CASE STUDY

SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT OF A CEO FOR THE BRITISH SOCIETY OF PLANT BREEDERS.

Chief Executive appointed within 12 weeks on a retained search, with the successful candidate starting three weeks later, ahead of BSPB's annual general meeting.

We delivered

Chief Executive Officer

Results

12 WEEKS
From instruction to appointment

3 WEEKS
From appointment to start date

1 TO 6
Shortlist to appointment

A RECOMMENDATION FROM AN EXISTING CLIENT.

BSPB's Deputy Chair sits on the board with another Murray McIntosh client, who recommended our service. We were the only recruitment partner BSPB approached.

THE BOARD'S CASE FOR A CHIEF EXECUTIVE.

The BSPB is a membership body in Ely, representing the UK plant breeding industry. In 2026 it is celebrating its 60th anniversary. The Chief Executive role had been vacant for some time, with two heads of department running the organisation. Following the departure of one, the board decided BSPB needed a Chief Executive to link the board, the team and the membership. They also wanted to raise BSPB's profile and give members more value. As such, the board needed the post holder to have policy, public affairs and communications experience, an ability to engage government, and a close working relationship with members.

A SPECIFIC BRIEF IN A SMALL TALENT POOL.

The brief was niche. The location and the sector knowledge required together meant the available talent pool was fairly limited.

Given the seniority and the focused nature of the role, we agreed a retained approach with a 12-week timeline from instruction to appointment.

A SEARCH MAPPED WELL BEYOND PLANT BREEDING.

The brief required credibility across industry, government, regulation and membership, so our market map went well beyond plant breeding, as well as using active advertising and our existing network. Our long list of 17 covered six markets:

- **Crop science:** businesses including KWS, RAGT, Bayer and Elsoms. Senior commercial, policy and regulatory leaders.
- **Agricultural membership and trade bodies:** AHDB, NFU, CLA, AIC and CropLife UK. Leaders experienced in representing diverse memberships and influencing government.
- **Government and regulatory:** Defra and the wider policy landscape. Senior leaders in seeds, trade, regulation and stakeholder engagement. The successful candidate came from this market.
- **Agricultural research, science and innovation:** NIAB, Rothamsted Research, John Innes Centre and the wider agri-tech sector. Leaders who bridge science, policy and industry.
- **Wider food, farming and supply chain:** grower organisations and agricultural businesses, with strong commercial and membership experience.
- **Agricultural communications and external affairs:** senior communications and public affairs leaders with deep sector knowledge.

The board were keen for us to deliver a marketing campaign alongside our proactive executive search for extra visibility.

WHAT WE MAPPED FOR.

Across those markets, we looked for individuals who could demonstrate:

- Leadership of a member-led or stakeholder-heavy organisation
- Credibility across agriculture, science and industry
- Strong government, policy and regulatory engagement
- The ability to represent the sector as an authoritative external voice
- Strategic and operational leadership
- Experience bringing together diverse or competing stakeholder interests
- Understanding of the major issues affecting plant breeding, including innovation, regulation, trade and food security

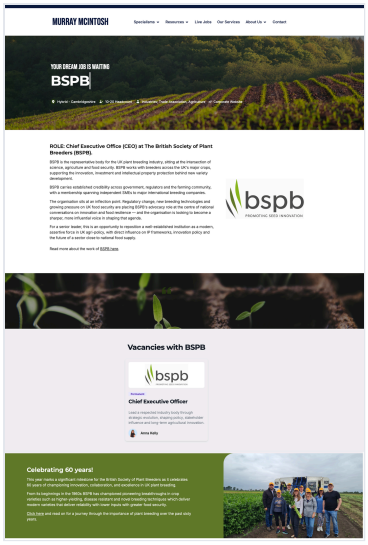
The successful candidate had spoken to us about a different role the year before. Recalling her credibility and experience, we were keen to speak to her again about this role. She needed careful convincing because of the commute distance. With candidates across the country, we met every shortlisted candidate face to face, either digitally or in person.

A CLIENT HUB AND LINKEDIN ADVERTISING.

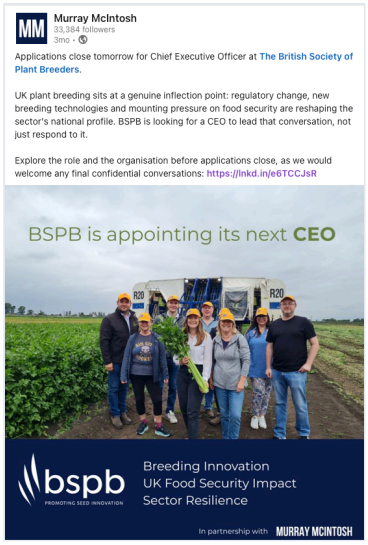
https://www.murraymcintosh.com/microsites/British-Society-of-Plant-Breeders

To increase candidate reach and engagement, we created a bespoke recruitment marketing campaign built around a dedicated client hub for BSPB:

- A client hub with the role and everything candidates needed to know about BSPB, in one place.
- Targeted LinkedIn advertising to bring the right candidates to the hub.



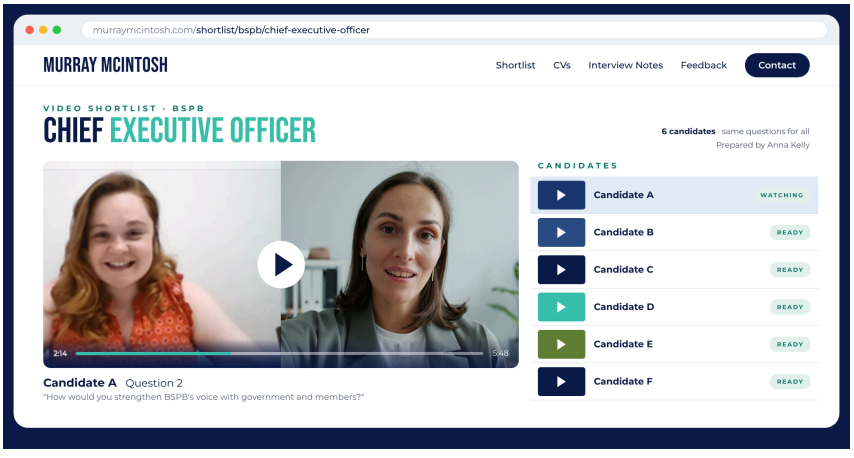
The BSPB client hub.



Example of social media advertising.

VIDEO SHORTLISTING TO SHOWCASE CANDIDATES BEYOND PAPER.

The Chair and Deputy Chair set the questions, and each shortlisted candidate was recorded sharing their answers on video. We sent the recording to BSPB alongside the CVs. For a role built on relationships as much as expertise, this gave the board a far clearer sense of each candidate's personality and narrowed the field from six to three.



The video shortlist page shared with BSPB.

THE OUTCOME.

The board's decision was unanimous. The successful candidate accepted the offer immediately, and BSPB agreed flexible working arrangements to ease her move into the role. She started three weeks after appointment, in time for BSPB's annual general meeting and board meeting in her first week.

MORE ABOUT MURRAY MCINTOSH.

Founded in 2015, Murray McIntosh was established to offer a research-led, specialist recruitment service. Since then, we've earned a reputation as a trusted partner, working with clients ranging from innovative start-ups to global multinationals to secure the talent needed to deliver.

Our Policy, Public Affairs, Strategic Comms & Economics team deliver highly targeted support, backed by genuine insight and sector knowledge.

We also offer strategic, complementary advice across recruitment process design, employer branding, and workforce planning. Our services cover both permanent and contract recruitment, tailored to meet the specific needs of each client.

We remain embedded in our markets by actively participating in industry events, panels, and working groups, keeping us informed, engaged, and always one step ahead.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

If you are planning your next policy, public affairs or communications hire and want to see how this approach could work for you, we would be glad to talk it through.



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