



Director of Research and Policy

July 2024

About Water Witness

Water Witness is a leading force in the struggle for global water and climate justice. From our Headquarters in Edinburgh, we drive action, research, and advocacy for a future where all people can access the water they need to thrive, and are protected against floods, drought, pollution, ecosystem degradation and water conflict.

We stand with those at the sharp end of the water crisis to shine a light on its impacts, understand its root causes and to trigger action. We work with inspirational local partners to demand social justice and to unlock system change so that the world's most precious resource is managed sustainably, equitably and in ways which build resilience to climate change.

Over the past 15 years our team have been at the frontline, working to improve water security for millions of vulnerable people, reform and implement policy and law, build new approaches, nurture communities of practice, and hold governments and corporations to account. Our hands-on field expertise is backed up by cutting-edge research and analysis, and this provides the knowledge and credibility needed to accelerate delivery of the water-related Sustainable Development Goals.

Our [2030 Strategy](#) builds on our track record and sets out five imperatives for change which will unlock improved water resource governance and shared water security:

1. **Accountable governance:** to implement effective and equitable water policy and law.
2. **Progressive financing:** to unlock funding and financial incentives for water security.
3. **Redefining corporate responsibility:** to transform private sector behaviour on water.
4. **Confronting climate chaos:** to prevent catastrophic water shocks and build resilience.
5. **Activating people power:** to trigger political, social and economic change for water security.

Our strategy is working. By sharing compelling evidence and helping communities to raise their voices, we are changing the way that governments, business, and banks think and act on water.

Having secured significant new investment from a range of donors we are now seeking an exceptional individual with the skills, experience and vision needed to guide our next phase of delivery and impact. Join us and lead the transition to a fair water future

The Role

Role: Director of Research and Policy



Location: Edinburgh UK – Flexible working arrangements may be considered but periodic attendance in the office will be required.

Salary: £58,147-£67,682

Benefits:

- 8% pension employer contribution
- 34 days annual leave (inclusive of public holidays)
- After 5 years an increase of 1 day's leave a year to maximum of 5 additional
- Employer contribution to Westfield Health – Health Cash Plan
- Employee assistance programme
- Death in service – 3x salary
- Gym membership contribution of up to £25/month

Job Summary

This is an exciting and strategically important new position in a small but mighty team. The design, delivery and documentation of rigorous action research, and the strategic use of evidence are the foundations of our advocacy and action for a fair water future. To secure and scale our impact, Water Witness is therefore strengthening its research capabilities, technical skills and scientific expertise in water management, policy, and climate resilience through the creation of a dedicated team which will be led by the post holder. They will be responsible for ensuring that our work is underpinned by high-quality interdisciplinary research, state-of-the-art knowledge, and a deep understanding of water issues from multiple perspectives - technical, social, and political-economy.

The post holder will lead our research and investigations into the water and climate challenges facing vulnerable people around the world, their root causes, and actionable solutions. They will use their knowledge and experience to support implementation of our Strategy and Programmes, and guide the organisation towards new opportunities for influence, impact, and growth. They will provide high quality advice to our team, partners, and stakeholders, ensuring that their work is based on solid foundations of science and policy 'know-how'. As well as generating world-class analyses, publications, and outputs, they will lead our monitoring, evaluation and learning function to attribute and document our impact and ensure that emerging lessons shape our approach. Informed by this, the Director will work closely with the Public and Political Engagement team to turn evidence into action, and complex concepts into compelling communication for a range of audiences- including governments, businesses, financial



institutions and the press. They will be a confident and convincing advocate for change and will represent the organisation in multiple demanding contexts. Above all they will nurture a growing community of water justice leaders by building collective credibility, reach and influence, and ensuring that our evidence is strong, relevant, and packaged and presented in ways which will drive change.

As we onboard several major research focused programmes (Fair Water Footprints/Just Transition for Water, BASIN, Accountability for Water) this is a superb opportunity for a dedicated and high-calibre individual to take the next step in their career as a world changing scientist at the forefront of innovation for global water justice. We seek a dynamic leader who shares our values, who will be equally comfortable when facilitating participatory research with communities in remote locations, as they are when interrogating global datasets, publishing peer-reviewed papers, or speaking with the media, Ministers or corporate CEOs.

Key working relationships

The Director will join the Senior Leadership Team and will report to the CEO. They will work closely with our Directors of Public and Political Engagement, Global Operations and Corporate Services, and international offices and partners. They will support several 'task teams', will line manage a Research and Investigations Officer and a growing team in the future. We are seeking an experienced leader in research and policy with a passion for social justice and a track record of using evidence to drive real-world change.



Responsibilities

Strategic leadership and programme management:

- Using a deep understanding of the water sector, science and international development to shape delivery of our 2030 Strategy and secure new opportunities for impact and growth.
- Managing existing and new research focused programmes and supporting Directorates and country teams to ensure efficient, joined up and impactful working across research, advocacy, communications, and programme delivery.

Generation of evidence and knowledge:

- Leadership, planning, delivery and documentation of desk and field-based inter-disciplinary research to support our advocacy and campaigns. To include:
 - Participatory action research with communities facing resource degradation/depletion, climate impacts, inadequate WASH and poor governance in Africa, Asia and S. America.
 - Water footprint analysis of countries, sectors, and corporations, and investigating water impacts of consumption, ensuring a chain of evidence able to withstand legal scrutiny.
 - Assessing the performance of water institutions, finance, aid, and development programmes, and undertaking systematic reviews of evidence.
- Authoring and production of engaging reports, case studies, think pieces, peer reviewed publications, briefings and other outputs for a wide range of audiences.

Technical advice, support and mentoring:

- Working with programme/country teams to generate research strategy and guidance.
- Providing high quality technical support and advice to our staff, communities, and partner organisations, including Signatories to the Fair Water Footprints Declaration.

Securing external influence:

- Helping shape advocacy and campaign strategy, ensuring that our advocacy priorities, targets and materials are based on robust research and evidence
- Working closely with the Public and Political Engagement team to create content, shape dissemination plans, and communicate findings in accessible and engaging ways.
- Representing Water Witness in high-level meetings and as a press spokesperson

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning:

- Leadership of organizational monitoring, evaluation, learning and knowledge management.

Candidate profile



This role will suit a proactive individual with experience of applying their technical knowledge and research skills to support improved water governance.

Experience and qualifications:

- At least 8 years of proven experience leading a research, policy or technical team in an NGO or other relevant setting.
- Experience of water, climate and environment sectors, networks, platforms and opportunities for influence.
- A track record of using interdisciplinary research and analysis to understand complex challenges, generate evidence, strategic advice, and targeted solutions for environmental and/or social change.
- Ability to synthesise and package complex findings, and to communicate confidently with diverse audiences, including via influential reports, presentations, graphics etc.
- Successful coordination of projects, programmes, and experience of working effectively with diverse stakeholders, partners, and international teams.
- Proven experience of working with campaigns and advocacy/research into use.
- Experience of supporting monitoring, evaluation, and learning.
- Experience of managing complex logistics & safe/ethical delivery of field work.
- Relevant post-graduate degree, in a relevant topic.

Desirable:

- A deep understanding of the political economy of the global water and climate crises.
- Understanding of investigative journalism and strategic litigation as mechanisms for research led change.
- An extensive publication record in a relevant area.

Skills and attributes:

- An exceptional communicator with outstanding organizational skills.
- Empathetic problem solver, quick to establish strong working relationships.
- A strategic thinker able to manage multiple priorities whilst ensuring attention to detail.
- Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and to Water Witness' mission.



How to Apply

All correspondence, at this stage, should be via Oxford HR. To apply for this post, click on the “Apply” button on the job advert page, complete our online application form, and submit your CV and cover letter as two different documents, which should be prepared before applying as they will be considered in the application process.

The cover letter should be no more than two pages long and explain why you are interested in this post and how your skills and experience make you a good fit. The document should be saved in PDF in the following format: Your First Name-Your Last Name-Documents Name-Date (mmyy) e.g., Pat-Jones-CV-072024-WaterWitness or Pat-Jones-CoverLetter-072024-WaterWitness.

Timeline

Closing Date: 4th September 2024

First stage interviews: TBC

Final interviews: TBC

Selection process

All candidates will receive an update regarding their application after the closing date. We advise candidates to add the role email to their safe senders list and regularly check their spam folder.

Equality Statement

Equality and diversity are at the core of Water Witness values. Staff are expected to work collectively and individually to promote a constructive and sensitive approach to others from a variety of backgrounds, where the work of others is valued and respected.

Queries

If you have any queries on any aspect of the appointment process, need additional information, or would like to have an informal discussion, please email at jsawyer@oxfordhr.com in the first instance.

About Oxford HR

Oxford HR operates globally - mainly within the international development and charity sectors. We carry out retained executive search mandates at board and senior management levels. We also offer human resource and organisational development consultancy.



Oxford HR has many years of experience in search as well as an extensive network of international development, social sector, corporate, public sector, and academic contacts from across the world. We carry out comprehensive and often international searches designed to meet the specific needs of our client.