

Sustainable Water Network (SWAN) Job Description: Policy Officer

Job Title: Policy Officer

Responsible to: SWAN Coordinator: Sinead O'Brien

Job Location: SWAN offices, 9 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2

Closing date for applications: 5.00 p.m. August 22nd 2018

Overview

The Sustainable Water Network (SWAN) is an umbrella network of 25 of Ireland's leading environmental non-governmental organisations (eNGOs) working together to protect and enhance the quality of Ireland's rivers, lakes, coasts and groundwater and to secure catchment-based, ecologically sustainable water management in Ireland through effective implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). We are looking for an experienced Policy Officer to join the SWAN team and play a central role in our work advocating for this. The Policy Officer will work on marine policy (particularly the MSFD), flood management policy and also on the interaction between these policy areas and the WFD and Habitats & Birds directives.

Introduction to SWAN

SWAN members work together to achieve our aim of effective protection and restoration of Ireland's waters by engaging in the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), Floods Directive and other water-related legislation. SWAN has both national and local members, representing a vast range of specialist and local knowledge and expertise in all areas of Ireland's aquatic environment. The SWAN office works to achieve our aim through:

- Policy research, development, advocacy and engagement;
- Facilitation of participation of the eNGO sector in implementation of water-related policy and legislation through SWAN members and executive at EU, national, regional and local level;
- Communications and awareness-raising in relation to the value of, and threats to, our aquatic environment and solutions to address these.

The role of the SWAN office is to co-ordinate and support the activities of our member organisations in meeting the aims of the organisation and also to act as a liaison point between the eNGO sector (SWAN member organisations) and public authorities, including the EPA, Government departments and Local Authorities. It is also to deliver on the SWAN work plan, as determined by the SWAN membership and directors, including developing detailed policy analysis, and communicating this, to support evidence-based engagement and advocacy with relevant government departments and state agencies, in consultation with, and on behalf of its members (both proactively and also in response to public consultations). The office is also a contact point between the member network and European eNGO partners (primarily the European Environment Bureau (EEB)) and Seas At Risk (SAR).

Role & responsibilities of Policy Officer

The role of the Policy Officer is to work as a core part of the SWAN executive team, and in collaboration with members, to ensure that SWAN is informed on policy developments relevant to the areas it seeks to

influence, to conduct research and develop evidence-based policy positions on these, and to advocate in support of these positions with key decision makers.

1. Policy monitoring and development

- Conduct desk-based research and develop evidence-based policy positions for SWAN on issues related to the water environment by working with SWAN members, staff and outside experts;
- Maintain up-to-date knowledge of the relevant topics and ensure that SWAN is informed on policy developments relevant to the areas it seeks to influence;
- Play a central role in SWAN policy and strategy on:
 - marine issues, in particular the MSFD and its interaction with the WFD;
 - Flood management, planning controls, physical modifications of Ireland's waterbodies and impacts on WFD implementation;
 - Interactions between the above and Birds & Habitats directives;
- Support the development of policy-influencing strategies and actions in the delivery of SWAN's strategic objectives;
- Project manage commissioned policy research, including drafting project briefs and tender documents in consultation with the Coordinator, board and project steering groups and dealing with contractors to ensure timely, quality delivery of contracted work;
- Input to national and EU policy development and implementation through policy submissions, engagement and input to the work of the EEB and Seas At Risk.

2. Policy advocacy, communications & achieving policy reform

- Liaise with and maintain regular contact with key players from government, state agencies, public authorities and other stakeholders to gather information and influence positions;
- Publicly present SWAN's policy positions, in collaboration with the Coordinator and Communications Officer;
- Represent SWAN at policy-making fora, conferences, seminars, committees etc.;
- Work closely with and support the Coordinator and Chair of SWAN to champion the cause of the water protection and sustainability, integrated catchment and coastal zone and marine management;
- Work with the Communications Officer to 'translate' policy positions into appropriate communications / advocacy messages for dissemination, including via the SWAN newsletter and social media and assist with the delivery of advocacy and communications messages based on policy priorities;
- Respond to water-related consultations;
- Forge relationships with other NGOs and a range of sectoral stakeholders in order to advance the implementation of policy changes.

3. Working with members: Policy support and collaboration

- Collaborate with members in developing SWAN policy positions, (e.g. through working groups and workshops);

- Support SWAN members incl. through development of briefing material with appropriate level of detail to support their work and by responding to specific queries and policy resource needs;
- Network with SWAN members to promote co-ordinated activities to influence decision-making in relation to water policy at opportune moments;
- Maintain a database of relevant policy and academic research material for use by SWAN staff and members.

4. Strategic policy planning

- Develop proposed strategic policy work plans for presentation to SWAN board and members;
- Participate in strategic planning of policy and advocacy activities.

5. Other

- Prepare documents and reports as required by the Coordinator, Chair and Board;
- Inform the content of events & meetings and work as part of the SWAN team to organise events;
- Support the SWAN team in the smooth running of the office and assisting with addressing members' needs when necessary e.g. answering the phone, responding to email queries;
- Carrying out general tasks within the office when required as part of the team;
- Any other duty that is reasonably requested by the SWAN Coordinator and/or the Board.

Personal Specification

A. Qualifications, knowledge, experience

Essential

- Postgraduate qualification in biology, ecology or conservation science, or water policy & management;
- At least three year's work experience in environmental policy, preferably in the NGO sector, including analysis and formulation of policy; demonstrating specific challenges and achievements during this time;
- A primary degree as above, with minimum 5 years relevant NGO experience with demonstrated results will also be considered;
- In-depth knowledge and understanding of aquatic ecosystems, water policy issues and challenges facing Ireland and an understanding of the effectiveness of EU and Irish policy and legislation in safeguarding the water environment, showing specialist expertise in an Irish context;
- A sound grasp of EU and Irish political, policy and legislative structures and processes and environmental law;
- A track record of initiating, managing and delivering evidence-based policy work that informs policy objectives and advocacy work.

Desirable

- PhD in aquatic ecology or other relevant discipline;
- 5 years relevant policy experience in an environmental NGO;

- In-depth knowledge of the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), Natura directives and planning-related policy (incl. marine spatial planning);
- In-depth knowledge/experience of integrated catchment management and/or integrated coastal zone management;
- Demonstration that previous policy work has resulted in successful policy outcomes.

B. Skills/Attributes competencies and achievements

- Ability to deliver focused policy analysis to tight deadlines, (e.g. in response to public consultations);
- Ability to collaborate with members and colleagues and integrate the expertise and multiple perspectives of others into policy development work;
- The ability to influence, negotiate and build awareness through excellent communication skills including:
 - Report writing to publication standard, using a recognised citation system;
 - Ability to successfully advocate for SWAN policy positions in engagement with senior stakeholders and decision-makers, including officials from government departments; state agencies and other stakeholders;
 - Expertise in communicating (and 'translating') complex policy and science concepts to a range of audiences and stakeholders and to communicate clearly, courteously, and professionally;
 - Ability to develop positive working relationships with key stakeholders in other sectors.
- High level of versatility; the ability to move between diverse work areas;
- Flexibility: The ability to understand and appreciate issues from a wide range of perspectives and adapt one's thinking and approach accordingly;
- Excellent interpersonal skills with a positive 'can-do' outlook and attitude and ability to work with limited resources as part of a small team;
- Strong personal commitment to environmental protection and empathy with the work and aims of SWAN;
- Excellent time management and task prioritisation skills and an ability to focus on optimal delivery of tasks within limited time (There's never enough time to do the job you would like to do in the NGO sector!)

Main Terms and Conditions

Duration: This post is a one year contract, with the possibility of a permanent post contingent on funding.

Working Arrangements: The working week is 35 hours. The standard working day is 9.30 a.m. – 5.30 p.m. with one hour for lunch. Intermittent evening and weekend work and overtime will be required for which time in lieu will be given. The timing of this will be at the discretion of the Coordinator. National and international (European) travel will also be required involving overnight stays, for which expenses will be covered by SWAN.

Overseas candidates must hold a full permanent working visa, if required, for Ireland.

SWAN offers:

Salary: €35,200

Holiday Entitlement: 25 days per year plus 9 bank holidays.

Opportunities This role offers an excellent opportunity to work with key influencers within the Irish environmental and other sectors and to work as part of a committed team to influence Irish environmental policy, in the area of water. You will also have the opportunity to engage with decision-makers and policy makers and to gain in-depth experience of environmental policy-making and implementation in Ireland. There will be the opportunity to attend and participate in water-related meetings, events and conferences attended by key stakeholders in water policy in Ireland and occasionally in the EU.

Applications

If you wish to apply for this post please submit the following to Sinead O'Brien at info@swanireland.ie:

1. Letter of application, outlining your relevant knowledge, experience, and competencies; the reason for your interest in the post and, if possible, your role in influencing a policy outcome;
2. Your CV, including contact details for at least two professional referees;
3. Brief responses (not exceeding 500 words each) to the following questions:
 - What are the key areas of interaction and conflict between the WFD; the MSFD and the Marine Spatial Planning Directive in Ireland and what should SWAN's priorities be for the coming year in relation to this?
 - What are the main pressures on Ireland's water environment and what should SWAN prioritise in terms of policy engagement to address these in the next 1-2 years?

Please note that only applications which include all three above elements will be considered.

The deadline for receipt of applications is 5.00 p.m. August 22nd 2018

SWAN is a network of non government organisations, with many of its associated members working on a voluntary basis. It is the ethos of SWAN that this voluntary commitment to the environment is highly valued and that, for paid staff, a harmonious work/life balance is achieved and personal and professional development is encouraged and supported.

We value the commitment and support from employees in helping us to embrace this ethos.

SWAN Members:

An Taisce, Bat Conservation Ireland, BirdWatch Ireland, Carra/Mask/Corrib Water Protection Group, Cavan Leitrim Environmental Awareness Network, Celebrate Water, Coastwatch, Coomhola Salmon Trust, Cork Environmental Forum, Cork Nature Network, Dodder Action (Associate), ECO-UNESCO, Friends of the Earth, Friends of the Irish Environment, Irish Peatland Conservation Council, Irish Seal Sanctuary, Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, Irish Wildlife Trust, Longford Environmental Alliance, Macroom District Environmental Group, River Shannon Protection Alliance, Save the Swilly, Shannon Dolphin and Wildlife Foundation, Slaney River Trust, Voice of Irish Concern for the Environment.