



Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Scotland

OCPAS LAUNCHES FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Scotland (OCPAS), has today published its first Annual Report. OCPAS was established in 2004 to create and regulate a public appointments process in Scotland that is open and transparent and provides equality of opportunity and treatment for all applicants.

Karen Carlton, Commissioner for Public Appointments in Scotland said; "In our first full year, we have formally established OCPAS, started the process of engaging with the public and created and submitted a new Code of Practice for Public Appointments that is progressive, practical and highly appropriate for Scotland."

In 2005, the Commissioner published a draft Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland. This was laid before the Scottish Parliament in May 2005 and has been revised in the light of comments from 300 individuals and organisations. The final Code of Practice will be launched in January 2006.

This Scottish Code has some unique features such as anonymisation of applications, removal of a requirement to declare political activity (only required when an individual is appointed) and an option to extend the time for which an appointee can serve, provided they have proved themselves to be the best candidate in an open competition.

During 2004 and 2005, the Commissioner has been working to an interim code, which has been developed by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, based in London.

In its first year of operation, under the interim code, OCPAS is pleased to report that there have been no formal complaints made about particular appointments or the appointments process itself.

During this first year, a total of 249 public appointments have been made in Scotland which can be broadly categorised as follows:



- 53% new appointments; 47% re-appointments.
- 71% male; 29% female (compared to a 44%/56% male/female population ratio in Scotland).
- 2% Ethnic Minority (compared to 2% of the Scottish population comprising Ethnic Minorities).
- 5% Disabled (compared with 5% of the Scottish population defined as Permanently Sick or Disabled).

While continuing to regulate the appointments process, development of the new Code of Practice has been central to the work of OCPAS in 2004/5. In addition, the Commissioner has formally established the office and developed relationships with the Scottish Parliament, sister bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Committee on Standards in Public Life. At the same time OCPAS has established a public face through its website www.publicappointments.org, undertaken a MORI survey on attitudes to public appointments and met with Scottish Ministers, MSPs and others with an interest in the work of the Commissioner. This work has been completed utilising only 53% of the budget allocated to OCPAS for this period.

Having launched the new, distinctly Scottish, Code of Practice in 2006, the Commissioner, in addition to her ongoing statutory duties, will turn her attention to the number, range and diversity of individuals applying for public appointments. At the core of this work will be an Equal Opportunities Strategy, which will identify why more young people, women and those from Ethnic Minorities, in particular, are not coming forward and will make recommendations for change, based on this research.

Karen Carlton concludes, "I am proud of our achievements in this first year; ensuring that the system continue to run smoothly while introducing a Scottish Code of Practice. I relish the challenges ahead in 2006, ensuring that the Public Appointments process is efficient and fair and helping to encourage a wider variety of Scottish people to come forward and make their mark on our country."

For background information please see: www.publicappointments.org

The Commissioner, Karen Carlton, is available for comment.

To arrange a suitable time to talk/meet, please contact Beverley Kirk at Great Circle on 0131 225 4646 or email bev.kirk@greatcircle.co.uk

