

# Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (ERCS)

## Assistant Legal Officer (part-time)

### Job Description

<b>Job title:</b>	Assistant Legal Officer
<b>Salary:</b>	£26,500 (pro rata)
<b>Hours:</b>	14 hours per week (0.4 FTE)
<b>Annual leave:</b>	25 days annual leave plus 10 days statutory holiday (pro rata)
<b>Contract type:</b>	Permanent
<b>Location:</b>	Hybrid working arrangements with office space in Edinburgh
<b>Reports to:</b>	In-house Solicitor/Chief Officer

### Background on ERCS

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 have 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
- strategic public interest litigation to enforce progress on key environmental issues and tackle systemic environmental problems.

Our operating values and principles are:

- 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
- transparent in how we evaluate our impacts and improve our effectiveness.



## Job Purpose

As the Assistant Legal Officer for the Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (ERCS) your role is to assist our in-house Solicitor to promote and further environmental rights in Scotland.

Our in-house solicitor gives free legal advice on environmental law to enquiries from members of the public and third sector organisations. This post is part-funded by the Equality and Human Rights Fund to particularly support equality groups. Our aim is to provide service users with comprehensive legal advice and advocacy support, in a way which is practical, meaningful and easily understood. In supporting our advice service, you will be sensitive to the nature of the enquiries we receive and be friendly, approachable and professional.

As part of the in-house legal team, you will undertake legal research to apply to casework, assist with the administration of the advice service and ensure professional legal standards are upheld across ERCS's services and in compliance with legal and statutory requirements.



## Key responsibilities

### Advice service

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

- Assist the in-house Solicitor to provide a full range of legal advice on environmental<sup>1</sup> and related planning law.
- Undertake legal research as required by the in-house Solicitor.
- Assist the in-house Solicitor to 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.
- Assist the in-house Solicitor to provide support to clients at all stages of their case.
- Ensure the effective prioritisation and timely management of an assigned workload.
- Ensure efficient administration and record keeping in compliance with relevant legislation.
- Identify common issues and findings for awareness raising and advocacy work.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.



## 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.
- Support the development of ERCS's website and social media presence to further ERCS's communications reach.

## Governance and operations

***ERCS delivers on its strategic and operational objectives***

- Support the in-house Solicitor to 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 strategic plan and 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, managed and used for reflection and reporting, including to funders.
- 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.
- Contribute to the support and training of ERCS student placements/interns and volunteers.
- Carry out other duties consistent with the job purpose and as ERCS may reasonably require.





## Person Specification

### Essential

- Law Degree.
- Understanding of the policy and legal landscape in relation to human rights and environmental law.
- At least one year experience in a relevant legal context/organisation e.g. law centre, law clinic or NGO.
- A track record of planning and supporting legal casework and handling confidential information appropriately.
- Experience of undertaking legal research and writing reports.
- Ability to manage, prioritise and complete tasks and to maintain standards under pressure.
- Excellent team-working skills and an understanding of disciplines including confidentiality, mutual briefing, and acting within limits of authority.
- Ability and enthusiasm to work creatively and independently with an appropriate amount of supervision.
- Experience of using monitoring and evaluation systems.
- Excellent IT skills including Microsoft Office 365, Power point, electronic case management systems, and online meeting software such as Zoom and Teams.
- Excellent communication skills, both written and verbal.
- Dedication to the delivery of a quality advice service.
- Demonstrable understanding of and commitment to reducing the barriers to access to justice in public interest environmental law in Scotland.



### Terms and conditions

This is a permanent contract for 14 hours per week, subject to a six- month probation. The salary will be £26,500 pro rata per annum.

The pro rata leave quota is based on 25 days annual leave and 10 public holidays per annum. There is flexibility over how the appointee will work their hours over five days. On occasion it may be necessary to work evenings or parts of weekends, for which time off in lieu will be granted. All approved expenses will be reimbursed.

ERCS operates an auto-enrolment workplace pension scheme with the Nest Pension where ERCS makes an employer contribution to employee personal pensions of up to a maximum of 8% of basic salary, complementing employee contributions.

