

Head of Policy (x2)

Water UK

May 2026



Introduction from the Chief Executive

Water is used by each of us every day, but until the last few years was rarely the subject of political debate. Greater scrutiny on the industry has created an unprecedented opportunity to challenge conventional wisdom and secure acceptance for contentious – but necessary – reforms. Joining Water UK provides the chance to develop ideas that are radical but progressive, and design strategies to have them adopted by decision-makers.

Since joining as CEO in 2023, and supported by our Chair, the former Cabinet Minister Ruth Kelly, Water UK has increasingly been at the centre of leading work to ensure that the water industry better meets the needs and interests of society. This has included major new transparency platforms, sweeping and detailed work on long-overdue reforms and building the detailed case for investment.

There is much more to do and, in the next few years, I have three main priorities.

First, we need to ensure that industry is well-placed to deliver a quadrupling of capital investment to 2030. This investment is urgently needed to renew infrastructure and restore trust. We work to ensure the rapid and effective delivery of improvements across the country.

Secondly, we must work with the UK and Welsh Governments on their major programmes of reform, which includes implementing their responses to the Independent Water Commission led by Sir Jon Cunliffe. Our aim is to develop major, well-evidenced and compelling policy ideas that better enable the sector to deliver on its long-term ambitions. Those ambitions include much better environmental

performance and the huge effort needed to secure water supplies against climate change and to support economic growth and new homes. To accelerate progress, we must also work with government to improve controls over sewage treatment and wider pollutants across society, which also enter water used for drinking water.

It is hard to overstate the potential of this sector reform programme in England and Wales. Since privatisation in 1990, there has been no major change to water regulation. With public and political expectations running very high, Water UK is uniquely well placed to shape the future of water for decades to come.

The third is to bolster our organisation's capabilities. This is because the industry looks to Water UK to analyse some of the most profound public policy challenges facing the country. We need to develop and deliver policies in partnership with some of the largest companies in the country, as well as the most senior decision makers across government, regulators and non-governmental organisations.

Therefore, recognising the challenges and opportunities facing the industry, and our members' commitment to Water UK, we are expanding the organisation.

If the kind of questions we're grappling with sound interesting, and you are excited about making a real difference on a subject that touches the lives of everyone in the country, I would love you to apply.

David Henderson
CEO
Water UK



Role Descriptions

Water UK's Policy Team is led by our Director of Policy and comprises two Deputy Directors, one for wastewater and one for water and Price Review 24 delivery. Beneath them sit six 'Heads of' roles – experts who are each in charge of a discreet portfolio, including the Head of Natural Environment and the Head of Planning and Growth. Water UK is recruiting for two of these roles – Head of Drinking Water and Head of Environmental Reform. Candidates are welcome to apply for one or both roles and should clearly state which roles they are applying for in their application.

The water industry is at a historic turning point. Water UK's Heads of Policy play a vital role in supporting the industry to address vital long-term challenges to support the delivery of our critical to life infrastructure service.

Head of Drinking Water

The Head of Drinking Water will be responsible for thought leadership on drinking water policy. They will lead on critical issues such as horizon scanning on threats to drinking water quality (such as PFAS), consider how drinking water regulations can be reformed to enable greater water reuse and they will own our relationship with the Drinking Water Inspectorate, the industry's regulator and key interlocutor on the quality of drinking water.

Head of Environmental Reform

The Head of Environmental Reform will provide thought leadership on how regulation, policy and investment can be shaped to deliver improved long-term environmental outcomes. The role will lead strategic thinking on the future legislative framework for water quality and wastewater, including consideration of how regimes such as the Urban Wastewater Treatment Regulations and the Water Framework Regulations should evolve to better support environmental protection, public value and resilience. The role will also lead engagement with the government on developing plans for the next Water Industry National Environment Programme in 2029, influencing the direction of billions of pounds worth of expenditure.

Head of Drinking Water

Responsibilities

The role will lead on the following key areas:

1) Policy development – drinking water

quality: Lead Water UK policy development and engagement on Drinking Water and ensure delivery of the policies committed to in the government's white paper 'A New Vision for Water'. This includes work on the following:

- Advising Government and regulators on the best way to manage risks from PFAS
- Horizon scanning future risks to drinking water quality.
- Managing the impact of drinking water treatment on the environment
- Gathering intelligence on international approaches to drinking water management and using the findings to ensure the UK retains the best quality drinking water in the world.
- Understanding and assessing the impact of forthcoming regulation and guidance.

2) Policy Development – resilience of drinking

water supplies: Ensure effective management of the resilience of drinking water supplies through addressing the following challenges:

- Ensuring drinking water regulation is not a barrier to the deployment of water recycling systems (such as rainwater and greywater harvesting).
- Ensuring drinking water quality regulation around emergency outages is practical and implementable – and does not jeopardise supplies.

3) Stakeholder engagement: Advocate and build the case for a high ambition approach to water quality by:

- Communicating at a senior level the industry's regulatory priorities to the Drinking Water Inspectorate.
- Chairing Water UK's Clean Water Committee, our senior forum for drinking water issues and in doing so;
 - Ensure industry discussions are focused on the most critical risks to maintaining the best quality drinking water in the world.
 - Assess and escalate concerns as necessary to Water UK Board.

Head of Environmental Reform

Responsibilities

The role will lead on the following key areas:

1) **Policy development – legislative reform and long-term outcomes:**

Lead Water UK policy development and engagement for the future of environmental legislation. This includes the following:

- Providing strategic leadership on the future direction of environmental regulation and policy, with a clear focus on delivering improved long-term environmental outcomes.
- Leading our thinking on the reform and evolution of legislative and regulatory framework governing water, including (but not limited to) Urban Wastewater Treatment Regulations and Water Framework Directive regulations, ensuring they remain fit for purpose in addressing current and emerging environmental challenges.
- Developing and promoting outcomes-based approaches to environmental regulation, considering how regulatory design can better incentivise improvements in water quality, ecological health, and system resilience.
- Building and maintaining relationships with water companies, regulators and other stakeholders.
- Identifying and assessing emerging environmental risks, regulatory gaps, and system inefficiencies, and translating these into actionable policy and regulatory proposals.
- Leading Water UK policy development and engagement on the next iteration of the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP).
- Advising on the best approach to realising the Independent Water Commission's recommendation for the creation of a network of regionally-based water environment systems planners.

Skills and experience

About you

The successful candidate for both roles will have the following attributes.

Essential

- Experience in developing recommendations for industry, government and regulators to improve public policy outcomes – preferably in an infrastructure sector.
- Strong stakeholder management skills, including experience working with senior stakeholders, government and regulators.
- Experience in horizon scanning and risk assessment and pre-emptively developing policies.
- Ability to think creatively in developing and advocating for new policy responses that reduce the risks to the supply of critical infrastructure services – drinking water and wastewater treatment.
- Clear and concise written communication skills, including drafting briefings, policy papers, summaries and lessons learned reports.
- Excellent verbal communication skills, including the ability to explain complicated policy proposals in an accessible way.
- Comfortable working independently while contributing effectively to a small, collaborative team.
- Ability to lead small discrete policy analysis projects on areas of interest.

Desirable

- Experience of handling and interpreting data.
- Knowledge of water industry processes.

About Water UK

Water UK represents all 17 of the water companies across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In addition, our associate members include new market entrants and water providers in the Channel Islands and Isle of Man.

Water UK members range from government-owned and not-for-profit companies to some of the UK's largest enterprises listed in the FTSE100.

Our job is to act as a force for good by understanding the biggest challenges facing the sector and solving them. Our activity ranges from developing long-term plans to suggesting legislation to running national behaviour change campaigns.

Some recent areas of focus include:

- The increasing pressures to public water supply and the environment from drought. We are responding with work on [leakage](#), [new reservoirs and water transfers](#), and a national campaign to [reduce wasted water](#).
- Achieving faster progress on sewage spills at lower cost to the customer (for example, by leading the [work on options](#), setting out a [plan of action](#) and campaigning to [reduce sewer blockages](#)).
- Improving the broader condition of rivers and seas (for example, by reducing pollutants from sewage works or [supporting the creation of new wetlands](#) and other nature-based treatment).
- Responding to new threats to drinking water, like microplastics and [persistent toxic chemicals](#).
- Providing better support for [vulnerable customers](#) and those [struggling with bills](#).
- [Securing investment](#) for dealing with these challenges, considering how they could better deal with specific problems such as the [ageing state of water infrastructure](#), and intervening in [regulatory appeals](#).
- Producing comprehensive submissions on behalf of industry to influence [reviews of regulation](#), [independent commissions](#) and [parliamentary inquiries](#).
- Promoting education, [information](#) and understanding and working very closely with the most senior leaders across the UK's water companies, non-governmental organisations, investors, regulators and government departments – as well as international bodies and companies abroad.



Working for Water UK

Water UK is a small, friendly and high-performing organisation.

Our work is typically fast-paced and offers engagement with and exposure to very senior decision makers. There is an opportunity to have a real and enduring impact for customers and the environment. The work is high-profile, varied and interesting.

1. Competitive salary
2. Discretionary bonus of up to 25% of salary
3. Private medical insurance and dental coverage
4. 27 working days' holiday, with the option to 'buy' more annual leave if you wish
5. Pension scheme – employee 5%, employer 6%
6. Life assurance from date of joining

We are based in central London, close to St James's Park. All roles are offered on a hybrid basis with an expectation of 3 to 4 days a week in the office.

