Working as an economist at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

In Defra, we deal with a vast range of issues that profoundly impact on people’s lives. We are responsible for England’s environment, our countryside and rural economy, the food and farming sectors (which together make up around 7% of the UK economy) and have lead responsibility for protection from a wide range of natural threats and hazards. You will play an important role in achieving our vision of ‘creating a great place for living’.

This is a particularly exciting time to join Defra, not least as an economist. We are one of the lead Departments in delivering a successful exit from the EU. With over a thousand pieces of EU and national legislation identified as Defra-owned and underpinning 80% of our work, we have an unparalleled opportunity to devise policies that best meet the future needs of the UK.

Our vision is to create a great place for living for people in this country. We have four impact objectives which explain our ambitious long-term strategic aims, and the positive differences we will make to the UK:

- To deliver a safe and ambitious departure from the EU, setting global standards in protecting and harnessing value from the natural environment
- To pass on to the next generation a natural environment protected and enhanced for the future
- To lead the world in food and farming with a sustainable model of food production
- To become an outstanding organisation focused on making a difference, with world class delivery capability

As an organisation, Defra works to:
- Provide excellent delivery, with outstanding value for money to deliver outcomes;
- Be an organisation continually striving to be the best, focussed on outcomes and constantly challenging itself;
- Be an inclusive, professional workforce where leaders recognise the contribution of people and build capacity to deliver better business outcomes.

We offer an inclusive culture which embraces and supports our colleagues to achieve and sustain increased levels of employee wellbeing, engagement and productivity.

For more information on the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs see our website

The work you will be doing

Being an assistant economist in Defra entails working closely with colleagues to structure policy problems and ensure economic analysis informs decision making, making best use of available data and evidence. You will work primarily with an Economic Advisor and wider analysts in developing the evidence base, drawing from a wide range of expertise, undertaking quality assured economic appraisal and evaluation, and providing robust analytical advice.
Responsibilities will vary according to post, but could include:

- Conducting and reporting analysis, to ensure policy options are underpinned by careful synthesis of available evidence and forward-looking analysis;
- Communicating with and advising policy colleagues on what the latest evidence and analysis tells you;
- Managing stakeholder engagement, analysing and reporting on outputs;
- Addressing policy needs through development, testing and application of advanced models.

Defra is looking for assistant economists to work across a range of areas particularly focused on priorities resulting from EU exit. Our economists are embedded in teams across Defra, summarised below.

- **The Office of the Chief Economist** ensures high quality economic analysis is being produced across the department to meet priorities and directly delivers important pieces of cross-cutting work. The Office also updates ministers on significant economic developments and leads the economist profession across the department.

- **EU and International trade** teams help shape the UK’s future relationship with the EU from the perspectives of Defra’s objectives and develop Defra’s positions on relevant international trade issues.

- **Future Farming** economics helps develop future domestic agricultural policy for the UK outside the EU. The team sits within the wider evidence team including statisticians, natural and social scientists and operational researchers. The evidence team is embedded with policy teams and so is an integral part of the policy development process.

- **Marine and Fisheries** teams are developing a new policy framework for the fishing industry outside of the EU and working to develop systems to manage the marine environment more sustainably.

- The **Natural Environment and Rural System** directorate develops policies around the contribution that land use change and management can make to wider environmental outcomes, including carbon storage, air quality, water quality, flood management and nature conservation, and supports development of the rural economy.

- **Environmental Quality** develops policies and approaches around activities that can impact on environmental outcomes, including measures to improve air quality, regulations on use of chemicals and pesticides and policies on waste management, many of which will be affected by EU exit.

- The **Animal and Plant Health & Welfare** (APHW) directorate works to find the most effective ways to protect the nation from animal and plant diseases and pests which can have significant impacts on consumers, industry, the rural economy and livelihoods.

- The **Better Regulation** team seeks to improve the regulatory measures that Defra is responsible for to achieve strong outcomes whilst reducing and minimising the burdens on business.

- The **Floods and Water** directorate’s work includes refining water environment regulation (including post-EU exit), economic regulation of the water utility sector including ongoing market reform, and the costs, benefits and incentive issues surrounding the management of flood risk.
The Economics Profession in Defra

At Defra you will join a diverse but cohesive group of economists working to deliver high quality, impactful economics to achieve great outcomes. To deliver our vision we are working together as a professional group fostering a strong collective identity to ensure we are impactful, skillful, vibrant as a community, and connected to the outside world.

You will join a culture where continuous learning is encouraged and colleagues are happy to share their expertise. You’ll have the opportunity to work alongside colleagues from alternative professions such as policy, science, statistics, operational research and social research, in a rich learning and policy-making environment. We will also offer you the chance to develop economic and policy competences through in-work training and other opportunities, such as economic seminars.

As a fast stream economist, you will have the opportunity to rotate between Defra and the Department of Transport and the Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government after your first year. This will give you exposure to a range of economist responsibilities and broaden your professional development.

Salary

Fast Stream economist salaries start at £28,000 plus a master’s allowance of £2,500 per annum.

Our Offices

Defra has offices in London, Bristol and York: fast stream economists start their careers in London.