at Pace. Candidates who pass the initial sift may be progressed to a full sift or progressed straight to assessment/interview.

Interview schedule and details will be confirmed on release of the sift results.

## **Interview**

If successful at application stage, you will be invited to interview where you will be assessed on the three advertised Behaviours and Experience.

Please be aware that interviews will take place in person at the Lowestoft Laboratory.

If scores are equal following interview, an assessment of the lead behaviour Delivering at Pace will be used by the panel.

A date has not yet been confirmed for the interviews to take place.



## **Location**

Please be aware that this role will be contractually based at Lowestoft. The successful candidate is required to carry out all their duties from a UK location and cannot do so from an overseas location at any time.

Successful candidates are expected to work from one of the laboratory or office locations listed in this advert in order to connect with their colleagues, as required by their role and business needs.

## **Office Attendance**

As part of the pre-employment process, successful candidate(s) will be able to agree a contractual workplace from those locations listed in this advert. The agreed contractual workplace is then the substantive and permanent place of work for the successful candidate(s)

Where the location is National the successful appointee should discuss an appropriate contractual location in line with both Defra's location policy and site capacity, prior to proceeding with pre-employment processes.

Successful applicants currently employed by the hiring Defra organisation for this post may choose to remain in their current contractual location or may choose to change location to one of those listed above. This should be discussed and agreed prior to proceeding with pre-employment processes.

Please note this vacancy is a lab-based role and therefore there is a requirement for the post holder to be on-site on a daily basis. Working time spent at a workplace may include time spent at other organisational locations including field-based operational locations, together with supplier, customer or partner locations. This is a non-contractual agreement which is consistent with common Civil Service expectations.

The successful candidate is required to carry out all their duties from a UK location and cannot do so from an overseas location at any time.

Defra includes the core department, APHA, RPA, Cefas and VMD.

Travel costs to non-contractual workplaces will be subject to departmental travel and subsistence policies. Travel costs to contractual workplaces are the responsibility of the employee.

### **Reserve List**

A reserve list may be held for a period of 12 months from which further appointments can be made.

### **Visa Sponsorship Statement**

Please take note that Defra and Cefas does not hold a UK Visa & Immigration (UKVI) Skilled Worker License sponsor and are unable to sponsor any individuals for Skilled Worker Sponsorship.

### **Reasonable Adjustment**

If a person with disabilities is put at a substantial disadvantage compared to a non-disabled person, we have a duty to make reasonable changes to our processes.

If you need a change to be made so that you can make your application, you should:

Contact Government Recruitment Service  
via [defrarecruitment.grs@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:defrarecruitment.grs@cabinetoffice.gov.uk) as soon as possible before the closing date to discuss your needs.

Complete the Assistance required section in the Additional requirements page of your application form to tell us what changes or help you might need further on in the recruitment process. For instance, you may need wheelchair access at interview, or if you're deaf, a Language Service Professional.

### **Accessibility**

If you are experiencing accessibility problems with any attachments on this advert, please contact the email address in the 'Contact point for applicants' section.

### **Criminal Record Check**

If successful and transferring from another Government Department, a criminal record check may be carried out.

In order to process applications without delay, we will be sending a Criminal Record Check to Disclosure and Barring Service on your behalf. However, we recognise in exceptional circumstances some candidates will want to send their completed forms direct. If you will be doing this, please advise Government Recruitment Service of your intention by emailing [Pre-EmploymentChecks.grs@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:Pre-EmploymentChecks.grs@cabinetoffice.gov.uk) stating the job reference number in the subject heading.

### **Internal Fraud Database Check**

Applicants who are successful at interview will be, as part of pre-employment screening subject to a check on the Internal Fraud Database (IFD). This check will provide information about employees who have been dismissed for fraud or dishonesty offences. This check also applies to employees who resign or otherwise leave before being dismissed for fraud or dishonesty had their employment continued. Any applicant's details held on the IFD will be refused employment.

A candidate is not eligible to apply for a role within the Civil Service if the application is made within a 5-year period following a dismissal for carrying out internal fraud against government.

### **Childcare Vouchers**

Any move to Defra from another employer will mean you can no longer access childcare vouchers. This includes moves between government departments. You may however be eligible for other government schemes, including Tax Free Childcare; for further information [visit the Childcare Choices website](#).

### **Salary**

New entrants are expected to start on the minimum of the pay band.

### **Feedback**

Feedback will only be provided if you attend an interview or assessment.

## Security

Successful candidates must undergo a criminal record check.

People working with government assets must complete [baseline personnel security standard \(opens in new window\)](#) checks.

## Nationality requirements

This job is broadly open to the following groups:

UK nationals

nationals of the Republic of Ireland

nationals of Commonwealth countries who have the right to work in the UK

nationals of the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein and family members of those nationalities with settled or pre-settled status under the [European Union Settlement Scheme \(EUSS\) \(opens in a new window\)](#)

nationals of the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein and family members of those nationalities who have made a valid application for settled or pre-settled status under the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS)

individuals with limited leave to remain or indefinite leave to remain who were eligible to apply for EUSS on or before 31 December 2020

Turkish nationals, and certain family members of Turkish nationals, who have accrued the right to work in the Civil Service

[Further information on nationality requirements \(opens in a new window\)](#)

## Working for the Civil Service

The [Civil Service Code \(opens in a new window\)](#) sets out the standards of behaviour expected of civil servants.

We recruit by merit on the basis of fair and open competition, as outlined in the Civil Service Commission's [recruitment principles \(opens in a new window\)](#).

The Civil Service embraces diversity and promotes equal opportunities. As such, we run a Disability Confident Scheme (DCS) for candidates with disabilities who meet the minimum selection criteria.

The Civil Service also offers a Redeployment Interview Scheme to civil servants who are at risk of redundancy, and who meet the minimum requirements for the advertised vacancy.

## **Diversity and Inclusion**

The Civil Service is committed to attract, retain and invest in talent wherever it is found. To learn more please see the [Civil Service People Plan \(opens in a new window\)](#) and the [Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy \(opens in a new window\)](#).

## **Apply and further information**

This vacancy is part of the [Great Place to Work for Veterans \(opens in a new window\)](#) initiative.

The Civil Service welcomes applications from people who have recently left prison or have an unspent conviction. [Read more about prison leaver recruitment \(opens in new window\)](#).

Once this job has closed, the job advert will no longer be available. You may want to save a copy for your records.

## **Contact point for applicants**

Job contact :

Name : Cally Wiles or Alec Wilson

Email : [resourcing@cefas.gov.uk](mailto:resourcing@cefas.gov.uk)

Recruitment team

Email : [defrarecruitment.grs@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:defrarecruitment.grs@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

## **Further information**

If you feel your application has not been treated in accordance with the Recruitment Principles and you wish to make a complaint, in the first

instance, you should contact Government Recruitment Services via email:  
defrarecruitment.grs@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive from the Department,  
you can contact the Civil Service Commission: [here](#)

