

JOIN THE LINE-UP

Recruitment Pack

Head of People and Culture

November 2026



THE PROBLEM

Ocean health is vital to all of us, wherever we live. The food we eat and the water we drink. The places we work and play. The weather around us. The climate we depend on. Even the air we breathe. Society has been shaped by a healthy and stable ocean. For people to continue to thrive and live life to the fullest, the ocean must thrive too. The planet is at tipping point and change is needed now.

Build the culture that wins

Thirty-six years ago, a handful of surfers got fed up with surfing in sewage and decided to do something about it. Today Surfers Against Sewage is a nationwide movement of staff, volunteers, communities and supporters and is one of the UK's most effective marine campaigning charities.

But sewage pollution remains a massive threat to our seas and inland wild waters, and the people who love, enjoy, and rely on them. The time for tinkering around the edges is over. Winning means changing the systems that put profit over people, and that takes a bigger, bolder, and more joined-up SAS.

We've got a new strategy, and we're gearing up to make sure we can be as impactful as possible. We are working on the technology, systems, and processes a leading campaigning organisation needs but we recognise that the power of our movement comes from people. Our ambition is an innovator and disruptor culture, with creativity, clear decisions, real ownership and room to experiment. Culture like that doesn't happen by accident. It's built by leaders, by managers, and by the people who support them.

That's where you come in. If you want to shape how a mission-driven organisation works, challenges itself and looks after its people, we'd love to hear from you. You don't need to surf. You do need to care about the ocean and about doing right by the people who protect it.

Read on to find out more.



Surfers Against Sewage campaigners, early 1990s

OUR CAMPAIGNS ARE ONLY AS STRONG AS THE PEOPLE BEHIND THEM.

Giles Bristow
CEO



As we start a new strategic plan, I'm looking for someone who'll help us become the organisation we say we are: fearless, focused and fun-loving, and a place where people can own their impact. If that's you, I'd love to meet you.

Giles Bristow, CEO

Head of People & Culture

Build the capabilities, resilience, leadership and culture that lets us move fast, challenge openly and deliver our bold ambitions.

Department/Team	Operations
Hours	Full time
Contract	Permanent
Role level	Level 2
Reports to	Director of People & Operations
Location	Hybrid
Salary range	£48,560 - £55,421
No of Direct reports	1 (Senior HR Officer)

WHY THIS ROLE EXISTS

Our strategy needs us to adopt an innovator culture, with creativity, clear decisions and ownership, cross-charity collaboration, and room to experiment. To make this shift we need to bring our people with us, and recruit, develop, recognise and retain talented staff who will thrive in a fearless, focused and fun-loving environment.

This new role sets our People Strategy and builds the frameworks, policies and leadership capability behind it. Through coaching and business partnering, you will help leaders model the change they want to see, and managers to take ownership of people management. As our leading people expert, you will also give support on complex workforce, organisational development, EDI and volunteer duty of care matters.

The role in brief

01. Shape and drive our culture

Be the steward of our values and the behaviours behind them. Help colleagues live them, building them into how we recruit, manage and recognise people.

02. Build leadership at all levels

Build leaders' and managers' skills, resilience and confidence so they own people management, take accountability and model our values.

03. Get the foundations right

Keep our people frameworks and policies fair, proportionate and focused on delivering our goals, so they help people do their best work.

What Will you do

People strategy, workforce planning, recruitment and retention

Develop and deliver a People Strategy, in line with our org strategy, priorities and future workforce needs.

Advise and challenge the Leadership Team on workforce and succession planning, capability and emerging people risks, using data to set priorities.

Culture, engagement and organisational development

Be the steward of our culture, values and expected behaviours, driving us to be more Innovative, Disruptive,

Fearless, Focused and Fun-loving in how we approach our work.

Leadership, management and capability
Build leadership capability across SAS, supporting leaders to coach great performance from teams, and model honest challenge, quick decisions and clear ownership.

Equality, diversity and inclusion
Lead and embed a new EDI Strategy, with clear objectives and open progress reporting, to make SAS more inclusive, diverse and equitable.

Employee relations, reward and people governance
Advise and challenge managers on complex, sensitive or higher-risk employee relations and performance matters, so they own and tackle people issues early. Oversee and take escalations from the Senior HR Officer's day-to-day casework.

Volunteer duty of care and safeguarding frameworks
Own our organisational frameworks for volunteer duty of care, setting clear policies, standards and escalation routes

Our Values in this role

Fearless
We aim big, make noise and call bullsh*t

Challenge leaders about the gap between the culture we want and the one people experience. Have direct conversations when behaviour or performance falls short.

Focused
We're crystal clear in mind and message

Keep people priorities few, clear and tied to the strategy. Use evidence to make decisions and keep policies proportionate.

Fun-Loving
We're fiendishly playful, inspired by the water

Make fun, rest and connection part of how SAS works. Encourage leaders to take creative approaches, celebrate good work and get their teams outdoors.

YOU SPEC

Head of People & Culture

Essential experience and knowledge

- Significant experience in a senior people, HR, organisational development or people and culture role.
- Strong knowledge of UK employment law and employee relations practice.
- Experience leading organisational change, culture development or workforce transformation.
- Experience leading culture change programmes with a strong focus on EDI.
- Experience partnering with and advising senior leaders on complex people issues.
- Experience turning organisational strategy into a practical People and Culture plan, spotting emerging workforce risks and delivering through clear priorities, policies and governance.
- Experience using people data and insight to guide decisions around core people matters: leadership and management capability, overseeing pay, reward and salary benchmarking, and building people considerations into organisational change.
- Proven experience managing and developing people, including setting clear priorities, giving feedback and supporting good performance.

Essential skills and behaviours

- You balance strategic thinking with practical delivery.
- You lead inclusively, challenge constructively, make clear decisions and deliver what you say you will.
- You build trust across the organisation, give difficult messages directly and respectfully, and create an environment where people can contribute, develop and thrive.
- You influence individuals and teams through facilitation and coaching.
- You can keep people policies and governance legally compliant, manage complex and high-risk employee relations matters, and give credible advice to senior leaders and trustees.
- You have the judgement to set organisational controls and escalation routes for volunteer duty of care, safeguarding links, safer recruitment, wellbeing, inclusion and conduct.

Desirable

- MCIPD or FCIPD qualification.
- Experience of, and responsibility for, volunteering programmes.
- Experience in a charity, campaigning, membership or volunteer-involving organisation.
- Experience with safeguarding, duty of care or volunteer governance frameworks.
- Experience or understanding of supporting people to deliver in Agile teams.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Here at Surfers Against Sewage, we are not ones to shy away from the big topics. Equally, we are self-aware enough to realise where we have work to do.

We are setting ourselves ambitious but attainable targets and we recognise our engagement in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion needs a dedicated, organisation-wide strategy.

The impact of sewage pollution, water quality and climate change disproportionately affects marginalised communities, yet there is significantly lower representation in Ocean Activism from within these communities. We want to change that. Our aim is to ensure that everyone, wherever they live and whatever their background, can be part of the movement to protect the waters we love. That isn't just a tagline – it's a commitment.

We are all connected to the ocean, regardless of distance, age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation or belief system. We want to help reconnect us all to the ocean, waterways, rivers, lakes and even the water we use in our homes and schools. It's all connected – let's protect it together.

And finally, even if you don't meet every single requirement and don't surf, here at SAS we are committed to building a diverse, inclusive and equitable workplace, so if you like the look of this role and even if your past experience doesn't align perfectly with everything in the job description, we would still like to hear from you! You may be just the right candidate for this or other roles.



Clevedon Protest
© Earthminutes

BENEFITS

What are the benefits to working at Surfers Against Sewage, apart from being part of an amazing, dedicated and inspiring community of people?

Flexible working hours and TOIL
We offer a flexible approach to working hours between 7:30am and 6:30pm, and we provide Time Off In Lieu when staff are required to work overtime. Our contracts specify working hours, but we focus on outcomes over where, when, and how people work.

Hybrid and home working
Our roles are specified as either Hybrid working, with a requirement to come into the office a minimum of two days a week, or homeworking, with some travel to the office on agreed days (dependent on the role).

25 days of annual leave (pro rata), increasing each January up to 28 days, plus Bank Holidays.



Employee Assistance Programme
SAS have partnered with Perkbox. Their employee benefits programme is a suite of wellbeing services, offering you and your family a structured way to work through physical or mental health issues and financial.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
As part of this policy, we offer four wellbeing days a year , to be taken at any time as a preventative measure.

Pension
5% (instead of statutory 3%) and will be regularly reviewed. Nest pension with ethical savings options.

Enhanced sick pay
8 weeks full pay and 8 weeks half pay

Enhanced maternity and shared parental policies

Sabbatical policy
Giving the option for those with longer (>3 years) service to request sabbaticals or career breaks.

We also have an amazing office space for those based locally, overlooking the sea and with an invigorating headland walk, access to Trevaunance cove for swimming, or grab a surfboard from the rack and squeeze in a lunchtime surf. And best of all well behaved pets are allowed in the office, and we're pleased to provide never-ending Yallah Coffee for staff!

Many of the above benefits are non-contractual, and therefore can be changed without consultation. We are committed to creating an ever more progressive and open culture, and we believe the biggest benefit of working at SAS is working somewhere that you can own your impact. We are also pleased to be able to offer a bunch of other great stuff alongside!

TESTIMONIALS

> Starting as an administrator at SAS five years ago, I never expected to stay this long – let alone find my dream job bridging business and environmentalism as part of our Partnerships Team. Representing a movement fuelled by such a fiercely passionate community is both a massive privilege and a responsibility that keeps you on your toes. Behind the headlines and wild campaigns is a fast-paced team that refuses to compromise on impact, yet doesn't take themselves too seriously. We're trusted to own our outcomes within a culture that understands that you need the slow to fuel the fast – lunchtime surfs and headland walks are part of the daily rhythm. Tabi, Fundraising.

> Hi, I'm Alun, Technology & Transformational Lead at SAS and I love the fast-paced nature of the work we do. The landscape we operate in is always changing, and in order to remain focused on impact, we have to continuously adapt and react. Having a culture that encourages collaboration, calculated risk taking, being accountable, and taking those brave decisions, provides the foundation for the agility we need to keep challenging the status quo and pushing for systemic change.

> I'm Danni, the Senior Press Officer at SAS- it's my job to work with journalists and broadcasters to keep the sewage scandal in the headlines and keep the pressure on decision-makers, whether that's calling out the polluters in national press, staging a creative stunt or telling powerful stories of those impacted by sewage pollution. I love working in an environment where we are encouraged to be bold, make decisions and take risks, whilst always learning. It's a privilege to work alongside such a fun and talented bunch of people who support each other to grow the movement, mobilise people and take down the polluters!



VALUES

These are our f-words. They are bullishly simple because their job is to guide behaviours and practices across our organisation.

Being **fearless** means not shying away from the biggest fights. It means aiming high, saying things straight and calling out lies. It means leading the way by doing things first, and saying no if the potential impact is too small.

Focus is about concentrating our efforts with precision and force; not spreading ourselves too thinly. This requires making tough choices and uniting around pivotal goals. Focus unlocks innovation by shedding distractions. And it keeps us agile so we can quickly re-organise when the conversation needs to change.

Fun-loving might seem out of place, but fun is a deceptively powerful tool, and when paired with fearlessness creates the unique SAS blend of edge and mainstream virality. Ours is a culture of playful creativity, unexpected innovation, and stinging satire. It's a style of campaigning that disarms bad actors, grabs attention and rallies communities. And it's proof that humanity can prevail against extractivism and greed.

FEARLESS

FOCUSED

FUN-LOVING

APPLY

How to Apply

SAS is working in partnership with **PSR (Polly Symondson Recruitment)** to manage this recruitment process. Please submit your CV, detailing your skills and experience, and a supporting statement explaining how your experience matches the person specification and why you believe you are the right person for the role.

We recognise that some of your experience may be from unpaid roles as well as paid employment – please include any voluntary work if it helps to show why you are the right candidate for the job.

At PSR we do understand that Artificial Intelligence platforms can be a useful tool in assisting with research for an application, however we request that your supporting statement is not written using AI to ensure that your authentic voice and communication style is present. Any personal statements found to be AI generated will be discounted and a new version requested in order to progress an application. Please email your supporting statement and CV to info@pollysymondsonrecruitment.co.uk quoting ref: 2677

Timeline

01.

Application deadline: **1st December**

02.

Initial interviews with Polly Symondson Recruitment will take place online on **3rd/4th December**

03.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an interview on **9th December** with SAS

We actively encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds especially from ethnically diverse, LGBTQ+ and disabled communities as well as those with lived experiences of tackling inequalities, as we believe diverse voices are instrumental in creating transformational change.

Surfers Against Sewage, in compliance with the Equality Act 2010, will seek to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to employment caused by disability and/or neurodiversity, and encourages applications from these candidates. If you need any reasonable adjustments please contact PSR on 01242 691683. We guarantee to offer an interview to those with a disability who meet the minimum criteria.

Recruiting Applicants with Criminal Records: Applicants with criminal records are welcome to apply for roles at Surfers Against Sewage. Advice and guidance on disclosing a criminal record can be obtained from Unlock. Successful appointment is subject to DBS checks appropriate to the post and references.

We are committed to ensuring our recruitment processes are fair, transparent, and free from conflicts of interest. Please declare any family, personal, or close working relationship with a current employee, volunteer, trustee, or contractor of Surfers Against Sewage on your cover letter.