



# RUARAI DH DOBSON

*Industry: Philanthropic Funding / Air  
Quality Policy*

## CURRENT ROLE

- Head of Data, Clean Air Fund

## EDUCATION & CAREER PATH

- **BSc Microbiology**, University of Glasgow (2007–2011)
- **Political & Policy Work** (British Lung Foundation, ASH Scotland, others) (2011–2018)
- **PhD Health Science**, University of Stirling (2015–2019) + Research Assistant Work
- **Postdoctoral Research** (2019–2022)
- **Private Sector** – Air Quality Tech (2022–2024)
- **Head of Data**, Clean Air Fund (2024–present)

## HOW HIS PATH DIFFERED FROM EXPECTATIONS

- I never had a rigid career plan—more of an evolving process. It's easy to imagine a structured path (PhD → postdoc → lecturer → professor), but life isn't always that linear. Plans break down, but you adapt.
- I initially assumed I'd follow the academic route, but funding challenges, job scarcity, and the pandemic pushed me to explore other options. That led me to air quality tech, where I gained valuable experience managing teams and applying research.
- Working outside academia before my PhD gave me perspective on career possibilities. Universities operate in their own way, and outside experience helped me see what I wanted—and what was realistic.
- I've also done part-time consulting, which kept me engaged in academia while broadening my skills. Teaching and MSc supervision, for example, let me stay connected to research while exploring new opportunities. It's worth considering if you have the time.

## CAREER INSIGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

- I get to talk to fascinating people about air pollution data all day—honestly, they'd probably have to pay me not to do it. Like any career, there are challenges, but ultimately, I'm working on something that matters to me and to the world. I wouldn't trade that.

## FUTURE PLANS

- I'm still settling into my role at the Clean Air Fund, but I'm excited about the international scope of our work. There's a huge gap in air quality data—while it's widely available in the Global North, regions like sub-Saharan Africa lack critical information. Helping bridge that gap is incredibly meaningful.
- Long-term, I want to focus on turning air quality data into action. Many places don't just need more data—they need tools and strategies to use it effectively. That's the challenge I'm most interested in solving.

## ADVICE FOR EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS (ECRS)

- ☒ **Know your worth** – Your skills are valuable in and outside academia, and you don't have to settle. You have more career flexibility than you might think.
- ☒ **Build your network** – Conferences, emails, and LinkedIn messages can open doors you never expected. Many opportunities come from simple conversations.
- ☒ **Balance matters** – Your career won't be defined by one paper or opportunity. Work hard, but don't let late nights become the norm. Life outside work matters too.