



**Humanist
Society
Scotland**



Annual Report

& Financial Summary 2019

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www.humanism.scot

Humanist Society Scotland, Playfair House,
6 Broughton Street Lane, Edinburgh EH1 3LY



Humanist Society Scotland is a Scottish charity, no SCO26570, and a Scottish company limited by guarantee, no SC413697.

Dear fellow member,

We are pleased to present the 2019 annual report of Humanist Society Scotland.

This documents just some of the highlights and key events of the Society over 2019. We are indebted to all the work done by staff, volunteers, celebrants and members to further the work of the Society and its charitable aims. This has helped the Society and humanist thought reach an ever wider audience in Scotland.



2019 saw Gordon MacRae step down as our Chief Executive after four years leading the charity. Gordon helped transform the organisation into the professional, modern charity it is today and widen its reach into civil society and we are very grateful for his hard work and leadership over this period.

Moving into 2020 has seen us face great uncertainty and unique challenges as the impact of the coronavirus pandemic has hit the country and society hard. However we remain steadfastly committed to our fundamental values, aims and work and have adapted quickly to the ever changing environment.

The commitment and support of our members is vital to ensure the Society can advocate for a fairer society, provide world-class humanist ceremonies and assist others through our volunteer projects. We would like to thank you for your ongoing support of the charity over the last year and hope to achieve great things in 2020 and beyond.

Maggie Kinloch & Fraser Sutherland

Chair & Chief Executive

Key Events of 2019

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

In 2019 Scotland is a country where the majority of people are not religious and the growth of the Society's activities in this period reflects the increasing base of people who align themselves with humanist values. Scotland continues to be one of the few countries globally where Humanist marriages are recognised in law; meaning thousands of people choose to mark this significant life event through a humanist ceremony.

Shifts in public policy on organ donation and the protection of children from assault showed the role the Society can have in making the case for progressive legislation, based on reason and fairness. The confirmation that the Scottish Government would fully adopt the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots Law further strengthens the argument that children's rights to abstain from compulsory religious worship/





observance in Scottish schools should be recognised and protected. In addition, for the first time a Scottish Local Authority removed the voting rights of unelected religious organisation representatives from school governance committees.

In May 2019 the Society held its annual conference at the Royal Society of Edinburgh which was sold out. Delegates were delighted to hear from humanist philosopher A C Grayling, author Rebecca Stott, campaigner Mike Haines, campaign group Stop Climate Chaos, and award-winning filmmaker Carina Haouchine.

Confirmation was also given for Glasgow to be the host city for the joint 2022 General Assemblies of Humanists International and European Humanist Federation, with Humanist Society Scotland acting as host of an international humanist gathering for the very first time.

Our Vision

**A caring and
compassionate
Scotland**

Our Mission

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

Community and Outreach

Education

The Society continued to work closely with schools across Scotland to help pupils learn more about humanism and explore non-religious responses to ethical issues. The Society currently has 20 volunteers carrying out such visits, assisting teachers to deliver outcomes on understanding non-religious beliefs as part of the Religious and Moral Education curriculum.

For the second year Humanist Society Scotland replicated our Daily Discovery calendar of scientific



facts that was widely distributed in 2018 to great acclaim. The Society was successful in providing over 230 calendars to those who purchased them and in donations to schools across the country in 2019.

StreetCare

In 2019 our StreetCare teams further expanded their work and volunteer base. We now have 180 registered volunteers across projects in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling. These projects provide warm food, warm clothes and a non-judgemental listening ear to homeless people across Scotland. We are grateful to numerous project sponsors for their generosity in supporting the work of these volunteers, both from individuals and corporate organisations.



Remembrance

Representatives of Humanist Society Scotland took part in 13 wreath-laying ceremonies at numerous Remembrance Sunday events across the country. This marks the biggest representation of humanists involved in remembrance events to date in Scotland. In addition, a special inclusive service of remembrance was held at Clyde Coast and Garnock Valley Crematorium with support from Humanist Society Scotland in recognition that those without religious beliefs may wish to mark remembrance week.



Darwin Day

On the 210th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth, members of the Society marked the date by handing out 210 free succulent plants to members of the public outside Glasgow Queen Street and Edinburgh Waverley train stations. This public engagement supported brand awareness of the organisation as well as encouraging better understanding of evolution and Charles Darwin's legacy.



Gordon Ross Humanist of the Year Award

Paul Millar, a member from Glasgow and long-term volunteer on the StreetCare project, was awarded the Gordon Ross Humanist of the Year award. In addition to his continued support of the homeless support program – StreetCare Glasgow – he has also been an avid fundraiser and able to foster good relations with corporate supporters. Paul also became a living kidney donor after watching a documentary on the need for more donors. The 2019 award was recognised in a motion before the Scottish Parliament.

Services

Ceremonies

The importance of humanist ceremonies provided by our registered celebrants to Scotland is very clear. In the last five years alone, our registered celebrants have conducted over 30,000 such ceremonies. We have also continued to expand the reach of our network of registered celebrants into new areas and where there is high demand. At the end of 2019 we had 140 registered active celebrants across Scotland.

In March 2019 official court statistics showed that divorce rates amongst couples with a humanist marriage were four times lower than those for religious or civil marriages. There are a variety of reasons for this but it also



partially reflects the fact that humanist ceremonies have a clear focus on the people at the heart of the relationship and their own personal commitments to a lasting relationship.

In June the Scottish Government announced plans to widen the laws relating to Civil Partnerships to allow mixed-sex couples the right to have the choice of a Civil Partnership or a marriage. The Society has been advocating for such a change to the law since 2014 and will be delighted to join together more couples in Civil Partnerships as soon as this is a legal possibility.

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. These groups provide an important community resource for members both new and long-standing.



Championing Humanism

End Blasphemy Laws Campaign

Humanist Society Scotland continued to campaign to remove Scotland's archaic common law offence of Blasphemy. With the repeal of similar statutes in New Zealand, Canada and Ireland, Scotland is one of the last remaining 'dead letter' states with such a law on its books. The campaign was given a boost in February 2019 when cartoonist Nick Newman and satirist Ian Hislop backed the campaign while on tour in Scotland. In early 2020 the Scottish Government announced it would scrap the Blasphemy law in coming legislation, a welcome end to our long running campaign.

**END
BLASPHEMY
LAWS
NOW!**



Last Rights

Humanist Society Scotland continues to work hard to make the case for individuals to have the right to end-of-life choices. At the beginning of the year, we launched our 'Last Rights' campaign that makes the case for everyone to have four key rights respected at the end of their life – access to palliative care, the right to die at home, the right to be in control, and the right to an assisted death. The campaign has sought to further public engagement on these matters, as well as engage with policy makers and media.

Secular Education

In line with our charitable objectives, we continued to advocate for an education system that ensures equal opportunity and treatment for individuals regardless of their religion or belief. Throughout the year we made the case, through our ‘My Beliefs, My Choice’ campaign, that law and guidance regarding 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). Indeed, previous reviews by the UN committee on children’s rights have criticised Scotland’s approach in this area, as has the Scottish Children and Young People’s Commissioner. We also engaged with the government as they seek to fully implement UNCRC into Scots Law, which they have previously



stated is their intention. It is still to be seen what action they intend to take on Religious Observance in 2020.

In addition, 2019 saw the power of religious organisations in local decision-making on schools challenged for the first time when Perth and Kinross council removed voting rights from religious representatives on its education committee. It still, however, remains the case across the other 31 local authorities that religious bodies are given a say preferential to those of other community groups, teachers, parents and pupils’ groups on how schools are governed. Our Fair School Votes campaign continued to raise awareness regarding this discrepancy to the public and policy makers.

The Society also gave input into the review of sexual health and relationship education carried out by the Government on the back of the influential TIE campaign. The Government intends to make reforms in this area in 2020.



Time for Reflection

Two Humanist Society Scotland members delivered Time for Reflection at the Scottish Parliament in 2019. Vanessa Smith spoke about a message of hope in February, and in June John Howieson delivered the very first Time for Reflection in the Holyrood building fully in Gaelic.

Equal Protection Bill

Humanist Society Scotland supported the introduction of the Equal Protection Bill to the Scottish Parliament by giving evidence in a Parliament session held on the Isle of Skye. The Bill was later passed by the Parliament bringing Scotland in line with international best practice on protecting children from violence.

Eco-Humanists

In response to the endorsement of the Reykjavik Declaration on the Climate Change Crisis by members of the European Humanist Federation and Humanists International, an interested members group was established. These members have taken part in a number of proactive lobbying and awareness raising exercises, including influencing the Scottish Parliament's Climate Change Bill in September. The Parliament set a commitment of reducing emissions by 75% by 2030.



International



Association of Secular Humanists Malawi

We continued our partnership with the Association of Secular Humanists in Malawi, which is now in its fifth 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. In December the Society hosted a film screening of 'African Witchfinder' by Cloud Break Pictures to raise additional funding for both our partners in Malawi and Alzheimer's Scotland.



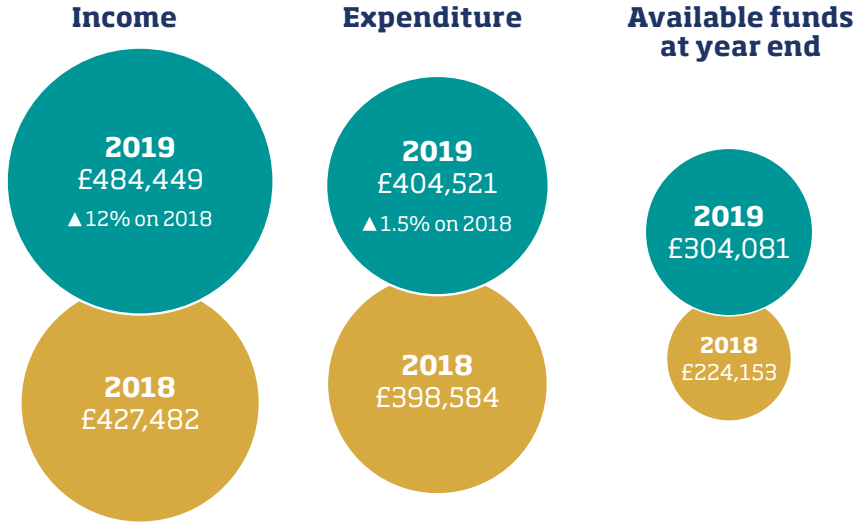
European Humanist Federation & European Humanist Professionals

Humanist Society Scotland was represented at the European Humanist Federation General Assembly, also in Reykjavik. The Society agreed to the Reykjavik Declaration on Family and Human Rights which argued for an inclusive definition of family, and protection of reproductive rights of women. 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 2019 General Assembly in Reykjavik. The Society supported a raft of changes to the structure and membership scheme of the organisation to better reflect the depth of membership from across the globe. In addition the Reykjavik Declaration on the Climate Change Crisis was agreed to, which tasked members to take action on climate change.

Financial Summary



| INCOME SOURCE | 2019 | 2018 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Donations, membership and legacies | £272,427 | £213,873 |
| Services | £196,708 | £200,749 |
| Events | £14,211 | £12,418 |
| Investment Income | £1,103 | £442 |
| TOTAL | £484,449 | £427,482 |

| EXPENSE ON | 2019 | 2018 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Services | £244,994 | £247,056 |
| Communications & Public Affairs | £109,754 | £104,464 |
| Membership Events | £49,773 | £47,064 |
| TOTAL | £404,521 | £398,584 |

A more detailed set of independently examined financial accounts is available at the Society's website which has been approved as an accurate record by the Trustees in April 2020.

Governance and Administrative

Trustees who served during 2019

- Gordon Agnew
- John Bishop
- Craig Campbell
- James Chalmers
- Linda Darby
- Senga Ishaq
- Maggie Kinloch
- Julia Loecherbach
- Morven Lyon
- Diane McLeish
- Lynne Ramsay
- Ian Rodger
- Stewart Struthers
- John Ward
- Craig Wilson

Chief Executive & Company Secretary

- Gordon MacRae
(before 19th May 2019)
- Fraser Sutherland
(from 19th May 2019)

Staff Team at 31st December 2019

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

Registered Company number:
SC413697 (Scotland)

Registered Charity number:
SC026570

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

