



**Humanist  
Society  
Scotland**



# **Annual Report**

& Financial Summary 2020

# Annual Report & Financial Summary 2020

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[www.humanism.scot](http://www.humanism.scot)

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6 Broughton Street Lane, Edinburgh EH1 3LY



Humanist Society Scotland is a Scottish charity, no SC026570, and a Scottish company limited by guarantee, no SC413697.

Dear fellow member,

We are pleased to present the 2020 annual report of Humanist Society Scotland. This document features just some of the highlights of our work over 2020. This year has been a very challenging one for everyone and every organisation. Restrictions on physical gatherings have hampered much of our regular work in ways previously unimaginable.



So too the human impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our registered celebrants have been at the front line and provided important support to thousands of families who have been bereaved during the pandemic, by creating meaningful humanist funeral ceremonies. We know how difficult in particular restrictions around attendance at funerals have been for those bereaved, and we'd like to record our heartfelt thanks to all our celebrants and staff who have supported so many during this difficult time.

As we move into 2021 the challenges posed by the pandemic still loom large. We are of course hopeful that many of the most restrictive measures may soon be able to be relaxed, but understand caution will still be required moving forward. We are also in the midst of planning the 2022 joint general assemblies of Humanists International and the European Humanist Federation which will be held in Glasgow in June - the first time we have acted as hosts for an international humanist event. We hope many of you will be able to join us for a packed weekend.

It is clear that the commitment from our members, volunteers and supporters is undeterred by the challenges of the past year, and to you all we are extremely gratefully. Without your support and commitment to humanism the Society would be much worse off.

**Maggie Kinloch & Fraser Sutherland**

Chair & Chief Executive



# Key Events of 2020

**Humanist Society Scotland is the national charity for non-religious people seeking to live an ethical, secular, rational life.**

2020 saw the emergence of the Covid-19 virus, and restrictions related to the suppression of the virus created a number of significant challenges for the Society in the way we operate. The number of attendees at ceremonies have been restricted thus impacting on the ability for Society celebrants to provide the full set of services that would normally be possible. Key activities such as our conference, volunteering activity and local group events were all impacted

by the necessary restrictions to suppress the spread of Covid-19.

Despite this the Society continued to provide much needed ceremonies to mark key life events (particularly funerals) and support those facing loss at this especially difficult time. Our registered celebrants also supported the celebration of a number of small humanist weddings (held in line with the restrictions) to help couples mark an important step in their lives.

Some lighter touch volunteering activity continued while others were unable to return to normal activity because of restrictions or personal vulnerabilities. Despite this there was some very positive work from our StreetCare volunteers in matching up food businesses to shelters, and food banks saw volunteers act as a useful conduit for supplies.

The Society has had a busy year in its policy and campaigning work on matters of freedom of expression, abortion rights, LGBT inclusive sex education, assisted dying, children's rights, and other key human rights matters. The Society was featured, quoted, and covered in a significant amount of print and broadcast media across the year relating to our campaign work, and also the impact of our ceremonies during the pandemic. This shows the increasing relevance of humanism in Scottish society.

## Our Vision

**A caring and  
compassionate  
Scotland**

## Our Mission

**To be the champion  
for humanism  
in Scotland**



**a falling feather**

# Community and Outreach

## Education

The Society continues to offer support and resources to schools across Scotland to help pupils learn about humanism and explore non-religious responses to ethical issues. The Society launched a new set of educational materials at the beginning of 2020 aimed at the RMPS qualification courses in upper secondary schools.

For the third year running the Society replicated our Daily Discovery calendar of scientific facts. We have now provided over 500 wall charts over the past three years to both individuals who have bought one and in donations



to schools across the country. In addition the Society created a short animation that explores the core philosophy of humanism in a simple to understand format.

## Remembrance

Humanist Society Scotland took part in a streamed national memorial ceremony in June 2020 co-ordinated by our sister charity Humanists UK to mark the impact of the pandemic on individuals right across the country. Fewer Society representatives took part in national memorial events attached to remembrance week than in previous years as many ceremonies were cancelled due to the pandemic. At the national ceremony at Edinburgh Castle a wreath was laid on behalf of the Society.

## Gordon Ross Humanist of the Year Award

Mubarak Bala, the president of the Nigerian Humanists, was awarded the 2020 Humanist of the Year award. Humanist Society Scotland's annual award recognises individuals whose efforts to promote humanism and its values are exceptional. This was in recognition of his fight to regain freedom after his arbitrary detention at the start of 2020 on alleged blasphemy charges. We continue to be concerned for Mubarak's safety and will continue to champion his case, working with our international colleagues.

#FreeMubarakBala



*Mubarak Bala*

## StreetCare

In 2020 our StreetCare teams were severely hampered by the restrictions of the pandemic. This was due to the need to reduce physical contact with clients, the closure of our office space which acts dually as a storage facility for the Edinburgh team, and the self-isolation of volunteers who were particularly vulnerable. Despite the restrictions, contact-free support to hostels, foodbanks and other support services was offered by a small cohort of Glasgow volunteers able to work within the restrictions.



# Services

## Ceremonies

The Covid-19 pandemic severely restricted our activities related to the provision of humanist ceremonies as restrictions were placed on public gatherings including weddings and funerals. Our registered celebrants continued to provide humanist funerals throughout the restricted period. After March 2020 until the summer weddings were completely restricted to emergency ceremonies (for example those terminally ill). After this was relaxed to allow small intimate ceremonies we saw an increase in couples choosing outdoor weddings, particularly in the summer months.

In the summer the 2019 marriage statistics released by the National Registers for Scotland revealed



that for the first time there were more humanist marriages (23% of all weddings) than Christian marriages (22% of all weddings) of all denominations combined. In addition in 2019 Society celebrants provided the highest proportion share of all marriages ceremonies that the organisation has ever had in its history.

## Local Groups

Humanist Society Scotland continues to have a number of local member groups across the country including in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, Fife and the Borders. These groups provide an opportunity for members to meet other humanists and co-ordinate thought provoking discussions and charitable endeavours. The pandemic has presented a challenge to the operation of local groups, however a number of them have arranged online discussion and social events.



## Podcast / HumanKind

In reaction to the challenges presented by the pandemic in communicating with members and supporters we established our HumanKind newsletter. This presented uplifting news alongside development from humanist organisations around the world and updates on our campaign work. The positive feedback from subscribers saw us expand this into a podcast format which uses a magazine style format to talk about issues relating to humanism in Scotland, our work and campaigns, and showcase the many faces (and voices) of humanism and the Society.

## Civil Partnerships

Humanist Society Scotland gave evidence to the Scottish Parliament in favour of proposed changes allowing mixed-sex civil partnerships

– something the Society had been calling for since the passing of equal marriage legislation also supported by the Society. The bill was passed in July 2020 and the Society is registered to carry out such ceremonies as soon as they can be offered.

## Young Humanists Scotland

In December 2020 a section of Humanist Society Scotland seeking to support the under 25s was launched. The launch of Young Humanists Scotland was supported thanks to advice and grant funding from Young Humanists International. As part of the launch a discounted membership rate was offered to under 25s to join the Society for the first time.



# Championing Humanism

## End Blasphemy Laws Campaign

Humanist Society Scotland have been part of the international coalition against Blasphemy Laws since it was launched in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attack. As part of this the Society have campaigned to scrap the Scottish common law offence for the past five years. In April 2020 the Scottish Government confirmed

in their Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill would be a provision to repeal the common law offence against Blasphemy, a significant success for the Society and our international partners.

In addition to the provision on blasphemy law repeal the Society organised significant efforts to influence the draft hate crime bill, which we were concerned could



impact free expression on religion. In September 2020 it was confirmed that our efforts had been successful as the government changed the provisions on stirring up offences to apply only in situations where intent was proven. This is in line with the recommendations in the UN Rabat Plan of Action on free expression and protection against incitement to hatred.

In November 2020 – after hearing evidence from Humanist Society Scotland at the Scottish Parliament Justice Committee – it was announced by the Justice Secretary that further amendments would be made.

## Last Rights

Humanist Society Scotland continues to work hard to make the case for individuals to have the right to end-of-life choices. We continue to work closely with other campaigners Dignity in Dying and Friends at the End and with supportive MSPs in the parliament. At the beginning of the year work to inform members of the RCGP and BMA consultation exercise on the bodies official position was undertaken. In October 2020 a poll jointly commissioned with the Society's support revealed that three quarters of Scots (76%) want the

Scottish Parliament to debate assisted dying after the May 2021 election. This came on the eve of the referendum result in New Zealand to enact a law on assisted dying there.

## Secular Education

We continue to make the case, through our My Beliefs, My Choice campaign that the lack of opt-out for young people from religious observance is incompatible with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We contributed to the review of Children's Rights in 2020 and the reporting of issues to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child on the issue of religious observance. We also supported the work of the Together Alliance for Children's Rights (the Society is a member) to move for new legislation underpinning the UNCRC.

In September 2020 the First Minister announced a bill to enshrine UNCRC into Scots Law. This is a significant step in the Society's campaign to end the compulsory attendance at religious worship as it gives statutory underpinning to the convention.

## Sex Education

Humanist Society Scotland, working alongside our Young Humanist Scotland ambassadors, launched a petition in December 2020 and campaigned to overturn a decision taken by Western Isles council to restrict the use of nationally agreed Relationship, Sexual Health and Parenthood materials. Concerns had been raised by religious organisations about the suitability of the materials, stating that the inclusion of material relating to LGBT identities could, “confuse and prematurely sexualise young minds” and encourage “heterophobic and faithophobic” bullying against pupils whose religious identity was

opposed to the acceptance of LGBT people. The petition gathered over 1,000 signatures and a ‘clarification’ was issued by the council that head teachers would still retain the right to decide on the materials.

## Abortion

Humanist Society Scotland joined forces with Back Off Scotland and the British Pregnancy Advice Service to campaign to end the harassment of women accessing abortion and pregnancy services by religious campaigners in November 2020. A petition focussed on Edinburgh City Council relating to one specific clinic had gathered over 4,500 signatures.

## Eco-humanists

Humanist Society Scotland continues to support the cross civil society work of the Stop Climate Chaos coalition. In 2020 plans were developed for the COP26 which was due to be held in Glasgow that year. These plans have been carried over into 2021 and Humanist Society Scotland plan to be part of the joint efforts of Scottish charities. Our eco-humanist group facilitates discussion and planning of members who are committed to tackling the climate crisis.



# International

## Association of Secular Humanists Malawi

We continued our partnership with the Association of Secular Humanists in Malawi, now in its sixth year. This is in the form of a modest grant to enable ASH members to develop their work to combat witchcraft-related violence and enhance the voice of humanists and atheists in public life in Malawi.

## European Humanist Federation & European Humanist Professionals

Humanist Society Scotland was represented at the European Humanist Federation General Assembly online. Discussions were held with members across Europe as to the best future structure of the organisation to represent European humanist organisations.

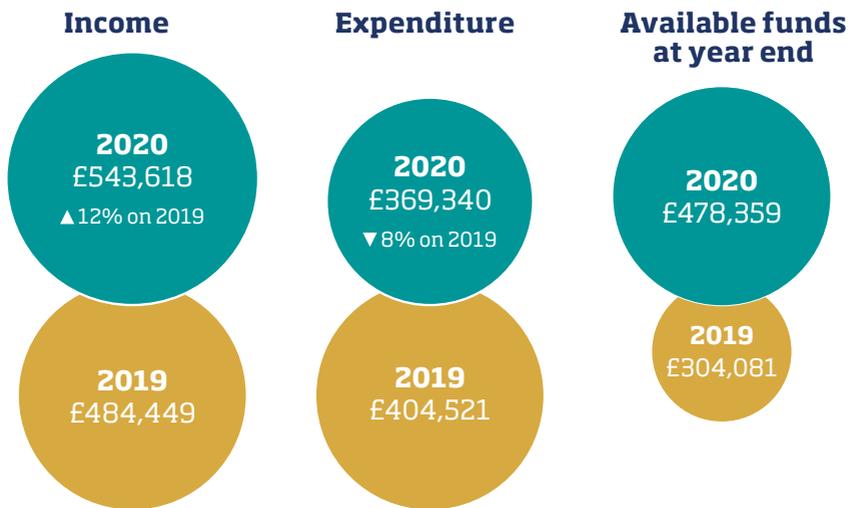
Neil Anderson – a member and celebrant of Humanist Society Scotland – remains the President of European Humanist Professionals. This network encourages humanist professionals across the continent to come together and share best practice in a number of areas.

## Humanists International

Humanist Society Scotland was represented at the Humanist International 2020 General Assembly which was held online due to the pandemic. As such, the business considered was limited in nature. Plans continue for the 2022 joint general assemblies of Humanists International and the European Humanist Federation in Glasgow.



# Financial Summary



INCOME SOURCE	2020	2019
Donations, membership and legacies	£468,957	£272,427
Services	£74,060	£196,708
Events	£0	£14,211
Investment Income	£601	£1,103
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£543,618</b>	<b>£484,449</b>

EXPENSE ON	2020	2019
Services	£198,376	£244,994
Communications & Public Affairs	£102,086	£109,754
Membership Events	£68,878	£49,773
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£369,340</b>	<b>£404,521</b>

A more detailed set of audited accounts is available at the Society's website which has been approved as an accurate record by Trustees in April 2021.

# Governance and Administrative

## Trustees who served during 2020

- Gordon Agnew
- Craig Campbell
- James Chalmers
- Senga Ishaq
- Maggie Kinloch
- Julia Loecherbach
- Morven Lyon
- Patrick McGlinchey
- Diane Mcleish
- Lynne Ramsay
- Ian Rodger
- Fraser Ross
- Stewart Struthers
- John James Ward
- Craig Wilson

## Chief Executive & Company Secretary

- Fraser Sutherland

## Staff team at 31st December 2020

- Lynsey Kidd  
Director of Services
- Mads Mitchell  
Head of Operations and Finance
- Ceri Sutherland  
Communications Manager
- Lara Celini  
Community Engagement Manager
- Derrick Jones  
Finance Officer
- Madeleine Clark  
Ceremonies Support Officer
- Colum Ballantyne  
Ceremonies Admin Assistant

Registered Company number:  
SC413697 (Scotland)

Registered Charity number:  
SC026570

Registered office:  
Playfair House,  
6 Broughton Street Lane,  
Edinburgh, EH1 3LY



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