MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Information Pack

Head of External Affairs

£44,000 to £48,000
Full Time, 35 hours per week
Remote working within the UK



Photo Credit: Peter Bardsley

Our values

We work to protect our ocean, and all that depends on it, the wildlife, the people, and now, our planet. We are looking for people who demonstrate our values, but who also contribute their own perspectives and experiences to add to our knowledge and our culture.

- We are brave
- We are positive
- We have integrity
- We are a community
- We are credible
- We are solutions focused

Bring the ocean's story to life

We're working for a cleaner, better-protected, healthier ocean. To achieve this, we unite communities, governments and industry to champion science-based solutions for cleaner, healthier seas to tackle the climate and nature emergency.

Are you ready to influence decisions at the highest level and help shape the future of our seas? This is a rare opportunity to lead our external affairs work across all four UK nations, driving political, legislative and business change that delivers real, measurable benefits for marine recovery. From Westminster to Holyrood, the Senedd and Stormont, you'll build relationships, lead high-profile campaigns and ensure our voice is heard where it matters most.

As a member of our Leadership Team, you'll combine strategic thinking with hands-on leadership, guiding a talented Parliamentary Affairs team while helping shape the organisation's wider direction. If you're an experienced leader who thrives on building partnerships, influencing decisionmakers and turning ambition into action, you'll play a pivotal role in securing a healthier future for UK seas.

What you'll do

- Set the strategy and direction for our external affairs work across the four UK nations and evaluate its impact.
- Lead our engagement with parliaments and governments across the UK, including parliamentary campaigns.
- Build partnerships with business leaders on agreed priority areas and represent us externally as a senior spokesperson.
- Oversee strategic legal interventions where they're the right route to our advocacy goals.
- Lead and develop the Parliamentary Affairs team and manage the external affairs budget.
- Contribute to organisational leadership as a member of our Leadership Team.

Why join us?

- You'll be part of a passionate, friendly and forward-thinking team.
- You'll lead change that matters, influencing decisions across governments, parliaments and business to help secure a healthier future for UK seas.
- We're flexible, inclusive and committed to learning and growing together.
- We believe in evidence, action and people-powered change.

We've also got other ways to value your contribution:

- Annual leave starting at 25 days a year, plus Bank Holidays, and increasing with service (we also close between Christmas and New Year as extra time off)
- 8% employer contributions to our stakeholder pension scheme
- Sick pay at full-pay for 8 weeks, then 8 weeks at half-pay (after probation ends)
- Great work life balance through flexible and in many cases, remote working

- Support for your health and wellbeing with an employee assistance programme for you and the people who live with you
- A paid day for you to volunteer to support another charity of your choice

Celebrating difference

We know that at present the environmental and charity sectors do not reflect the true diversity of our communities. We recognise the role we must play in changing this. As an organisation, we are actively taking steps to play our part and you'll be warmly welcomed into our EDI working group (if you'd like to join!) which is shaping how we operate internally and externally.

We value who you are as a unique individual, and we encourage you to contribute your thoughts and experiences to help us grow as an organisation. We are an organisation that celebrates difference and so we welcome applications from all walks of life for all of our roles. If you have any queries surrounding role requirements or special adjustments, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us at hr@mcsuk.org.

Ready to dive in?

We understand that the application process can be difficult if you have a condition or disability that you are living with. We want to make it as easy as possible for you to shine during your application process, so please let us know what we can do to accommodate you. Read on through this pack – there's lots more detail on the role and what to put in your application.

Closing date: **Sunday 22 November 2026**
Interviews: **w/c 30 November 2026**



Head of External Affairs

Responsible to: Director of Conservation & Policy
Line management: Parliamentary Affairs team (3 direct reports; 1 indirect)
Matrix Working: Works closely with Head of UK Policy & Advocacy and the Policy & Advocacy Team

Overall purpose and objectives

To lead the Marine Conservation Society's external affairs work across the four nations of the UK. That means our engagement with parliaments, governments and business, and the legal routes that support it. Your aim is to secure political, legislative and business change that measurably improves the health of UK seas.

This role will set the direction for this work, lead the Parliamentary Affairs team and act as one of our senior external voices. As a member of our Leadership Team, you'll also help shape how we deliver our Ocean Goals across the organisation.

Main duties

- Set the strategy and direction for our external affairs work across the four UK nations and evaluate its impact.
- Lead our engagement with parliaments and governments across the UK, including parliamentary campaigns.
- Build partnerships with business leaders on agreed priority areas and represent us externally as a senior spokesperson.
- Oversee strategic legal interventions where they're the right route to our advocacy goals.
- Lead and develop the Parliamentary Affairs team and manage the external affairs budget.
- Contribute to organisational leadership as a member of our Leadership Team.

Strategy & Evaluation

- Work with the Director of Conservation & Policy to set our four-nation external affairs strategy and operational plans, so they deliver our Ocean Goals and reflect devolved competencies.
- Decide where, when and how we influence, choosing between parliamentary engagement, coalition building, public campaigning and legal routes.
- Set clear objectives, milestones and measures of success for external affairs work, and review progress regularly.
- Work with the Head of UK Policy and Advocacy and the Policy & Advocacy team so our policy positions and external affairs activity reinforce each other.
- Work across our teams so projects are SMART, geographically focused and aligned to political, policy and legal opportunities in each nation.

Parliaments & Governments

- Lead our engagement with the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, the Senedd and the Northern Ireland Assembly, and with the four governments.
- Design and oversee parliamentary campaigns, including on legislative change that affects marine recovery.
- Coordinate our parliamentary work with cross-border organisations and partnerships, so we take a joined-up four-nation approach.
- Give expert advice on policy and advocacy outputs, so our messaging is targeted and reflects devolved competencies.

Business Partnerships & External Representation

- Act as our lead with business leaders and business bodies on agreed priority areas.
- Build and maintain constructive relationships with our key external contacts.
- Act as a senior spokesperson for media and public-facing communications.
- Help our comms, engagement and fundraising teams build our profile with new audiences.

Strategic Legal Interventions

- Assess, with legal advisers, where legal routes could support our advocacy goals.
- Develop and oversee strategic legal interventions, such as challenges to decisions by government or public bodies, where they're the right approach.
- Identify and manage the legal, financial and reputational risks of this work, and advise the Director and Leadership Team.

Team Leadership & Budget

- Line manage the Parliamentary Affairs team, setting objectives and KPIs, and providing regular support and supervision in line with our policies.
- Review and appraise performance and support each team member's development.
- Plan the team's work to realistic timescales, so everyone knows their role and work fits the time and resources available.
- Build cohesion in a remote team and share information within the team and across the organisation.
- Manage the external affairs budget, covering team and relevant programme budgets, including the annual budget and half-year review.

Leadership Team

- Contribute to our strategic direction and decisions as an active member of the Leadership Team.
- Champion cross-team working, leading our matrix-style approach to deliver joined-up projects and operational plans.
- Encourage colleagues to find new approaches that improve team and organisational performance.
- Contribute to strategic planning and reviews of our environmental and organisational objectives.

General

Your place of work will be your home address; however, the role requires regular travel across the UK to external meetings, events and in-person team gatherings.

All colleagues are required to act responsibly in terms of the health, safety and welfare of yourself and colleagues in accordance with our Health & Safety Policy and Procedures, and the policies as set out in the Employee Handbook.

The duties and responsibilities highlighted in this Job Description are indicative and may vary over time. You may be asked to take on other reasonable duties that fit the level and scope of the role.

Person specification

Knowledge and experience (what you'll know)	
Essential	• Has led political or parliamentary engagement at a senior level that achieved a clear policy or legislative outcome. • Can explain how devolution shapes environmental or marine policy across the four UK nations and adapts influencing approaches to match. This understanding may come from work, study, volunteering or another route. • Has designed, led and evaluated advocacy campaigns, with clear objectives, a theory of change and measures of success. • Has built trusted relationships with parliamentarians, senior officials or business leaders that led to a change in position or practice. • Has led and developed a team, including people working remotely, so they deliver to a high standard. • Has managed a budget, planning spend, monitoring it and reporting against it.
Desirable	• Has developed or supported strategic legal interventions, working with legal advisers to use legal routes alongside wider advocacy. • Can apply knowledge of coastal and marine conservation issues, legislation and organisations to shape advocacy priorities. • Has engaged business bodies or industry groups to change policy or practice. • Has written funding proposals or reports for funders.
Skills and abilities (how you'll do it)	
Essential	• Uses sound political judgement to spot opportunities and risks, and chooses the right tactic: parliamentary engagement, coalition building, public campaigning or legal routes. • Explains complex policy in plain English, in writing and in person, tailoring messages for each UK government and audience. • Represents an organisation confidently with the media, including writing press releases and giving TV and radio interviews. • Plans and manages a complex programme of work to deadline and budget, adapting when circumstances change. • Uses evidence to evaluate progress and adjusts the approach when something isn't working. • Identifies and manages legal, financial and reputational risk in high-profile external work.
Desirable	• Spots and acts on opportunities to raise our profile and build new partnerships.
Personal Qualities (what you'll bring)	
• A personal style in line with our values and our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. • A genuine commitment to ocean conservation. • Builds open, supportive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, and leads by example. • Stays resilient and solutions-focused under pressure, prioritising a varied workload and competing deadlines. • Seeks continuous improvement and encourages others to try new approaches. • Organises their own time and stays connected with colleagues when working from home. • Able to travel regularly across the UK.	

How to apply

Active job vacancies are shown on our website https://www.mcsuk.org/work-for-us/current-vacancies/ and clicking on the job title will take you to our application system.

If you would like to contact us to request an adjustment that would help you to fully and comfortably take part in our recruitment process, please contact us at hr@mcsuk.org

What we might ask you to tell us

Your CV –If we ask for a CV, you should remove your personal information like photographs, contact information, name and age. Our system can remove personal information, but it may make a mess of the formatting. It's much better to not include personal information at the start.

A motivation statement - tell us how your experience meets the role requirements by referring closely to both the job description and the person specification. Include examples of your work or experiences which show how you will meet the job criteria and person specification and what skills you bring which would make you successful in the role.

Your motivation statement should also let us know what inspired you to apply for this role with us – tell us what it is about our work that attracted you to the organisation and the position.

We find that stronger applications have this statement so to give yourself the best opportunity for this role, please ensure you include it.

Role-based experience - We may ask you to provide an answer to a question that's related to the role, and that might be instead of a CV, or to help us look at how you'll approach something that is likely to come up as part of the role.

Helping you to shine - We understand that the application process can be difficult if you have a condition or disability that you are living with. We want to make it as easy as possible for you to shine during your application process, so please let us know what we can do to accommodate your needs.

Selection process

If you're invited to an interview, you may be requested to prepare a task in advance or take part in a group activity as part of the assessment process – we'll let you have all the details in the invitation to interview. We will also invite you to talk with us about any reasonable adjustments which would support you in fully and comfortably taking part in the interview process.

The legal bit

If you're successful, all offers of employment are conditional, subject to the following:

- We are not licensed to issue work permits so candidates are required to provide proof of eligibility to work in the UK and may be requested to present original documents if invited for interview. If appointed, you will be required to have your right to work in the UK confirmed through our approved agency prior to starting work. If your right to work cannot be sufficiently established we will legally be unable to continue with your employment.
- Information on what you'll need to show will be provided as part of the invitation to attend an interview, but you can read more on the Home Office UK Border Agency website: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration
- Receipt of two references which are satisfactory to MCS
- A check of your driving licence and insurance, if using a vehicle is an integral part of your role