Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (ERCS)
Solicitor (part-time)

Job Description

Job title: Solicitor
Contract type: One year fixed-term contract
Location: Edinburgh (initially working from home)
Reports to: Chief officer
Salary: £30,000 - £33,000 (pro rata) (depending on post qualification experience)
Funding: ERCS core
Hours: Part-time: 21 - 28 hours per week
Annual leave: 25 days annual leave plus 10 days statutory holiday (pro-rata)

Background on Scottish Environment LINK and ERCS

Scottish Environment LINK (LINK) is the forum and national intermediary for the citizen-led environmental sector in Scotland. The network has 40 member bodies with a collective membership of c 500,000, who represent a broad range of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society. Working through LINK’s strategic groups on Economics, Governance, Land, Marine and Planning, we influence public policy and its implementation in the public interest, with support from a small core staff team, and strategic oversight from the board of trustees.

The Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (ERCS) was initiated by Scottish Environment LINK (LINK) and was registered as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SC050257) in July 2020. ERCS’s vision is of a Scotland where every person’s right to live in a healthy environment is fully realised. Our mission is to assist members of the public and civil society to understand and exercise their rights in environmental law and to protect the environment. We are developing four work programmes to achieve this:

- public education to increase awareness of legal rights and remedies in environmental matters;
- advice, assistance and representation to improve public participation in environmental decision-making;
- advocacy in policy and law reform to improve environmental law and access to justice on the environment; and
- strategic public interest litigation to enforce progress on key environmental issues and tackle systemic environmental problems.
Our operating values and principles are to be:

- open, accessible and approachable in how we offer our services;
- respectful, collaborative and enabling in how we deliver our services;
- evidence-based and assertive in how we advocate for policy and law reform;
- trusted and authoritative in how we pursue environmental rights and litigation.

**Job Purpose**

As an in-house Solicitor for the Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (ERCS) your role is to promote and further environmental rights and responsibilities in Scotland: in particular by giving free legal advice on environmental law to enquiries from members of the public and third sector organisations. This will be face to face (virtually or in person), by phone and by email.

Our aim is to provide service users with comprehensive legal advice and advocacy support, delivered by a qualified solicitor in a way which is practical, meaningful and easily understood. You will be sensitive to the nature of the enquiries we receive; and be friendly, approachable and professional.

In addition, you will play a critical role in the development and implementation of ERCS’s public education programme, its advocacy to improve access to justice on the environment, and in identifying opportunities to undertake strategic litigation.

Although not formally a line manager, the Solicitor takes on a supervisory and leadership role within ERCS. They are regarded by their colleagues as a source of expert information, advice and support, and are able to effectively represent the organisation to partners, funders and peers.

**Key responsibilities**

**Advice service**

*ERCS has a high quality environmental law casework service including good client care and effective case management*

- Provide a full range of legal advice on environmental\(^1\) and related planning law.
- Provide professional, timeous and impartial legal advice face-to-face (virtually or in person), via telephone and email on issues affecting individuals, community groups and environmental NGOs.

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\(^1\) ERCS defines environmental law as including law relating to land-use planning, climate change, pollution control, environmental health, the conservation of biodiversity, and any other field (e.g. cultural heritage, transport, energy) to the extent that it impacts on the natural environment in Scotland.
• Provide support to clients at all stages of their case.
• Ensure the effective prioritisation and timely management of an assigned workload.
• Efficient administration and record keeping in compliance with relevant legislation.
• Train, support and guide the work of ERCS’s volunteers.
• Identify common issues and findings for awareness raising and advocacy work.

Advocacy and public education

ERCS is recognised as the knowledge hub and expert in public interest environmental law

• Maintain a thorough grasp of current relevant environmental and related planning legislation and case law developments, and an overview of political developments in relation to the environment and environmental law in Scotland and internationally.
• Develop web-based resources and deliver training on environmental law and rights to a high professional standard, and to a wide range of audiences to develop capacity building.
• With the Advocacy Officer, identify opportunities and advocate for reform, particularly in relation to compliance with the Aarhus Convention and the establishment of a Scottish environmental court.
• Analyse and critically respond to policy consultations, parliamentary inquiries and other legal issues by working collaboratively with colleagues and the Board of Trustees.

External relations

ERCS works in partnership with statutory and non-statutory organisations to promote access to environmental justice in line with ERCS’s mission and values

• Develop and promote ERCS’s Advice Service to community groups and organisations in the environmental, equality and social inclusion sectors.
• Contribute to the development of ERCS’s networks with key stakeholders within Scottish civic, legal, environmental and academic fields.
• Represent ERCS publicly by participating and/or speaking at meetings, events, and conferences.

Governance and operations

ERCS delivers on its strategic and operational objectives

• Carry out all responsibilities properly in terms of the law and practice of a solicitor in Scotland.
• Work collaboratively with colleagues and with the Board of Trustees to deliver ERCS’s Business Plan and strategic objectives.
• Support the Board of Trustees to perform its governance role by providing such information and advice as they may reasonably require, including statistical information and written reports.
• Ensure quality standards and monitoring and evaluation systems are maintained.
• Contribute to regular briefings to inform the public and civil society on developments in environmental law and ERCS’s work.
• Attend team meetings and events as required.
Other duties

- Travel to destinations across Scotland to deliver training when required.
- Such other tasks as ERCS may reasonably require.

Person Specification

Essential

- Holder of an unrestricted practicing certificate with the Law of Society of Scotland.
- Satisfactory relevant post-qualification experience as a solicitor.
- Knowledge or awareness of the policy and regulatory context of environmental and related planning law, rights and protection.
- A track record of planning and prioritising legal case work.
- The capacity to undertake high volumes of work and ability to deliver to strict deadlines.
- An excellent ability to develop, manage and maintain effective working relationships.
- The ability to understand and quickly identify legal issues and provide legal advice succinctly and in response to individual needs.
- An effective communicator capable of delivering complex messages in an accessible manner to diverse audiences.
- A track record of working effectively in a team and under own initiative.
- Solution orientated thinking.
- Sound judgement and good decision-making skills, coping well with competing time pressures.
- Excellent IT skills including Microsoft Office 365, Power point and electronic case management systems.
- A working understanding of court procedure, especially judicial review and public inquiries.
- The ability and confidence to create and present dynamic and engaging public education and training materials.
- Excellent communication skills, both written and verbal.
- Dedication to the delivery of a quality advice service.
- Understanding of and commitment to reducing the barriers to access to justice in public interest environmental law in Scotland.

Desirable

- Three year + post qualification experience.
- Sound working knowledge of environmental law and policy.
- Experience in developing and delivering training.
- Good experience of conducting legal research.
- Understanding of Legal Aid, in particular Advice and Assistance and Civil Legal Aid.
- Familiarity with or experience of working with community organisations and the third sector.
Terms and conditions

LINK employs and holds the terms and conditions for ERCS staff. This is a fixed term, part-time contract, subject to a three-month probation. Salary is £30,000 - £33,000 pro rata per annum (depending on post-qualification experience). LINK operates an auto-enrolment workplace pension scheme with the People’s Pension where LINK makes an employer contribution to employee personal pensions of up to a maximum of 8% of basic salary, complementing employee contributions. If you are eligible to join, you will be auto enrolled from the start of your contract, you may still join if you are not eligible but would need to actively opt-in, full details are provided in the staff handbook. The pro rata leave quota is based on 25 days annual leave and 10 public holidays per annum. The appointee may work the 21-28 hours over five days. All approved expenses will be reimbursed.