



solar power  
tea power

**Environment & Business  
Additional Information Pack  
Senior Advisor - External Affairs Strategic Engagement Team**

# John Leyland

## **Executive Director, Environment & Business (E&B)**

This is an exciting time to join us. The work we do and the outcomes we deliver are high profile with the Government, the media and the public. Illegal waste sites blight local neighbourhoods. Polluted streams, rivers, lakes and seas have a negative impact on the wildlife that depends on them and on local economies. Our hard work helps communities thrive, encourages healthy living and recreation and allows wildlife and the natural environment to flourish.

We place huge importance on health, safety and wellbeing and creating a respectful community. We want everyone to be able to be themselves and do their best work and to feel valued. We have over 150 trained Respect at Work advisors across the organisation, numerous staff led networks you can join and a large amount of training courses available for you to develop your skills and progress within your role or within the directorate.

[Hear from our people.](#)





# Gemma Sweet

## **Deputy Director, External Affairs**

I joined the EA in 2009 as a Grade 5 Communications and Business Partner—an amazing role that gave me a deep understanding of frontline work. I developed my skills across various portfolios, building fantastic relationships along the way.

After maternity leave in 2016, I took on a Grade 7 role leading communications for the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management programme. Although I was concerned about balancing work with two children, the EA's flexibility and support made it possible.

In January 2023, I secured a Deputy Director assignment, creating a new External Affairs function to transform how E&B communicates internally and externally. It's been one of the most exciting and rewarding roles of my career.

I've also benefited from personal development, including the FEW Leadership Programme (2013/14) and the 30% Club mentoring scheme, which support women in leadership. If you want a truly life-enhancing career, the EA is for you.

# Our teams

**E&B External Affairs was set up in October 2023** to set the strategic direction for engagement across the various portfolios including water quality, planning, waste regulation, decarbonisation and chemicals.

Our department is divided into the following teams:

- **People & Engagement:** We support E&B in getting the most out of a skilled, healthy, and diverse workforce by aiding managers with people management and helping staff realise their potential through recruitment, career development, skills enhancement, retention, and embedding EDI principles.
- **Internal Communications and Engagement:** We collaborate with the E&B Leadership Team and across the Directorate to develop and implement internal communications and engagement strategies, manage related channels, and support key initiatives and projects, ensuring alignment with national and corporate communications.
- **Correspondence:** We handle information requests for the E&B Directorate, including freedom of information and environmental information requests (FOIs/EIRs), general enquiries, Parliamentary Questions, briefings, and Defra requests. We log, track, and respond to these requests, ensuring compliance with legal and internal guidelines. Our strong links with Government Relations, press, Information Rights, and FOI advice help us manage and triage enquiries efficiently, reducing email traffic and understanding the directorate's workload.
- **Stakeholder Oversight:** We ensure the E&B directorate has the tools and resources for effective engagement by coordinating organisational join-up, managing key milestones, providing insights, support, and guidance for various initiatives and leadership activities.
- **Strategic engagement hubs:** We set the strategic direction for engagement, direct the messaging, plan the activities and use insights to adapt our plans as needed for three 'hubs': Water Regulation & Quality; Water Resources, Water Futures, Nature and Place; Energy and Resources & Chief Regulator. The roles we are advertising sit in these hubs.

# How we operate in External Affairs

## E&B Leadership Team (EBLT)

<b>Chief Scientist Group</b>	<b>Strategy &amp; Programmes</b>	<b>Water</b>	<b>Nature &amp; Place</b>	<b>Chief Regulator</b>	<b>Energy &amp; Resource</b>
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## E&B External Affairs, People & Engagement

- Embedded in E&B – integrated within EBLT and leadership teams
- Leads on external affairs and engagement – managing relationships and engagement; inc. proactively (horizon scanning/planning) and reactively (issues management/customer response)
- Works with the business to set the communication, engagement and people priorities for E&B
- Shares intelligence and expertise across E&B and wider organisation
- Operates to a range of service-levels; from light touch advice to full service, depending on priorities, capacity and skills
- Works in conjunction with the other EA departments.

<p><b>Defra Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic communications, press office, internal comms etc</li> <li>• HR - Business Partner and specialist functions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Flood &amp; Coastal Risk Management (FCRM)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic join-up with Business Engagement team</li> <li>• Joint working and sharing best practice with PMA digital/skills</li> </ul>	<p><b>Strategy, Transformation &amp; Assurance (STA)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EA Private Office (communications) &amp; G&amp;E inc info rights, political advice and guidance</li> <li>• Resourcing, skills, EDI (People)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Operations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place-based engagement</li> <li>• Tactical join-up with NCCC for correspondence</li> </ul>
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# The role

## External Affairs Senior Advisor

Reporting to one of the Heads of Strategic Engagement in our External Affairs team, this role is an exciting opportunity to be part of the E&B Directorate. You will sit at the heart of our work to support our long-term goals of 'Healthy air, land and water supporting nature's recovery', 'sustainable growth' and 'a nation resilient to climate change'.

We are advertising 5 roles which will focus on a different area of E&B but will be expected to work across portfolios as needed.

These roles involve shaping and delivering external communications and engagement for various portfolios including water quality and resources, chemicals, data and evidence.

In this role you'll lead and deliver communications and engagement plans and strategies for several issues and milestones.

You will work with our Defra Group comms colleagues to shape and deliver the external comms, internal clients across the business to identify and examine organisational priorities, and external affairs teams to shape our approach to engaging with external partners.

First and foremost, you'll be ready for this exciting challenge; you'll have a track record of building strong relationships and be ready to deliver positive outcomes.

You'll provide strategic engagement expertise, and the leadership required to ensure a coordinated and collaborative approach in a complex and fast-paced environment.

You need to have the ability to manage multiple topics at the same time and be able to move quickly between subjects. This can at times be a fast-paced role with conflicting demands that need rebalancing and prioritising on a weekly and sometimes daily basis.

# Available Roles

We have 5 x Grade 6 Senior Advisor positions available in our **Stakeholder Oversight and Strategic Engagement Hub** team.

## **Water Engagement Hub:**

- 1 x Permanent Grade 6 Senior Advisor
- 1 x Fixed term contract Grade 6 Senior Advisor until 31/08/2027

## **Energy & Resources, Chief Regulator and Stakeholder Oversight Hub:**

- 1 x Permanent Grade 6 Senior Advisor

## **Nature and Place, Water Resources, Water Futures and Chief Scientist Group Hub:**

- 2x Permanent Grade 6 Senior Advisor

## **Expected timeline:**

**Advert live: 3 February 2026**

**Advert close: 15 February 2026**

**Candidate call: 12 February 2026 at 12pm**

**Interviews expected: From March 2026**

**Offers expected: End of March 2026**

# Additional Information

## **Working at the EA:**

- Everyone new into the EA will have an inclusive incident management objective in their development plan. We'll help you find a role to suit your needs. Appropriate training will be given.
- You'll have an EA Office base location, as a national role the working location is flexible / hybrid.
- We use smart tools to stay connected and reduce travel. Some travel and overnights may be required.
- We support flexible working hours and practices to help you strike a good balance between your work and your personal life.
- As a valued member of the team, you'll be encouraged to challenge conventional thinking, explore innovative ways of working, develop strategies, and share your ideas, while maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

## **Assessment:**

- Applications are "blind" assessed using your answers to the competency questions. More information on how to answer competency questions can be found in the Candidate Pack attached to the advert.
- Interviews will consist of a two-round assessment. The first round will be conducted virtually, and candidates who are successful will be invited to attend a second-round, face-to-face assessment. Please note: The EA will not cover travel costs to face-to-face interviews.
- If you consent to being held on a reserve list, we'll hold your details for 6 months and may offer you an alternative post.

## **Development:**

- We provide access to a wide range of training and development courses to help broaden your skill set, to ensure you develop the critical competencies necessary for long-term success in your career.

# Candidate Call

**Date: 12 February 2026 at 12pm**

To help prospective candidates, we will be hosting a candidate call to introduce the role, team, and details of the assessment.

We encourage all interested candidates to join us to learn more and ask questions before you submit your application.

If you have any queries, please contact the [eandbpeople@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:eandbpeople@environment-agency.gov.uk)

## Call Details:

Microsoft Teams meeting: Join on your computer, mobile app, or room device

### [Join the meeting now](#)

- Meeting ID: 322 768 377 042 26
- Passcode: e8PW7pq7

## Dial in by phone

- [+44 20 3321 5273](tel:+442033215273), [954206596#](tel:+442033215273) United Kingdom, City of London
- Phone conference ID: 954 206 596#

## Join on a video conferencing device

- Tenant key: [teams@defra.onpexip.com](mailto:teams@defra.onpexip.com)
- Video ID: 122 499 897 9



# Robin Chatterjee

## People and Engagement Team Manager

I've worked for the EA for over 30 years, in different parts of the organisation, and with many inspirational people. The start of my career was focused on the environment, but over the last twenty years I've worked mainly on communication and engagement, change management and trying to help people realise their potential and get the best out of each other. My journey is indicative of the huge range of stimulating and rewarding development opportunities and career pathways available to people at the EA, which lead many of us to stay for so long.

I help lead the EA's Carers' network, which provides support and advice to employees who have caring responsibilities, but also helps the organisation get the best from the amazing and talented carers in its workforce. I'm also a Respect at Work advisor (providing support and advice to colleagues who feel they have been treated unfairly/disrespectfully).

# Hannah Millinship

## External Affairs Senior Advisor

I'm the Environment Agency's Senior External Affairs advisor on sustainable growth, which is an exciting and unique role working across the different departments of the Agency to tell the story of how we enable sustainable economic growth, within environmental capacity.

I've been at the Environment Agency for almost two years; this is my second job in that space of time and brings with it lots of opportunity to work with senior colleagues to shape our approach to this core government priority. In addition to career progression opportunities, I've been encouraged to dedicate time to learning and development, including through maintaining my membership of CIPR and the GCS community.

Having previously worked for charities and social enterprises, as well as in other parts of the public sector, I've really felt welcomed at the EA. Our uniting purpose is to protect the environment and it is clear that everybody who works here feels strongly connected with that vision – and it's brilliant to work alongside such passionate colleagues





# Rob Millbank

## **External Affairs - Senior Advisor**

I've worked for the EA for 14 years and currently lead the Stakeholder Oversight team within E&B External Affairs. I provide leadership to a small team who support senior leaders with stakeholder engagement and help ensure the EA's work is clearly communicated to a wide range of stakeholders.

One of the main reasons I've enjoyed working here for so long is the variety of roles I've been able to take on - including roles in permitting, town and country planning, customers & engagement and external affairs. Each role has tested me in different ways, but the biggest constant has been the people. I've always worked with supportive and knowledgeable people who are happy to help, and who genuinely care about doing the best thing for the environment.

The EA have been brilliant in supporting my learning and development, and I've been encouraged to build new skills, take on leadership responsibilities from day one, and progress my career, all while maintaining a great work-life balance.

# Sophie Waddington

## **External Affairs Advisor**

I lead strategic communication and engagement for the Water (Special Measures) Act 2025 and wider water-industry regulatory priorities. Working within the Water Engagement Strategy Hub, I help set the strategic direction for water-quality engagement and work collaboratively across teams to reach the right stakeholders at the right time. I particularly enjoy shaping clear, compelling stories that translate technical expertise into effective engagement.

I joined the Environment Agency in July 2025 and am keen to continue developing my career here. I'm enrolled on the Government Communication Service Advanced Practitioner programme and also support incident response through my role in the National Incident Room, contributing to our responsibilities as a Category 1 responder.

Based at Horizon House in Bristol, I enjoy the office culture and co-captain a recreational touch rugby team open to colleagues across the Defra group.





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Come and Join us!