

Job Description – Associate Director, Energy and Environment (including Net Zero)

About Public First

Public First is a specialist consultancy, helping charities, philanthropists, public sector bodies and global brands improve public policy. Based in London, we have worked in more than two dozen international markets. We are part think tank, part strategic consultancy, part polling company, and part communications agency. In other words, we bring together the different disciplines that make policy happen and work.

Our team has been recruited from the most senior levels of government, the civil service, Parliament, political campaigns, think tanks, opinion research and the media. Our staff have been active in each of the main political parties. We are divided politically, but united by a desire to do rigorous, work that has a real-world impact on policy and its implementation. We believe our differences make our work better.

Energy and Environment (including Net Zero)

Energy and Environment is one of the major areas of specialism for Public First. There is now a global consensus that rapid decarbonisation is required to avert an economic and ecological disaster. Our team believes that net zero can only be achieved by a combination of business and government action and, in turn, these are only possible if the public is brought along with us on that journey.

At the same time as we need businesses to step up and drive extraordinary, swift changes, business behaviour is under increasing scrutiny. Consumers are worried about the impact that firms have on people, communities and the planet. And when consumers are worried, so are regulators and legislators. Being a responsible business seems ever more complex, requiring expertise in supply chains and inclusion, climate science and biodiversity. That complexity is increased by high levels of uncertainty around government policy: we know the end goal but not how we will reach it.

Public First helps client to navigate these uncharted waters in the following ways:

- **Policy:** Create and influence the government policies needed to reach net zero and encourage responsible business practices, assisted by policy experts with specialisms in skills, energy, tax, tech and the built environment.
- **Impact:** Demonstrate the positive impact of organisations, using credible and innovative impact reporting, and better communicate that impact with easy-to-use tools such as message houses and playbooks.
- **Strategy:** Mitigate emerging risks to reputation and bottom line and optimise strategies to make the most of rapidly evolving government policy and consumer opinion.
- **Campaign:** Create campaigns that shape government policy and change public behaviour, fuelled by gold-standard opinion research and deep campaign expertise.

Here is some of our recent work that is publicly available:

[How Carbon Pricing can help Britain achieve net zero by 2050](#)

[Sustainability Sentiment Tracker](#)

[Full Throttle – Driving UK Automotive Competitiveness](#)

[Options for Energy Bill Reform](#)

The role(s)

We are looking for the right person to come and join the energy and environment practice. We are open to the level of seniority that this role might cover but we expect you will come from some type of policy background and have a specialism in energy.

You may be someone who has spent a couple of years professionally in the energy sector, or in a policy role covering energy such as in a university, in government, a think tank, or a charity, or in consultancy and private business. For those people, we tend to recruit to what we call Policy Managers. More likely, you are a more experienced policymaker who has spent several years in one or more of those roles, or similar. For those, we recruit to a role we call Associate Director. We are also open to Director-level hires for the right candidate. Please do not worry overly about fitting yourself to the 'right' level. We recruit for skill, and fit within the organisation – and will work with the people we make offers to, to ensure that they are placed and rewarded within the company in a way that suits everyone.

The role will include some or all of the following key **responsibilities**:

- *Leading or supporting individual projects and liaison with the client within the energy and environment practice* under the supervision of the Head of Practice, but with significant day to day autonomy and responsibility for execution and delivery of work. This will include policy writing (internally and for publication), data analysis (via Excel), commissioning and managing junior staff and meetings and discussions with external stakeholders in Westminster and elsewhere.
- *Providing expertise in particular areas of energy and environment policy.* We are knowledge junkies! We want a culture of expertise within the organisation, and to learn from each other about all elements of policy within our practice (and other areas, as well)
- *Contributing to broader projects within the practice and across different practices* – for example, on a piece of work around housing development, or on a campaign or media relations piece of work which will include collaboration with specialists in other areas across Public First.
- *Maintaining client relationships*, including ongoing broader support, advice and counsel on developments in Westminster, and politics and policy more broadly.
- *Scoping of and developing future project work and engaging with potential clients.* Although this is not a business development role, and there is no 'sales target', everyone will have scope to develop new areas of policy which they want to work in and have opportunities to engage with new clients.
- *Maintaining and further building strong networks across the energy sector in the UK* – in government, energy companies and the wider energy network, think tanks and policy organisations, corporations and third sector organisations, media, and others. For more senior staff, we encourage everyone to build and maintain their own profile and brand including by speaking at events, writing for publications, and offering thought leadership more broadly.
- *Working alongside colleagues who offer specialisms in policy, communications, and campaigns* and who can contribute to energy projects. There will be significant opportunities to grow expertise across all these domains.

The role will require the following **skills and experience**:

- *Experience within the energy field* from a policy or communications perspective. The single most important thing we will be looking for is someone who understands the UK's energy system and evolving energy policy. We are relaxed about where this expertise may have come from, or how many years' experience you have. But we will be looking for someone who – for example – reads, and enjoys reading policy articles and opeds from Utility Week, Energy Live News, edie or Business Green on a daily basis, or contributes to discussion face to face or online about energy policy. We are unashamed about being wonks ourselves and we want someone to help contribute to this mission.
- *Familiarity with government, Westminster and policymaking and politics.* This could similarly have been gained through direct experience in politics and government or through working alongside them; regardless of the route, successful candidates will need to demonstrate above all that they understand how government and policymaking works.
- *Ability to write clearly, incisively and precisely about policy issues* – including the ability to translate complex policy topics into language accessible to educated laypeople.
- *Ability to handle quantitative data* – Public First employs economists and expert data modellers but all staff are required to be able to conduct, for example, data analysis functions in Excel up to publishable standard and to be comfortable working with large datasets and raw numbers and to be able to draw conclusions from them.
- *The ability to be able to present, verbally, conclusions from our work.* This could be to clients (including very senior individuals), or to prospective clients, or to MPs and policymakers, or to an expert education audience. We are looking for someone who is comfortable and enthusiastic about discussing energy policy and what it means.
- *A willingness to work flexibly across a small organisation* – including getting involved in different types of role within a project (for example, running focus groups, helping out on polling questions or psychological profiling, helping craft press releases, or managing events in Westminster) as well as policy analysis, and, where needed, contributing to projects running in other subject areas.
- *Ideally, a strong degree in a relevant subject area.* However, we are very willing to consider candidates who come from a non-graduate background who can demonstrate the skills and experiences required to fulfil the job description.

The roles are nominally London based (Westminster) but if Covid has taught us anything, it's that we are flexible! It is likely that the postholder will need to be physically present in London for at least a couple of days a week once normal life resumes, both to meet with other members of Public First and also meet current and future clients, but we are also highly likely to offer home working for a proportion of the week and indeed, client depending, for many contracts and projects for the foreseeable future. Given the geographic spread of many of our clients, we are also open to discussions about job holders being permanently based in another area of the country. International travel and work would be possible for future projects, but we cannot sponsor visas or manage people based permanently abroad.

Salaries will depend on experience and level of seniority but to give a sense of scale, Associate Director starting salaries will typically *start from* £50,000-£55,000, with considerable flexibility for the right candidate with experience.

We particularly welcome applications from disabled and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) candidates. We are a politically diverse organisation that has worked right across the political spectrum and want to continue that tradition as we grow.

If you're interested, please send a copy of a CV, a short covering letter outlining how you fit the criteria and two examples of writing¹ to contact@publicfirst.co.uk. We will recruit on a rolling basis until we identify the right candidate(s) but would encourage candidates to apply by the end of September at the latest.

¹ We are relaxed about whether this is writing you have already done in a professional capacity, or personally, or indeed writing you do specifically for this job advert. Similarly, in terms of purpose, this can be something written for publication in eg Computer Weekly, or a private note to a client or something from your own personal blog or LinkedIn – it really doesn't matter. The topic can be on anything you want within the broad sphere of Technology policy, and should be around 500-1000 words long. We will be looking both at what you say (though there is no 'right answer', we are interested in your analytical take regardless of what it is) and how you say it.