

Sustainability First: Recruitment of Chair and Treasurer March 2024

Sustainability First is seeking to appoint **a Chair and a Treasurer who will also become trustees.**

Our current Chair has served for many years as a Trustee and latterly as Chair and will be retiring in the summer 2024. Our Treasurer retired after 4 years in late 2023 and the role is currently being covered temporarily by one of our existing trustees.

Our new Chair and Treasurer will play a key role in helping to guide Sustainability First through the next stage of its development. Appointed for an initial term of three years, with the option for a second term, these two non-executive officers will help oversee and extend the governance, impact, sustainability, resilience and reach of the charity in the context of the major challenges facing both the energy and water sectors in the UK. The roles provide an opportunity to make a substantial contribution to the charity itself and, externally, to improve the fairness of regulation and operations, reduce adverse environmental impacts and improve inclusivity and equity by engaging lesser-heard voices in decision making across the energy and water sectors.

This documents briefly sets out Sustainability First and its approach, the role description for the Chair and Treasurer and for trustees and details of how to apply.

About Sustainability First

We are a small, highly regarded think-tank and charity that promotes practical, sustainable solutions to improve environmental, economic and social wellbeing through thought-leadership - primarily in the areas of energy and water.

We advocate change by undertaking research, convening policy discussions, making complex issues accessible to engage the public, promoting unheard and under-represented voices, and developing solutions to influence government policies, legislation, regulation, and business practices. We will always act as critical friends, holding companies, government bodies, and regulators accountable, in the public and planet's interests.

Our work focuses on promoting a 'public interest' agenda where consumer and environmental issues come together and yet where there are often trade-offs between managing near-term pressures against the need for longer-term thinking and actions for sustainability.

We build a policy and evidence base in support of our recommendations and advocate for change through continued engagement and stewardship.

We are independent and will only work with funders who respect the importance and value of approach as critical friends. Our funding comes from a mix of annual subscriptions to our newly-formed Sustainability Leaders Group, consultancy services to companies, regulators, and government-backed bodies, multi-stakeholder funded projects, grant-making bodies and

philanthropy. We have a reasonable level of reserves and are continuously developing our approach to fundraising to ensure our financial sustainability.

We run a mixed team of Sustainability Experts and staff on our projects to match our expertise to the needs of each piece of work we undertake. Our current directly-employed staff are our Executive Director and our part-time Policy Directors, a Senior Research Officer, Communications Manager and a part-time Company Secretary. We currently have eight members of our Expert Group. We have use of office space in central London, kindly gifted in-kind to our charity, but mostly work remotely. For more information visit <http://www.sustainabilityfirst.org.uk>

The legal charitable purpose of Sustainability First is *“to advance knowledge and understanding of the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainability and to undertake and procure research and study and to publish any useful results. to promote ideas, actions and changes to further the integration of quality of life with environmental protection, including the combating of climate change and global warming; at a community, regional, national and international level”*.

Our values:

- 1) Openness & Trust – promoting transparency, embracing diverse perspectives, prioritising integrity, and reliability.
- 2) Empathy & Inclusion – An evidence-based understanding of the needs and experiences of a diverse group of stakeholders that seeks to address these needs effectively.
- 3) Creativity – demonstrating passion, seeking innovative solutions, and engaging stakeholders imaginatively.

Our mission – How we make change in favour of sustainability.

- 1) Promote change and practical solutions in the energy and water sectors for a fairer society and address the planetary crisis.
- 2) Help policymakers, regulators, and business leaders to place sustainability at the centre of the energy and water sectors.
- 3) Champion the public interest and amplify lesser-heard voices in decision making to improve inclusivity and equity.

Our vision – the outcomes we want to achieve.

- 1) Address the climate crisis through a fair and affordable transition to clean energy.
- 2) A society that places greater value on the importance of clean water, and resilient water environments.
- 3) Greater connectivity between the public and decision-makers for better informed policymaking, especially when it helps underrepresented groups and future generations who are often an unheard voice in energy and water policy development.

ROLE DESCRIPTION FOR CHAIR OF OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

You will be joining Sustainability First at a critical time, where we are stepping up our ambition to drive change in the energy and water sectors in a way that benefits people and responds to the urgent need to transition to a more sustainable future. You will work collaboratively with our Executive Director in meeting our ambitions to scale our work, drive change across the sector and embed the representation of people into decision-making. This will include six primary responsibilities:

1. Ensuring that Sustainability First has a clear strategic direction aimed at fulfilling its charity objectives and that the Strategy is regularly reviewed.
2. Oversight of the governance of the Charity with:
 - a. an effective, diverse and relevant Board of Trustees.
 - b. appropriate policies, processes & financial management such that the Charity operates within the law, in pursuit of its Strategy and demonstrating good practice.
 - c. regular and effective liaison, reporting and oversight of the Executive Director, Company Secretary and, as necessary, staff and panel of experts in order to ensure effective and proportionate planning, use of resources, monitoring and reporting by the Board of Trustees.
3. Set the agenda for and chair Board meetings to ensure engagement of, and discussion amongst Trustees based on the best possible information, input from the Executive Director and team, leading to clear and accountable decision-making.
4. Appointment, support and management of the Executive Director on behalf of the Board.
5. Ensure that the charity has an income generation strategy which is monitored and actively supported by trustees and Chair, in order to achieve the Board's stated objective to build resilience and capacity for Sustainability First to successfully fulfil its charitable objects.
6. To represent the charity externally as required.

PERSON SPECIFICATION – CHAIR The ideal candidate will have proven knowledge/ skills/ experience in the following areas:

1. Governance and board experience (essential) and in a chairing or leadership role (desirable)
2. Demonstrable leadership skills consistent with Sustainability First's values and charitable purpose (essential)
3. Ability to both manage and support the Board and Executive Director to help achieve the best outcomes (essential)

4. Support the vision and mission of the charity (essential) with experience, networks and profile in one or more of our areas of operation (desirable)
5. Sufficient time and energy to fulfil the role (essential)
6. A growth mindset (essential) and Income generation experience (desirable)
7. Experience of small organisations and their particular challenges in a professional or voluntary capacity (essential)
8. Experience of working within the UK Charity Sector (desirable)

In addition to preparing for and chairing the Board, the Chair will be an ex officio member of all Board Panels, will line manage the Executive Director and will represent the charity externally as requested. The commitment is likely to average around two days per month.

The appointment is for an initial three-year term with the option to renew.

ROLE DESCRIPTION FOR TREASURER

On appointment, the Treasurer will become a trustee and company member of Sustainability First.

As Treasurer, you would take the lead at board level on:

1. Making sure Sustainability First keeps proper accounts.
2. Reviewing Sustainability First's financial performance.
3. Reviewing policies for finance and investment.
4. Ensuring that Sustainability First has robust and effective financial controls in place.
5. Liaising with the Company Secretary and bookkeeper and with the charity's independent examiner/auditor.

Specific tasks as Treasurer are likely to include:

1. Liaise with the Company Secretary and bookkeeper to ensure the financial viability of the organisation.
2. Make fellow Trustees aware of their financial obligations and take a lead in interpreting financial data to them.
3. Regularly report the financial position at Trustee meetings.
4. Oversee the production of an annual budget and propose its adoption at the last meeting of the previous financial year.
5. Ensure proper records are kept and that effective financial procedures and controls are in place.

6. Lead on appointing and liaising with auditors/the independent examiner.
7. Chair the Finance Panel, and participate in ad-hoc board committees such as the Remuneration Panel as required.

PERSON SPECIFICATION – TREASURER The ideal candidate will have proven knowledge/skills/ experience in the following areas:

1. Working knowledge of strategic and operational financial planning and management and reporting (essential)
2. Knowledge of financial controls and reporting in UK (essential) and for charities (desirable)
3. Experience of income generation (desirable)
4. Governance and board experience (desirable)
5. Sufficient time and energy to fulfil the role (essential)
6. Experience of working in the UK Charity sector (desirable)
7. Experience of working in, running or volunteering with a small organisation (essential)

The time commitment for this role is likely to average around one day a month.

The appointment is for an initial three-year term with the option to renew.

THE ROLE OF TRUSTEES (Both the Chair and the Treasurer will also become trustees.)

Key responsibilities as a Trustee include guiding the strategic direction of the charity to:

- Ensure Sustainability First is carrying out its purposes for the public benefit.
- Comply with Sustainability First's Memorandum and Articles of Association and the law.
- Ensure Sustainability First is accountable.
- Manage Sustainability First's resources responsibly.
- Act in Sustainability First's best interests.
- Act with reasonable care and skill.

Qualities for Trustees

- Empathy and commitment to the objectives and values of Sustainability First.
- Ability as part of a small team to guide the strategic direction of the organisation.
- Ability to communicate clearly.
- Ability to provide guidance which is proportionate to a small organisation but one which has a strong national reputation.

We value and promote the importance of greater equity, diversity and inclusion in society. We believe that everyone has the right to live without fear or prejudice regardless of race, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, social class, religion and belief. And we strive to see this diversity reflected in our staff, trustees, partners, and funders.

Trustee commitment

Trustees meet four times a year for Board meetings and most trustees also serve on one of the Board Panels. Currently the Board Panels are Policy Panel; Finance Panel; Communication Panel, Remuneration and Personnel Panel plus ad hoc groups looking at matters such as strategy and recruitment. Meetings are mostly held virtually with occasional in-person meetings in central London.

Trustee positions are not remunerated although reasonable travel expenses will be paid.

On appointment, Trustees will also become members of Sustainability First, a Company Limited by Guarantee as well as a charity.

How to apply

Please send a cover letter (explaining why you are applying for this role and what experience and skills you would bring to it), a copy of your CV, and a completed [Equity Diversity and Inclusion monitoring form](#) to our Company Secretary and Head of Finance, Claire Williams, at claire.williams@sustainabilityfirst.org.uk **by 13th May 2024.**

We will get back in touch with all applicants to let them know if they have been short listed for interview. Interviews will take place in May/June.

If you would like a confidential chat about this role in advance of applying, please email our Executive Director, David Murray, david.murray@sustainabilityfirst.org.uk, and he will get back to you to arrange a call.