



**Humanist
Society
Scotland**



Annual Report

& Financial Summary 2021

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www.humanism.scot

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

Foreword

We are pleased to present the 2021 annual report of Humanist Society Scotland. This document highlights some of our many achievements this year as we continue to act on our strategic plan, and to be Scotland's most trusted provider of humanist ceremonies. Our work has continued to be affected by the restrictions that have been used to mitigate against the global pandemic. But the staff team, our celebrant team, our trustees, our volunteers and the wider humanist community have risen to the challenges the ongoing situation has presented and we have seen some innovative solutions to overcome these obstacles.



Our ceremonies team and registered celebrants have experienced a year of two halves - the first half of 2021 was characterised by continuing restrictions and reduced ceremony numbers, and the latter half of the year has seen a gradual lifting of restrictions and a significant increase in wedding bookings as couples raced to organise postponed weddings. The ceremonies team and celebrants have faced extreme pressure in dealing with both the restrictions and the increased wedding numbers. Every single wedding ceremony has been honoured under our Ceremonies Promise, a formidable achievement in the face of stringent restrictions, Covid isolation requirements, and illness.

Elsewhere in the organisation new ways of working that started to emerge in 2020 have been cemented into our working practices in 2021. Our campaigns team have utilised online campaign tools and strategies to great effect, our community engagement and volunteering work has made a virtue of necessity with online book groups, film screenings, and volunteer support. And our in-person conference substantially increased its reach after it was professionally filmed and made available on our YouTube channel.

Our main campaign focus across 2021 was centred around the proposed bill to legalise assisted dying in Scotland, and the combined efforts of the Scottish coalition have culminated in a bill consultation process that has seen more public engagement than any previous bill. We will continue to focus our efforts on bringing the bill through parliament and supporting and encouraging our membership to engage with the full consultation process.

In June of this year we will host the general assembly of Humanist International for the first time in our history. We have worked hard throughout 2021 planning the various events that will occur over the weekend, and we look forward to seeing many familiar faces amongst a delegate list with guests representing more than 20 different humanist groups from across the world covering Asia, Africa, and North and South America.

Once again our work has been directed and supported by our members, volunteers, and supporters and we remain very grateful to be part of a community that is committed to humanism and to making the world a better place.

Maggie Kinloch & Fraser Sutherland
Chair & Chief Executive



Key Events of 2021

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

This year saw the continuation of Covid-19 related restrictions which have had a significant impact on a number of areas of our normal activity: we saw a significant reduction in the number of couples choosing to get married during this period compared to pre-pandemic levels, local groups and other member activities were still unable to take place in person, and restrictions on volunteering activities continued.

Despite the restrictions the Society's registered celebrants were able to support thousands of families at a time of loss by providing meaningful humanist funeral ceremonies. We also saw an increase in wedding ceremonies towards the end of the year, and early indications show that 2022 will see a significant increase in the number of ceremonies provided by our celebrants.

Our Vision

**A caring and
compassionate
Scotland**

Our Mission

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

In November we held an in-person conference for the first time since 2018. We used the event to make the case for reform in the area of assisted dying and support efforts to change the law brought by Liam McArthur MSP in 2021. Mr McArthur spoke at the conference alongside the rest of the campaign team. We continued to provide campaigning support for the proposed Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill (Scotland) Bill. We will continue to build engagement with the public and parliamentarians throughout the bill's progress and have significant plans in place for 2022 in this area.

In June 2022 we will host the Humanists International General Assembly for the first time in our

history and we look forward to welcoming members from across the world. The Society has put in place additional financial support alongside Humanists International to ensure the Glasgow Assembly will be one of the most diverse in terms of attendance from the Global South.

The Society has continued to champion a number of humanist causes including access to abortion services, secular education, children's rights, and protection for freedom of expression. A key component of our campaigning work in 2021 saw over 400 candidates in the Scottish Parliament election receive a copy of our manifesto *From Scotland's Humanist Community*.

Community and Outreach

Building Bridges

We continue to build on our civil relationships with Scotland's diverse faith and belief communities. Our Chief Executive took part in an online session about the importance of tackling the climate crisis with members of Interfaith Scotland. We were also represented at a multi-belief 'kirking' to mark the new parliament, where our Chief Executive read a short extract from a novel by supporter of the Society Iain Banks. In addition, the Society was also represented by staff and volunteers at a number of celebratory receptions organised by faith/belief groups.



COP 26

A committed group of activist members joined the main COP26 civil society protest alongside some Humanists UK members, and staff from Humanists International who were taking part in the main COP26 discussions on behalf of the humanist community. Our EcoHumanists group remain active, and we share relevant content on the Facebook group for members to engage in. We hosted a successful and innovative online event 'Time Travel Game' as part of Climate Fringe Week in September 2021.

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. During 2021 we provided a number of class sets of resources to schools across the country. In addition we developed a new resource focussed on the philosophical questions segment of the RMPS qualification courses, which has been distributed to schools and made available on our website.

Science Calendar

We distributed 350 calendars to 174 different schools. The calendars highlight a number of major scientific discoveries and biographies to help science teachers engage with pupils on a variety of subjects.

A volunteer continues to create social media posts promoting our #DailyDiscoveryCalendar on social media.

Chaplaincy / Pastoral Support

A number of our members undertake chaplaincy and pastoral roles in a voluntary capacity, and in a range of settings including local health services and further / higher education establishments. The support offered varies but their efforts have helped establish humanist practice in conversations in these settings.

StreetCare

In 2021 StreetCare continued to provide much needed support in Glasgow, with over a thousand engagements with people. The ‘T-Drop’ continues to collect surplus food from supermarkets and local businesses every week and redistributes it to hostels, refuges, and community fridges. This helps to reduce food waste and get food to those that need it. StreetCare Edinburgh remained paused due to issues around accessing the office safely. In October 2021 the decision was made to wind the project down. A number of walkabouts and a scoping exercise of other services showed a lack of demand for the project and adequate provision in place to help this cohort of people.

Remembrance

In 2021 our celebrants laid wreaths on behalf of Humanist Society Scotland in eight locations, including Dumfries, Doune, Edinburgh, Gartmore, Hawick, Latheron, Monifieth and Wick, down from the 19 events we were represented at in 2019 (pre-COVID). This was because many memorial events attached to remembrance week were cancelled due to the pandemic. At the national ceremony at Edinburgh Castle a wreath was laid on behalf of the Society.



Services



Ceremonies

Ceremony provision continued to be significantly impacted in 2021 as Covid-19 restrictions continued to affect many aspects of all of our ceremonies. Funeral provision continued at similar levels to previous years, but weddings and naming ceremony numbers continued to be reduced in the first part of 2021. In the second half of the year we saw a significant increase in the number of wedding ceremonies provided by our registered celebrants as restrictions started to loosen. Many couples unable to get married in 2020 rearranged their weddings for the later half of 2021, and as a result our celebrants solemnised more weddings

in 2021 than they did in 2019. This is a significant achievement given the challenges faced by our entire network due to the pandemic.

Civil Partnerships

After campaigning efforts by Humanist Society Scotland and others in previous years, mixed sex civil partnerships were legalised from June 2021. We are one of only two organisations (alongside the Scottish Unitarian Association) to be prescribed in the Marriage Act to offer mixed-sex civil partnerships. We are proud to offer couples the fullest possible range of options to legally solemnise their relationship in the humanist tradition.

Podcast

Our HumanKind podcast had two broadcasts in 2021, focussing on the international humanist movement and assisted dying respectively. We have more than doubled the number of listeners in the last year and will seek out ways to increase listenership year on year.

Member Groups

Humanist Society Scotland continues to support a number of local member groups, including in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Fife. Local groups provide an opportunity for members to meet other humanists and coordinate thought-provoking discussions, social activities, and charitable endeavours. Our Community Engagement Manager supports quarterly online 'Connect' meetings for local group organisers to get together, share ideas, and offer peer support.

Humanitie Magazine

We provided two copies of our popular humanitie magazine to over 8,000 households who hold memberships with the Society. These issues included features on a humanist asylum seeker's personal story, a summary of our successful campaign to scrap Scotland's blasphemy law, and our campaign on assisted dying.



Book Group

The Humanist Book Group was launched in April 2021 and meets quarterly online. Our Community Engagement Manager has recruited and supports five volunteer book group facilitators. Titles read in 2021 included, *Mayflies* by Andrew O'Hagan; *In the Days of Rain* by Rebecca Stott; and *The Little Book of Humanism* by Andrew Copson and Alice Roberts.



Film Screenings

In January 2021 we hosted our first online documentary film screening. *Not Without Us* follows the personal journeys of seven grassroots campaigners from around the world as they attempt to harness the only force that can prevent catastrophic climate change: the will of the people. The post-screening discussion was facilitated by one of our Young Humanist Scotland Ambassadors. We are exploring the potential to set-up a film club that will allow us to screen six films per year through Take One Action.

Young Humanists Scotland

The aim of Young Humanists Scotland is to develop the understanding of humanism amongst the 18-25 age group. This will give a voice to young humanists, atheists, and freethinkers, and support them to defend humanist values such as human rights and freedom of belief. This will help to build a fairer world, and create a stronger and more representative Humanist Society Scotland. A discounted membership rate is offered to under 25s joining for the first time. We currently have six Young Ambassadors who have created content for our social media and newsletter, contributed to the latest podcast on religion and education, and who support our national campaigns.

Policy and Campaigns

Assisted Dying



We are a key partner in the campaign to bring forward new legislation that would allow assisted dying in Scotland. Building on our Last Rights campaign, we wrote a joint letter with our campaign partners Dignity In Dying and Friends at the End that was sent to all candidates in the Scottish election. We were delighted to support the launch of a consultation by Liam McArthur MSP on a proposed members bill on assisted dying in September 2021. We hosted a symposium on the case for assisted dying at the Royal Society of Edinburgh in November 2021, which was recorded and made available on Youtube for a wider audience. Throughout 2021 our Chief Executive featured on a number of broadcast media pieces on the subject.

Hate Crime Bill

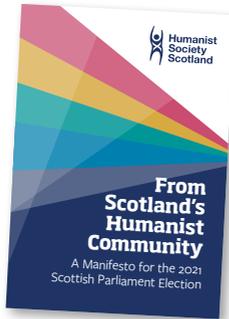
Significant amendments were made to the bill after a campaign by the Society to highlight the need to protect artistic freedom and understand the unintended consequences of the proposed legislation. This included removing sections on ‘holding offensive material’. The Society continues to push the Government, prosecutors and the police to adopt OSCE guidance that aims to ensure that freedom of expression is protected.

Back Off

We worked in partnership with the Back Off Scotland campaign to highlight the need for buffer zones outside healthcare facilities to stop the harassment of women accessing services by anti-abortion protesters linked with religious organisations. We commissioned public polling that showed that 82% of the Scottish public backed our call for protected buffer zones. This polling received national TV and newspaper coverage.

Manifesto 2021 election

We produced a manifesto for the 2021 Scottish Parliament election. *From Scotland's Humanist Community* highlighted five broad themes that were issues of importance to our members and supporters. We worked collaboratively with members to ascertain what these themes should be. The manifesto was delivered to over 400 parliamentary candidates standing at the election.



Children's Rights

We continue to press for the implementation of an opt-out from religious observance in Scottish schools and had positive engagement with the Scottish Government on the matter. However, reform in the area has been held up by a delay in the implementation of the UNCRC bill passed by the Scottish Parliament after a Supreme Court decision. We were part of a joint effort of 65 organisations to call for a speedy resolution to this dispute.

Time For Reflection

Time For Reflection in the Scottish Parliament has been delivered by Society members twice since August 2021. Morven Lyon reflected on the situation in Afghanistan and the right of women and girls to receive an education, and Linda Britton spoke about the importance of working together to create a better world for everyone.



International

Malawi

Humanist Society Scotland is proud to continue its relationship with Malawi Humanists. As part of this partnership we provide a modest grant to support the Malawi Humanists with capacity-building work and community work tackling witchcraft-based violence in the country.

Afghanistan

Using a new campaign tool we mobilised our membership to contact MPs representing Scottish constituencies. Our members contacted 57 out of the possible 59 MPs, helping to make humanist views known on the need to protect those at risk of persecutions by the Taliban regime, notably the non-religious, women and girls, journalists, and artists. Following our letter writing campaign our Chief Executive met with the UK Government Under Secretary for Scotland on the issue and pressed for a greater effort by UK authorities working with international partners.

International Support

We provided a modest sum of money to support the membership of two smaller humanist organisations to

Humanist International whose normal fundraising had been impacted by the pandemic. Both organisations (the Social Development Fund in India and the Council of Ex-Muslims in Sri Lanka) plan on attending the Glasgow International Conference in 2022.

Translation

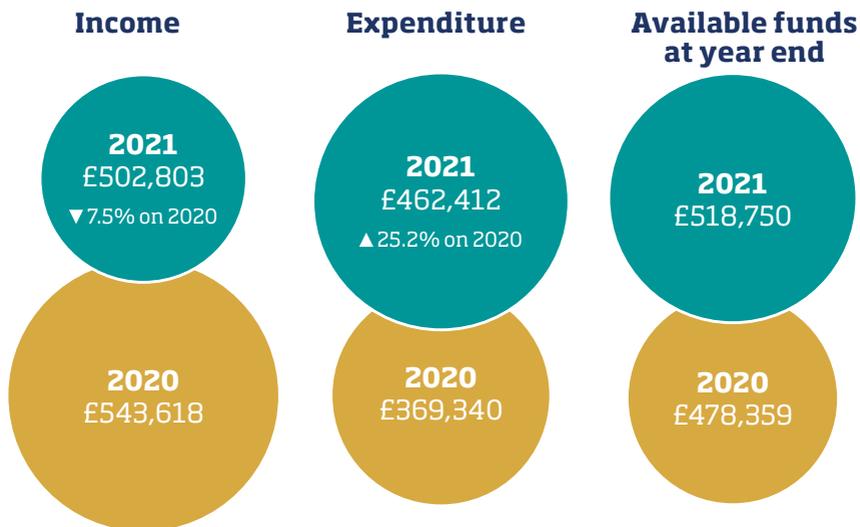
We provided a Gaelic translation of the Amsterdam Declaration for Humanists International as part of their project to translate the statement into the languages used in their member countries. Thanks to our member John Howieson for the translation.

Asian Humanist Conference

Our Chief Executive gave a remote presentation to the Asian Humanist conference on the success of humanist ceremony provision in Scotland, and how organisations in other jurisdictions can replicate some of our success.



Financial Summary



INCOME SOURCE	2021	2020
Donations, membership and legacies	£412,489	£468,957
Services	£89,230	£74,060
Events	£520	£0
Investment Income	£564	£601
TOTAL	£502,803	£543,618

EXPENSE ON	2021	2020
Services	£245,447	£198,376
Communications & Public Affairs	£116,806	£102,086
Membership Events	£100,159	£68,878
TOTAL	£462,412	£369,340

A more detailed set of audited accounts is available at the Society's website and has been approved as an accurate record by Trustees in April 2022.

Governance and Administrative

Trustees who served during 2021

- Gordon Agnew
- James Chalmers
- Maggie Kinloch
- Morven Lyon
- Patrick McGlinchey
- Ian Rodger
- Fraser Ross
- Craig Wilson
- Craig Campbell
- Senga Ishaq
- Stewart Struthers
- Jennifer Buchan
- Ian Simpson
- Gary Smith

Staff team at 31st December 2021

- Lynsey Kidd
Director of Services
- Mads Mitchell
Head of Digital
- Ceri Sutherland
Communications Manager
- Lara Celini
Community Engagement Manager
- Derrick Jones
Finance Officer
- Colum Ballantyne
Ceremonies Manager
- Hazel Sharp
Ceremonies Development Officer
- Dani Robertson
Services Administrator
- Shelley Raiden
Administrator

Chief Executive & Company Secretary

- Fraser Sutherland

Registered Company number:
SC413697 (Scotland)

Registered Charity number:
SC026570

Registered office:
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