



Humanistically Speaking

October 2021

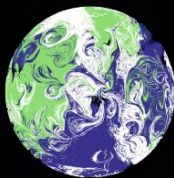


A Humanist hotline to a secular worldview

MISSION2050

Young Humanists demand climate action

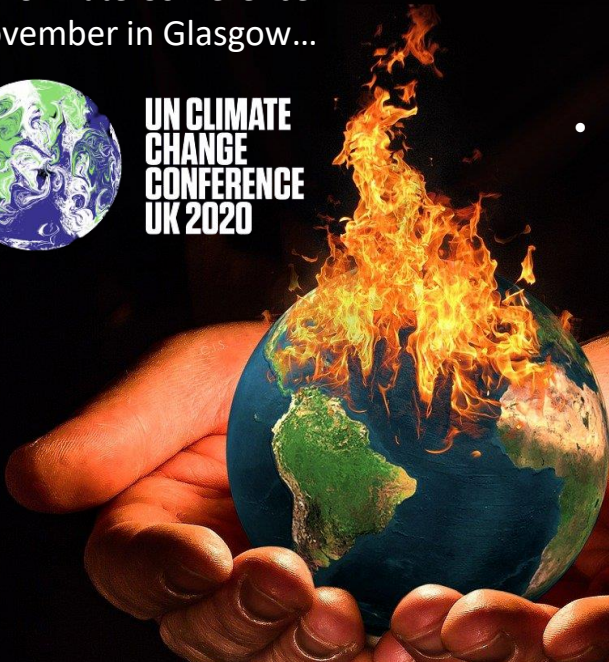
Our theme this month anticipates the upcoming UN Climate Conference in November in Glasgow...



**UN CLIMATE
CHANGE
CONFERENCE
UK 2020**

Inside this issue

- Professor Peter Newell
 - Young Humanist climate action
 - EcoHumanism
- Electric car report
 - Climate Toolkit
 - Your letters
 - Poet's corner



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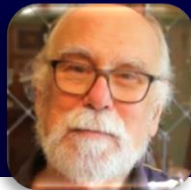


Humanistically
Speaking
A Humanist hotline
to a secular worldview

In this Issue

Come in, sit down, put your feet up...

David Brittain
Executive Editor



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CONTENT DISCLAIMER

Our editorial team consists of humanist volunteers. Articles are written by them, or by our readers and contributors, and published at the discretion of the editorial team. We strive to publish content in line with humanist aims and values but views expressed by writers are their own and not necessarily shared by any associated Humanist groups or Humanists UK.

Dear reader,

Climate change is probably the most important issue that human civilisation has ever confronted and I find it deeply frustrating that governments around the world still seem to be more concerned about endless economic growth, or winning the next election, or indulging the oil industry with subsidies. Our government is not the worst offender, but I am frankly dismayed that we are presented with post-Brexit proposals for trade deals with the USA, South America, and Australia for food supplies when Europe can supply our needs without our having to go vast distances. Buying locally, and only what you need, is at the top of Aaron's Climate Change Toolkit on page 27. I'm encouraged and inspired, however, by young humanists like Javan Lev Poblador from the Philippines who are taking a lead in demanding action. Javan's report appears on page 13.

My interview with Greenpeace director Peter Newell was also very instructive, but concerning. Finding a balance between the demands of growing economies and climate change will be very difficult, and yet there remains a range of different opinions and responses. Our editors offer their own perspectives, as well as guest writer Cath Sutherland on what she proposes to call 'Eco-humanism'.

It seems clear that the most developed societies, and indeed the wealthiest tier *within* those societies, will have to give the most. But such people have the most political influence. How are we going to persuade businesses in Brazil to stop destroying the rainforests? How are we going to persuade the super rich to dump their private jets? It's going to be tough, but I hope we are not left with vague objectives and pacifying platitudes for the media. It is far, far too serious for that.

On a more upbeat note, our resident poet Alex Williams has recited his own poems, and a new recording will be released in *Humanistically Speaking* every month from now on. We have also found a way of reviving Adolf Hitler, who challenges Mr Darwin on eugenics. Can't wait to read what he says? Then read on...

David Brittain



HUMANIST NEWS



'Hating Peter Tatchell'

On 1st November LGBT Humanists will be hosting a free screening of the recent documentary film 'Hating Peter Tatchell'. Peter Tatchell will take part in a Q&A session. There are 25 free seats for LGBT Humanists and supporters. This will take place in Central London as part of the Raindance Film Festival. Keep an eye out for more info on the [Humanists UK events](#) page, on [Facebook](#), and on [Twitter](#).

Peter Tatchell is a veteran activist, campaigner, and distinguished supporter of LGBT Humanists.

Transgender Day of Remembrance

On 20th November, LGBT Humanists will be hosting an online Transgender Day of Remembrance. The International Transgender Day of Remembrance takes place on 20 November each year. It's recognised as the worldwide rallying call to join the fight against transphobic violence and murder. LGBT Humanists first organised a specially created humanist ceremony for Trans Day of Remembrance in 2018, and since then it's become one of their most important annual events.



COP26 demonstrations in Glasgow and London

COP26 is the 26th United Nations climate change conference, which is taking place in Glasgow. For nearly three decades the UN has been bringing together almost every country on earth for global climate summits – called COPs – which stands for 'Conference of the Parties'.

When the UK hosts COP26 in November, Humanist Climate Action is planning on taking part in demonstrations and marches organised in Glasgow and London. Humanist Climate Action is looking for members to join them and to help carry the HCA banner. If you are interested in and being part of the delegation, please email campaigns@humanism.org.uk

Follow Humanist Climate Action on social media

Humanist Climate Action is a new campaigning group, and to grow, it is important they build up their social media following. So please help them get their message out by following them on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).



HUMANIST NEWS



Register now for European Humanist Youth Days 2nd – 30th October 2021, organized by young humanists of deMens.nu with the support of Young Humanists International. Workshops include:

- Morality, moral dilemmas and moral injury in a military environment
- Exercises in Critical Thinking and Argumentation
- I-matter workshop (Identity, self-confidence and social advocacy)
- Networking / applying for a job
- LGBTQ Rights in Europe: a legal case study
- Saving lives: organ donation in Europe.

Javan Lev Poblador
Young Humanists International Coordinator
www.europeanhumanistyouthdays.org

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Apologies for image quality, we had some technical problems

David Brittain reports on a recent meeting of the South Central England Humanists Network which is an official section of Humanists UK...

In common with many other organisations, Humanist groups in the South Central England Humanists Network have struggled during the Covid outbreak and there's widespread 'Zoom fatigue'. But now life is showing signs of returning to some kind of normality.

Leaders from humanist groups throughout the central southern region got together in Windsor last month to share plans for the future, and to review areas of common focus and concern within their orbit. The network's purpose has always been to facilitate communication and collaboration between our Humanist groups in the region, and it has proved very popular and effective. The network aims to be mutually supportive, providing the leadership of the member groups with both moral and practical support from their neighbouring groups as required.

Plans for revivals and relaunches of face-to-face activities are now well in hand across the region, and the network's Chair, Anthony Lewis, is keen to make contact with other Humanist groups and networks. If you are a representative of another Humanist network, or a nearby group that would like to join the South Central England Humanists Network, Anthony would love to hear from you. Email him at antzlewis@me.com

People in the photo above are (from left to right): Kat Reynolds, Chair of Brighton Humanists, Alan Montgomery (Reading Humanists and Farnham Humanists), David Stanley (South Hants Humanists), David Warden (Chair of Dorset Humanists), David Brittain (Basingstoke Humanists and *Humanistically Speaking*), Anthony Lewis (Windsor Humanists and Chair of SCEHN) and on the laptop screen Andrew Edmondson (Chichester Humanists). Also in the network are Bromley, Guildford and Woking, Hastings, Isle of Wight, Oxford, Portsmouth and Winchester, whose representatives could not be with us on the day.

COP26

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY



What is COP26? What's it all about, what are its aims, what has it achieved in previous years, and is it doing any good?

David Warden investigates...

COP26 is the 26th United Nations climate change conference, which is taking place in Glasgow. For nearly three decades the UN has been bringing together almost every country on earth for global climate summits – called COPs – which stands for ‘Conference of the Parties’. COP26 is being called ‘a pivotal moment in the fight against climate change.’ In November, the UK, in partnership with Italy, will host an event many believe to be the world’s ‘best last chance’ to get runaway climate change under control. In the run up to COP26 the UK is working with every nation to reach agreement on how to tackle climate change. World leaders will arrive in Scotland, alongside tens of thousands of negotiators, government representatives, businesses and citizens for twelve days of talks.

The importance of the Paris Agreement

COP21 took place in Paris in 2015. For the first time ever, something momentous happened: every country agreed to work together to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees



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and aim for 1.5 degrees, to adapt to the impacts of a changing climate and to make money available to deliver on these aims. The commitment to aim for 1.5 degrees is important because every fraction of a degree of warming will result in many more lives lost and livelihoods damaged.

Under the Paris Agreement, countries committed to publish national plans setting out how much they would reduce their emissions – known as Nationally Determined Contributions, or ‘NDCs’. They agreed that every five years they would come back with an updated plan that would reflect their highest possible ambition at that time. Glasgow (delayed by a year because of the pandemic) is the moment for countries to update their plans. But the commitments laid out in Paris *did not come close* to limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees, and the window for achieving this is closing. The decade to 2030 will be crucial.

'Eco-humanism' – the humanism of tomorrow?

Photo by Erik McLean

By Cath Sutherland



At last, most people are waking up to the reality that we are destroying our natural world on many fronts – climate change, destruction of the wildlife of the oceans,

collapse of soil quality, disastrous loss of biodiversity (the sixth great extinction), deforestationthe list goes on. People are starting to understand that our planet is at a critical juncture, and that this is not a temporary phenomenon.

We need a creed, a belief-set, that reflects new ways of seeing our relationship with the rest of the natural world. There are times in history when big changes are happening, and we are at the beginning of one of them now. Humanists need to be open to change, including change in the way we see things.

Sooner or later we humans in Western capitalist society will fundamentally rethink our relationship with the natural world and adopt ways of seeing ourselves as inseparable from the rest of nature; as needing to revere, respect and protect nature rather than just plunder it for our own advantage. For the Western world it will be a deep shift in the way of seeing life. For many indigenous people it is a way of thinking that they have never lost, but their wisdom has been ignored.

Because of our belief in science, logic and reason, humanists should be the first people to take what the scientists say seriously and realise that only humans can save the natural world. But for people who care passionately about the environment and other animals, the problem with 'Humanism' is in the name: it appears to be all about humans.

This focus on human life has dominated Western civilisation for at least two thousand years. It is a belief that we are entitled to plunder the natural world as we wish, and that moral behaviour is entirely about how we behave towards other human beings. Humanism largely follows this 'human-centric' view of life.

Humanists have begun to recognise our need to respect and nurture our environment. The [Amsterdam Declaration](#), the official definition of Humanism, was updated in 2002 to recognize our dependence on and responsibility for the natural world. In 2019 Humanists International ratified the [Reykjavik Declaration](#), committing member organisations to campaign on climate change. The same year, Humanists UK started the process of setting up [Humanist Climate Action](#) which is a great start. However, a few words buried in the depths of an organisation are not enough. Maybe humanists in other countries are more involved in the environmental movement, but here in UK we need a step change in the way we see Humanism's relationship to the rest of nature. We could call it Eco-humanism.

Going Electric: A Firsthand Account

By John Glazer
Dorset Humanists



For many years I was a 'climate sceptic'. But at the same time, I considered myself to be an environmentalist and it was this that led me to abandon the Internal Combustion Engine and dip my toes into the battery electric vehicle sector just over two and a half years ago. As I already owned a Jaguar saloon and there was no clear sign as to when Tesla would start exporting their newly launched Model 3 to the UK, I put my name on the waiting list for a Jaguar I-Pace.

The I-Pace is a medium-sized crossover style vehicle which won several motoring awards and to my tastes is still one of the best-looking electric vehicles on the market. I very quickly got used to the regenerative braking which allows for one-pedal driving, the instant response, the lightning fast and linear acceleration, the excellent handling, and the calm of driving such a quiet vehicle. In a nutshell this car was FUN. I'd previously been given the chance by Jaguar Land Rover to test drive their top of the range XJ - the very same model seen on the news ferrying prime ministers from Downing Street. But the I-Pace was just so much better.

I very quickly got used to plugging it in at home, which took just a few seconds and was so much easier than travelling to a petrol station, standing at the pump while the tank

filled up and then having to go and pay for the fuel, especially if there's a queue. The other benefit I found was that filling the batteries with electrons was about a third of the price of petrol. The downside, though, was on longer journeys when I needed to find a public charger to top up. Although this is now changing, the motorway network of rapid chargers was so unreliable that they became unusable and even at other locations I have experienced unreliability. Fortunately, the original company, Ecotricity, have recently been bought out by an excellent new entrant into this market, Gridserve, who have almost finished replacing every one of the charging points and adding to them with even faster chargers.

But it was this 'range anxiety' that led to me recently selling the I-Pace and buying the Tesla Model 3. Tesla provide a premium and seamless charging experience for all their owners and is one of the major reasons why the experience of owning an EV from this company is so much better. On top of that





John with his Tesla Model 3

their software is so much better than anyone else making electric cars. They provide constant 'Over The Air' updates which means their vehicles keep getting better with every passing month and the efficiency of their cars is way ahead of everybody else's. This means they charge faster, have a longer range, and cost even less to run than any other make.

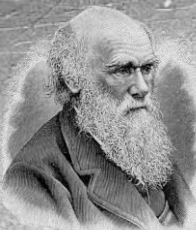
The downside, currently, is that the ticket price of electric cars, even with the government grant of £2,500, is higher than an equivalent internal combustion engine version. A recent Bloomberg report suggested that price parity will be reached by 2027 but this is way out. China has almost 400 companies making electric cars and very soon there will be an avalanche of much cheaper but very good battery electric vehicles reducing prices considerably. This shift has already started with MG, an old British marque, now owned by Geely, a Chinese company, offering two very good value models. Within the next five years we will start to see most of the European, American, and Japanese brands we have become so familiar with losing market share, and eventually fading away into obscurity unless governments bail them out, which in my view

would be a huge mistake.

The disruption to the transport sector has started, as recent sales figures attest, and by 2027, the date Bloomberg predicted price parity, it will be almost over. So, what will that mean for the petrol or diesel car sitting on your driveway at the moment? Well, second-hand prices will drop dramatically, petrol stations will start closing, the price of fuel may well increase and workshops to maintain your vehicle will reduce in numbers. Bear this in mind when the time comes to replace your car.

Critics of electric cars have claimed that batteries won't last, the metals needed to manufacture them will become in short supply and the human cost of using child labour to mine cobalt is an ethical disaster. None of this is true. Batteries are showing that even the first generation are holding up much better than expected and the latest generation are expected to last at least half a million miles, after which they will have a second use life in either home battery or grid scale storage, after which, 30 or 40 years in the future, they will be recycled. The pace of change in the chemistry of batteries is advancing at an astonishing rate and it will not be long before batteries that contain sodium (salt) or iron are able to replace some of the rare earth metals that are being used now. As for cobalt which is mined in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by child labour, this makes up only a very small proportion of the total mineral mined, and in any event is used extensively in the production of petrol, so reducing the refining of oil will also reduce the need for this particular metal.

Would I go back to driving an internal combustion engine car? Absolutely not, and surveys of battery electric car owners show that only one percent would. So, if the future is electric when will you take the plunge?



Charles Darwin.

Dear Darwin

Ask Charles your difficult questions...



The Mount, Shrewsbury.
Darwin's family home.

Dear Darwin

With too many people in the world, many of whom were less than perfect examples, I tried my best to reduce this problem and build a superior form of humanity. Should we not both be reducing the occupants on this earth and ensuring a better, more perfect form of human that adds to its splendour rather than detracts from it? Please excuse my English.

A. Hitler, Berlin

Dear Herr Hitler

You may have in mind a quotation from my book *The Descent of Man* (1871): 'The western nations of Europe ... now so immeasurably surpass their former savage progenitors [that they] stand at the summit of civilisation ... The civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace the savage races through the world.' This was a prediction, not a recommendation. It almost came to pass, as we can see from the history of the United States, Australia and other lands.

I am not an expert on your eugenicist theories, but I am well aware of the fact that some form of eugenics policy was shared by almost all progressive intellectuals, including Bertrand Russell, before the hideous war which I understand you unleashed. This perhaps goes to show that one should remain critical of fashionable progressive ideas.

It remains the case, of course, that humans

are quite willing to improve livestock by means of selective breeding in order to improve fitness for whatever human purposes are desired, and yet we are unwilling to subject our own species to such treatment. The reason for this is that it would be an infringement of human rights to sterilise those deemed to be unfit, let alone to practice genocide on such grounds, and these ethical considerations override any benefits which may accrue from such oppressive social interventions.

I wonder, however, whether there might be an ethical way to pursue genetic enhancement in the future. My 21st century advisors have introduced me to CRISPR genome editing (CRISPR stands for 'clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats') which could, potentially, allow parents to choose benign gene variants for their offspring. For example, they could opt to switch off faulty genes associated with inherited disabilities. This would allow any couple to reproduce without some of the risks of letting nature take its course.

There are ethical risks of course. Should parents be allowed to choose the sexual orientation of their offspring, if such a choice were to become available? I can guess your answer, based on your appalling persecution of gay men in addition to your many other crimes. We should proceed with great caution.

Aaron Explores

Trying to see the wood for the trees: Global Warming



Having browsed through the IPCC reports today, which I may add contained much the same as the last report's predictions, I find myself wondering how much of an impact this will have on the average person? Helpfully (or not) the news media translates this for us into a picture of doom and gloom in order to shock us all into action.

Discussions will be had in offices over the water cooler, and large organisations will make a few changes, and next week the topic will change to something else. Will our own behaviour have changed that much?

Two primary issues stand out from the 21st century forecast. Firstly, sea level rise of between 20cm and 76cm from ice loss on land and thermal expansion from ocean warming. And secondly, temperature rise, as we all know, is predicted to be 1.5°C rising to a potential of 3°C if unchecked. To some, this may seem very insignificant. With tides changing sea level all the time and such a minor temperature range, who cares? If you were to go outside now to tell me to within a degree what temperature it is, I imagine you couldn't.

When we are told about climate change the fear factor is engaged, giving us to believe that our typical peak temperature of 30°C could end up being 40°C upwards, and that uncontrollable wildfires will plague the planet for evermore. Science could prove these all to be true, or not, but that's not what my article is about today. My main point is that, whether



Predicted catastrophes that didn't happen. Click image to browse the shock headlines.

you're sceptical or not, the fact remains that it's still a good idea to clean up the planet.

It makes sense:

- to have cleaner air to breath in cities
- to have less waste in our seas
- to utilise finite resources more thoughtfully
- to reduce energy costs
- to have warmer homes in winter and cooler homes in summer
- to have cars that cost pennies to run
- to eat greener, locally, sustainably and healthily

When you only have one planet's resources to live on, it makes sense to use it in the wisest way possible, pushing the three Rs of **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle**. So even if you are a conspiracy theorist, a climate change denier, or you just question mainstream science news (click the image above for failed news predictions) it *still* makes sense to look after the one planet that we have.

To some, the fear factor may not be working. They may say they're not going to be around in a hundred years' time to worry about the sea level rising half a metre. They may not have children's or grandchildren's futures to care about. Such attitudes don't sit well with humanist ideals of intergenerational consideration and being responsible caretakers of the planet, we live on. But impacts are being felt now.



Los Angeles Department of Water and Power floated 96 million 'shade balls' on its largest reservoir. The balls saved 1.7 million cubic meters of water from evaporating.

Food and water security



One of the key global concerns arising from a changing climate is our ability to feed ourselves. Both in the UK and all around the world, temperature change is affecting our environment in how we grow crops and how we store water. Droughts are a massive problem globally, and not just in developing countries. California has an ever-increasing problem of storing and supplying enough water for its population with various innovative ways being looked at to prevent water evaporation in high summer. But here at home we have experienced both very wet winters, reducing potato crops and other staples, and hotter summers that have dried

up our reservoirs to dangerous levels. In the UK we are coping, but in places all around the world primary freshwater sources are drying up. [These lakes](#) which are on their way out cause severe problems for the locals: they can't irrigate their crops, they can't collect water when wells dry up, and they struggle to maintain sanitation and basic hygiene when water is so scarce.

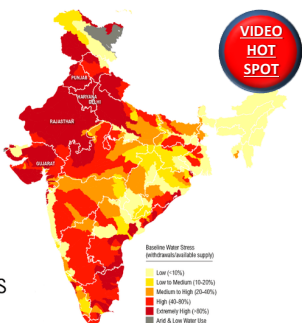
Migration across India, Asia, and Africa in pursuit of water is already occurring. The world has a growing refugee crisis already from war and economic disparity. Adding climate problems on top of this squeezes an ever-growing population chasing decreasing resources.

With the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, the world has once again become a smaller place, showing that one part of the planet is absolutely dependent upon the abilities of another. Wealthy countries created the vaccine, poorer countries manufactured it along with PPE. The world is interdependent for the talents, skills, resources and abilities that each country can contribute. We absolutely must look after it. We need to halt the damage and develop innovative solutions to stabilize and even reverse some of the problems we have created.

If we don't manage the planet wisely, humanity will die from food shortages long before sea level rise becomes a problem.

54%

of India
Faces
**High to
Extremely
High**
Water Stress



www.indiawaterportal.in

 WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

Climate Action in the Humanist Community

By Javan Lev Poblador, Young Humanists International Coordinator

Events in the month of November 2013 still continue to haunt Filipinos. I was just 13 years old, but I still remember strong winds buffeting the roof of our house, rivers overspilling and flooding roads, and a blackout that lasted for five days. But it wasn't until the power came back and I turned on the TV that I realized how horrendous it was for other parts of the Philippines. Bodies piling up on the sides of the roads, homes submerged in floodwater, and lost family members swept away by the storm surge.

The climate crisis has already progressed from a scientific observation to a real, everyday phenomenon that affects how we live or die. It's not a question anymore of whether it's real or not, but will we do anything about it? Although the climate crisis is the greatest threat to face modern humans, not everyone is affected in the same way. The sad reality is that some of us will have to fight harder than others, just for being in the front seat of the effects of climate change and all in the pursuit of climate justice. And it's not hard to see why, in recent years, young people all around the world have begun to fight back on a never-before-seen magnitude.

Why should humanists care more about the climate crisis?

As humanists, we have a duty of care to all of

humanity including future generations and we recognize our dependence on and responsibility for the natural world ([Amsterdam Declaration 2002](#)). Humanists International has also put on record at the UN that the world must wake up to the science and curb the impacts of the climate crisis through its [Reykjavik Declaration on the Climate Change Crisis](#).

Young humanists speak out

If there's one thing I learned from my work as an environmental journalist, it's that environmental rights are also human rights and all rights are interconnected. But I'm not the only one to have this view. I've asked young humanists in other countries about Humanism and climate change. Rebekka Hill from Young Humanists UK said that, as humanists, "...we trust science and fight unnecessary suffering." Wonderful Mkhutche from Humanists Malawi and Gerardo Chaparro from Humanists of Puerto Rico both agreed that we owe it to future generations to leave a liveable planet and they emphasized the importance of taking urgent action on climate change. And Sasa Aguila-Aguire from Humanist Alliance Philippines, International (HAPI) concluded that all the 'progress' we have made as a civilization will soon be swept away if we do nothing now to mitigate the climate crisis.



Top Right: Javan on a climate strike in Dumaguete City, Philippines. "After the strike, we talked to the city lawmakers. A few days later, a resolution banning fossil fuel companies in the city was released."



Humanist Alliance Philippines, International - one of the organizers of a climate strike. Photo by The NORSUnian

Young Humanist Climate Action

Unwilling to sit idly by, we are taking all this rage, frustration, and passion and turning it into climate actions. As the Young Humanists International Coordinator, together with my team and the support of other humanist organizations, we have launched [Young Humanist Climate Action](#). This is a long-running campaign of Young Humanists International in the pursuit of climate justice which aims:

- To establish a united front of young humanists for climate action
- To encourage climate change conversations and interdependence with other human rights issues in the humanist movement
- To educate and raise awareness of the climate crisis and the environment
- To communicate and promote the science behind climate change

This doesn't mean that the humanist movement has not done anything prior to this project. This campaign will only solidify further the existing climate advocacies in other humanist organizations with a greater focus on young humanists. To name a few, Belgian humanists **deMens.nu** through [#BackToTheClimate](#) call for more climate policies and for states to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C.

Humanist Society Scotland launched [EcoHumanism](#) which champions present and future generations that have no voice. And Think School has released fourteen open-licence [videos](#) in a series on the climate crisis.



Imtiaz Shams
video narrator

A 1.5°C world and beyond

The recent IPCC report released in August paints a bleak picture for our planet's future that left many of us overwhelmed. But hope is not lost. The Paris Agreement's 1.5°C warming limit is still achievable if there's a strong global action and we act faster.

A huge piece of the climate solution lies in cutting down our greenhouse gas emissions and divesting from fossil fuels, but there are many pieces of the jigsaw: addressing agriculture, environmental conservation, and the choices we make every day.

Yes, it's a long shot, and it calls for the cooperation of every person on the planet. However, our response to the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that drastic changes for the better are possible. But we can no longer afford any more delay.



Javan, author of this article, leading a climate strike. The event gathered around 1,000 people, mostly young people.

Brittain Interviews...

Our video conference with notable Humanists, interviewed by David Brittain

Peter Newell



For more than 25 years Professor Peter Newell has conducted research, consultancy and advisory work on issues of climate change, agricultural biotechnology, corporate accountability and trade policy working in a number of countries including Argentina, Brazil, China, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Mexico and South Africa. In recent years his research has mainly focussed on the political economy of carbon markets and low carbon energy transitions. He has worked for the universities of Sussex, Oxford, Warwick and East Anglia, and NGOs such as Friends of the Earth. He sits on the board of directors of Greenpeace UK.

It was a great privilege for me to be able to interview Peter for this special edition of *Humanistically Speaking*. Just click the YouTube button!

David Brittain

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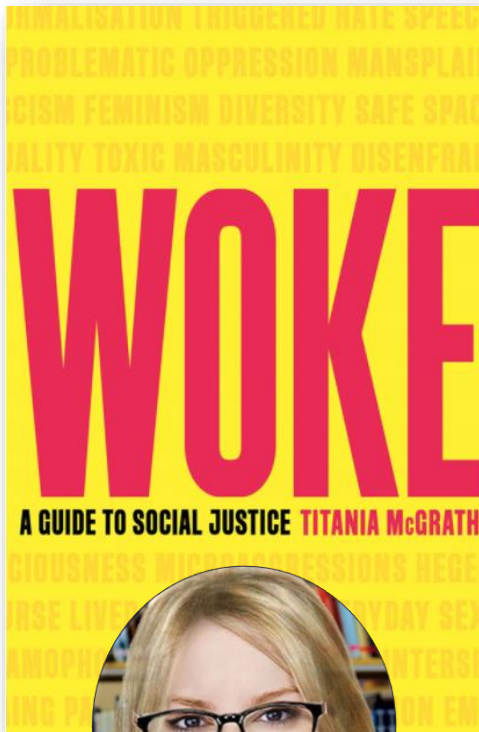
Thought for the Day

Assistant Editor David Warden explains woke, wokeism, and wokery...

It seems that lots of people do not really know what the word 'woke' means. If they hazard a guess, they probably think it's just the latest synonym for 'political correctness'. They may think it's a good thing to be 'woke' because this signifies that you are liberal and progressive, are in favour of diversity and equality, and that you avoid causing offence to minorities. People on the right complain about 'woke' and 'wokeness' all the time because, allegedly, right-wing people are hateful and bigoted.

I think it's rather more complicated than this. The word 'woke' is a slang term from a dialect called African American Vernacular English (AAVE). In AAVE, 'awake' is often rendered as 'woke', as in "I was sleeping, but now I'm woke" (Merriam Webster). In a positive sense, 'woke' means 'aware of and actively attentive to issues of racial and social justice'. On the face of it, this sounds like a good thing. But critics of wokeness claim that it is an illiberal ideology which is suffocating freedom of speech and destroying the foundations of Western civilization. Not so good, if true.

Wokeism, in the eyes of its critics, is closely related to identity politics. But this is another confusing term because identity politics is not really about politics as such. It refers to a political philosophy which holds that ►



Titania McGrath is the pseudonym of Andrew Doyle who is a comedian, playwright, journalist, and political satirist from Northern Ireland. The image of Titania does not represent a real person even though she is reviled on Twitter. Titania's follow-up volume is *My First Little Book of Intersectional Activism* (2020), a (satirical) guide for infants to get up to speed on being woke.

injustice and oppression are pervasive aspects of society which are endemic in the relations between men and women, white and black races, straight and gay people, abled and disabled and so on. Privilege is woven into the fabric of society, especially in speech and language. This is why 'woke' people are so sensitive about language. If you say the wrong thing, you can easily be accused of 'violence' and hate speech.

Most people may be willing to concede that being white, male, able-bodied and so on confers a certain level of advantage in society. But woke activists, sometimes referred to as 'social justice warriors', have coined terms like 'toxic masculinity' and 'white privilege' which suggest that there's something inherently wrong or disordered about being male or white. They seek to reorder society not on the basis of individual merit but on the basis of demographic proportionality and equality. Unequal social outcomes are always blamed on prejudice and discrimination and never on personal factors like skill, intelligence or aptitude.

On the face of it, the pursuit of social justice seems like a good thing, but by emphasising binary oppositions like male/female, black/white, cis/trans and so on, and by insisting that oppression occurs at all of these intersections, identity politics seems to be fuelling resentment and victimhood. In place of the humanistic ideal of 'common humanity', identity politics can be seen as divisive and intolerant. At its most extreme, it seems to be an all-out attack on the values of Western civilization: statues are to fall, the curriculum should be de-colonised, and even classical music comes to be seen as an expression of white supremacy.

Humanists should, of course, seek to eliminate prejudice and discrimination. But



Leader of the Opposition Keir Starmer taking the knee: a 'woke' gesture?

Humanists should also be wary of any political ideology which fuels intolerance and fanaticism. The term 'social justice warriors' should ring alarm bells.

Wokery and identity politics did not come out of nowhere. An historical analysis is beyond the scope of this short article, but our readers may be interested to know that this philosophy has its roots in cultural Marxism and the 1930s Frankfurt School. A comprehensive analysis is given in the book suggested in the footnote.



Musings by Maggie

Be prepared – for what?

According to the latest [IPCC report](#), despite 56 years of repeated warnings from scientists¹, nowhere near enough has been done to prevent a rise in the earth's temperature to no more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial times (the increase in global surface temperatures is already about 1.2°C). Clearly, efforts to mitigate climate breakdown must continue, and indeed be redoubled. It may now be too late to prevent it, but it is not too late to prepare for it. The question is, what exactly should we prepare for, and how?

The [Government Climate Change Adaptation Policy Paper](#) promises: "At COP26, increasing ambition on adaptation, resilience and loss and damage will be a priority. As one of the core goals of our COP26 Presidency, we will call on countries to increase action on adaptation and reduce loss and damage."

One of the most pressing issues is local planning. In the UK, our existing buildings and infrastructure are not designed to withstand the kind of heatwaves we are likely to experience in the future. On the UK Government website, the [Guidance on local planning](#) states:

When preparing Local Plans and taking planning decisions local planning authorities should pay particular attention to integrating



What exactly should we prepare for?

adaptation and mitigation approaches and looking for 'win-win' solutions that will support sustainable development. This could be achieved in a variety of ways, for example:

- *by maximising summer cooling through natural ventilation in buildings and avoiding solar gain;*
- *through district heating networks that include tri-generation (combined cooling, heat and power); or*
- *through the provision of multi-functional green infrastructure, which can reduce urban heat islands, manage flooding and help species adapt to climate change – as well as contributing to a pleasant environment which encourages people to walk and cycle.*

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However, the guidance also warns: *‘Local planning authorities should be aware of and avoid the risk of maladaptation (adaptation that could become more harmful than helpful). For example, designing buildings to maximise solar gain in winter without thinking through the implications for overheating in summer.’* The risk of flooding is likely to increase in many parts of the world, including the UK, due to the slowing of the Gulf Stream and melting sea ice in the Arctic. The recent [Public Accounts Committee report on flooding in England](#) recommended that house builders should bear the costs of paying for flood mitigation if they choose to build on a floodplain, with the option of building them on raised platforms.

There is, in fact, a plethora of official documents and reports, both nationally and internationally, setting out ambitious plans for the mitigation of and adaptation to the effects of climate breakdown. If they were all printed out, I’m willing to bet that there would not be a rainforest, never mind a tree, left standing anywhere in the world. It remains to be seen, however, how many of these plans will actually be implemented and whether that will be soon enough. Optimism, it seems, might be the resource that we most need to preserve.

Meanwhile, there are the usual examples of things being taken to extremes. In July 2018, Professor [Jem Bendell](#) self-published a paper entitled *Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy*, in which he predicted that climate change would lead to a complete breakdown of society within ten years. The paper was self-published because it was rejected for publication by a peer-reviewed journal, whose reviewers said its language was "not appropriate for an

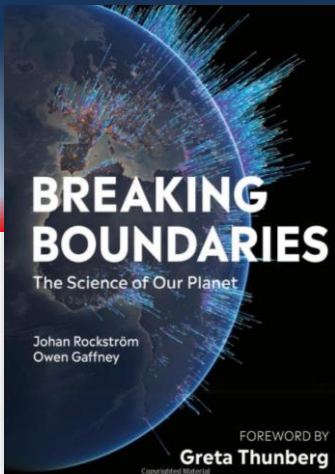
academic article". Nevertheless, the *Deep Adaptation* concept has gained a following on social media with thousands of people worldwide, including in the UK, who have taken the Professor’s pessimistic warnings seriously and are learning about foraging and how to grow their own food, moving from urban areas in places like southern England to more northern, cooler and higher regions like the north of Scotland and working out how to survive in a world without electricity.

Most mainstream scientists, however, are critical of Bendell’s paper. "Honestly, this kind of material is at the level of science of the anti-vax campaign," says Myles Allen, professor of Geosystem Science at the University of Oxford, quoted in a recent [BBC News item](#).

It seems to me that, as with everything in life, what’s needed is a “happy medium approach” which avoids extremes. Strenuous efforts still need to be made to mitigate the effects of climate change and to drive down carbon emissions as much as possible, whilst still pressuring governments and local authorities to ensure that infrastructure planning is fit for purpose in the inevitably altered world in which future generations will be living. However, it might not be a bad idea to start rewilding your garden.

¹ In 1965, the landmark report, "[Restoring the Quality of Our Environment](#)" by U.S. President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#)’s Science Advisory Committee warned of the harmful effects of fossil fuel emissions, including the warming effect of carbon dioxide.

'Breaking Boundaries: The Science of Our Planet' (2021) by Johan Rockström and Owen Gaffney



Professor Dr. Johan Rockström (above) is Director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and Professor in Earth System Science at the University of Potsdam. Owen Gaffney is a global sustainability analyst and writer and head of media at the Stockholm Resilience Centre.

The message of this book is optimistic and humanistic. It does not berate human beings for making a mess of things. It celebrates our ingenuity, but it also provides a stark warning about the risks of global warming.

Humans and our evolutionary ancestors have survived catastrophic climate change in the past. For the last million years, there have been ice ages every 100,000 years. The last one ended 11,700 years ago and we have been able to build human civilisation in the warm period known as the Holocene Interglacial. Interglacials can last for up to 30,000 years. Our planetary task, if we are up to it, is to keep the Earth in this 'Goldilocks' zone – not too cold, not too hot. But global warming may be pushing the Earth back to a state not seen since the 'hothouse Earth' period 5 to 60 million years ago when temperatures were up to 15°C hotter than today. Such a scenario

would be incompatible with human civilization. It could come about by what the authors call 'the domino effect': warmer temperatures release CO₂ from the ocean, and permafrost thaws emit more CO₂. A self-reinforcing warming cycle could rewind the climate clock tens of millions of years in just a couple of centuries. It's scientifically plausible, but as yet we know 'precious little' about it.

There are nine 'planetary boundaries' which provide a safe operating space within which humans can thrive. They are the climate system, ozone layer, ocean, biodiversity, land use, fresh water, fertilizer overload (nitrogen and phosphorus), novel entities such as plastic debris, and aerosol pollution. We have already transgressed four of the nine boundaries (climate, biodiversity, land, and fertilizers). We need to understand the Earth system in the same way that we understand the human body. If just one of its vital organs fails, the whole organism could shut down.

The authors have identified six system transformations that need to happen in the next decade to slow the rate of change of Earth's life support system and allow us all the chance of a good life on a stable planet. They call this 'the Earthshot Mission': energy transition, food production, reducing inequality, compact green cities, population and health, and harnessing technology.

If Dr Rockström's diagnosis and treatment plan is correct it looks like the whole planet needs to be put into intensive care. In the Netflix documentary (below) he says this should be the top priority of the UN Security Council.

Ethical Encounters

Exploring moral questions

RIGHT WRONG



If personal sacrifice, such as eating less meat, will make very little difference overall to the problem of global warming, is there any moral obligation to make such a sacrifice?

Paul Ewans says **yes**, David Warden says **no**.



Paul Ewans: It seems clear that we have moral obligations to the future generations who will inhabit this planet after we are gone. Our descendants will suffer

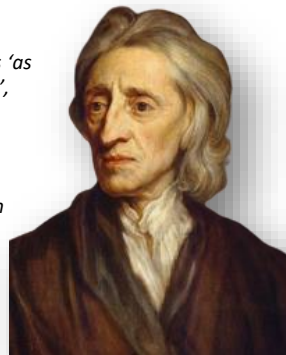
grievously if they do not have clean water, adequate food, an unpolluted environment and a habitable world.

We should therefore practice sustainability, leaving future generations 'as much and as good', as the philosopher John Locke put it, so that they have lives which are at least no worse than ours. We should protect the environment, preserve those features of the natural world whose loss would be irreversible, and leave resources for future use. In some mountainous regions unattended huts are left stocked with fuel and food in case walkers or climbers get pinned down by bad weather. We should adopt the same thoughtful and responsible attitude towards future generations.

We all have some responsibility for causing the global warming which appears to be the

We should leave future generations 'as much and as good', according to philosopher John Locke.

Portrait of Locke in 1697 by Godfrey Kneller (public domain)



greatest current threat to the well-being of future generations. But does this mean that each of us has a moral obligation to help counter it? If we continue to live the way we are living now, the consequences both for humankind and for all other living creatures may be catastrophic and it will probably only be possible to avoid the worst if very many people make significant changes to their lifestyles. But for each of us, taking action will often mean making a personal sacrifice which will have only a very small impact on the problem as a whole.

Continued next page ▷

This leads some people to claim that no one has an obligation to do any particular thing – such as eating less meat – since this will make very little difference overall. But we generally believe that we should do what we reasonably can to prevent harm to others and failing to act will certainly harm future generations. So it seems we cannot claim to be living a morally good life if we are not making a personal contribution in the fight against global warming. We should do what we know to be right.



David Warden: The concern I have about Paul's moral stance is that if everyone on the planet 'does their bit' to tackle climate change this will not come near to actually

solving the problem. The mantras of individual responsibility, eating less meat, buying an electric car and so on is lulling people into moral delusion. It makes people feel good to think that they are 'making a personal sacrifice' and 'doing their bit' but in reality, this is taking the focus off the real solutions to the problem which are technological and systemic.

We need to fix the energy problem. Turning off your TV standby and buying long-life bulbs will not solve the problem. Renewables like wind and solar require a vast amount of steel, concrete, and land (apart from offshore turbines), they need fossil-fuel back up because they are intermittent, and they are a hazard to birds and insects. The world needs to overcome its irrational fear of nuclear energy which is the safest and most efficient way to produce abundant energy.

We need to fix the concrete and steel problem. According to Bill Gates in *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster* (2021) the world will be building the equivalent of another New York City every month for the next 40 years. That's nearly 500 new cities by 2060. Making one ton of steel produces about 1.8 tons of carbon dioxide. John Glazer (see his article elsewhere in this issue) is 'doing his bit' by forking out £40,000 for an electric car but it probably contains a ton of steel. Aaron's carbon footprint is admirably small (see his article), but if he wins the lottery (which he hopes to) he will probably go out and buy a battleship (I know him well!)

Making one ton of cement produces about one ton of carbon dioxide. Innovative processes for making cement currently reduce carbon dioxide by about 10 per cent. It may be theoretically possible to get to 70 per cent. To clean up the remaining 30 per cent we're going to need [direct air capture](#) of carbon dioxide. We've got the technology, but it needs to be scaled up massively.

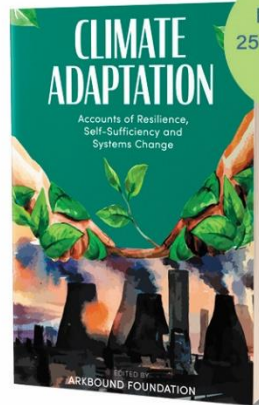
According to Bill Gates, public investment in research and development is one of the most important things we can do to fight climate change, but governments aren't doing nearly enough of it. In total, it amounts to about \$22 billion a year, around 0.02 per cent of the global economy. That needs to be scaled up to at least \$100 billion. This investment will feed through into leading-edge export markets for low-cost, zero-carbon energy, cement and steel technologies.

Don't get me wrong. We should all minimise our impact on the planet. But if we get the tech right, we can live within planetary boundaries without sacrificing universal wellbeing.

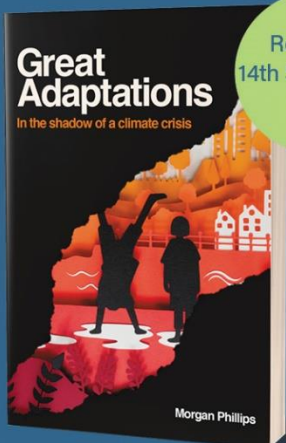
Climate Adaptation

Accounts of Resilience,
Self-Sufficiency & Systems Change

Where is the world really heading, and what can we do about it? With accounts by 18 leading authors around the world, this book examines ways people and communities can adapt to climate change, as well as alternative socio-economic models that can build a better future.



Released
25th October
2021



Released
14th September
2021

Great Adaptations

In the Shadow of a Climate Crisis

Across ten captivating and beautifully illustrated chapters, Morgan Phillips recounts the lesser-told stories of the good, bad, and very ugly adaptation to climate change. A conversational, provocative, and visually arresting call to action, it presses home the need for adaptations that are ecologically restorative and socially just.

Morgan Phillips



Letters & Emails

Humanists are wrong to want legally recognised marriage ceremonies

I am going to be controversial and say that humanists are wrong to want their marriage ceremonies to be legally recognised. They should be seeking the opposite. No 'marriage ceremony' should create a legally binding marriage.

Marriage is a legal contract. It can only be ended by the divorce courts and therefore should be entered into in a sober fashion in a court, town hall or council office, not when dressed up in a silly white meringue in church or garlanded in flowers under a tree.

By all means have your church, temple or humanist ceremony, enjoy the party, share the joy of the union with friends and family, but remember that this is a legal not a spiritual matter. From the early Christian era marriage was thought of as primarily a private matter, with no uniform religious or other ceremony being required. The Christian church hijacked a good thing when it saw an opportunity.

Julia Ewans, Bury St Edmunds

A view from Indiana

What am I missing? The title of the article by Julian Webb and Claire Berrisford asks if their wedding will be MEANINGFUL. Then, when you get into it, you seem to be concerned whether or not the marriage will be LEGAL. These are two very different things. Why can't you just go to the courthouse and take care of the legal part, and then have a party with your friends to make it a meaningful day full of wonderful

memories? After all, it's primarily a legal contract is it not? How can you avoid that aspect and still be "lawfully wedded"? Maybe you don't really want to be "married" at all? I don't see what your issue is... You will have to "bear the cost" of a separate legal ceremony - "To be legally married, costs start at around £120. That covers fees for the notice of marriage (£35 for each partner) and a brief registry office service on a weekday." Oh, for goodness' sake! Send me your address and I'll cover it. Heck, I'll even throw in a gift card from Selfridge's and Harrod's! Our lives are governed by laws all day long. You can't legally run red lights or kill people. Like it not, you're going to need a marriage license. Just put up with the brief ceremony at the registry office and be done with it. I don't really understand why this is the hill you want to die on, but to each his own. Not a fan of marriage but sending you best wishes from Indiana. And I am serious about your fees and the gift cards. Cheers!

- Julian and Claire's article in last month's *Humanistically Speaking* 'Will our humanist wedding be meaningful?' was published simultaneously on Jonathan MS Pearce's 'Tippling Philosopher' blog on [Patheos](#). The spirited response above came from a contributor called 'dcinDC' in Indiana.
- What's your view? Do you think that a wedding ceremony is somehow meaningless without it also taking legal effect? We'd love to hear more views on this.



Letters & Emails

Humanist clubs for the converted

Well done David Brittain and the team for the frequent and professionally produced newsletter. Re the article last month on "Making a Stand", I am with Aaron, the volunteers from N.E. Humanists and others who take Humanism to a wider public because I feel that organised Humanism, in the UK at least, tends towards providing clubs for the converted, most of whom are both (now the choice of words gets tricky) top-end intellectuals and highly educated people.

Of course, a lot of work is done to spread the word, but I want us to get to the majority of the population who do not have the same advantages. (Dare I say "the man in the street" of whom I am one). After all, the idea and ideals of Humanism are very simple, easy to understand and persuasive. (My own discovery of Humanism was life-changing).

Having some years ago organised what we called Outside Events for Dorset Humanists and made several school visits I was frequently pleased and surprised that so many adults and students seemed to understand and see the sense of our beliefs and activities.

We found that it was best to have stands at events which attract people who have the time to stroll from stand to stand. We had lots of visitors at the Wimborne Folk Festival and the annual Martyrs event at Tolpuddle. A smaller pop-up gazebo and eye-catching graphics should be sufficient.

Richard Scutt, Dorset Humanists

Reasons to get married

The 'General Marriage Rate' graph (1930-2010 crash) on page 17 of the September edition of *Humanistically Speaking* is absolutely astonishing! When I got married, I did so because it was fair for my wife, as so-called 'common-law' marriages have no legal standing and in the event of anything happening, she might have experienced considerable problems in accessing our joint assets. Hardly a romantic reason for getting married but still important for us both. Another reason, which she probably did not consider at the time when I 'tricked' her into marrying me (that's another story!) was that it gave her a more settled and 'respectable' standing with her own family members.

John Dowdle, President of Watford Area Humanists

Scotland – the place to go for humanist weddings!

A good read and a great interview with Fraser Sutherland (Chief Executive at Humanist Society Scotland) in the September edition of *Humanistically Speaking*. We are already conducting a fair number of marriages for you poor English/Welsh folk up here! Did a quick count of my next twenty weddings and four are from England which feels about average. Of course, in normal times we also get couples from further afield and I've personally married couples from Norway, France, New Zealand, Australia, USA and Japan that I can remember.

Marilyn Jackson, Humanist Society Scotland

Anthropocentric

The Chairman said:

'The trouble with Humanism is that it's Anthropocentric.

It puts us in the middle.

Like we're the most important

When in fact we aren't worth piddle.

Not when compared to the bounteous wonder
Of Nature."

The Secretary said:

"The trouble is meetings.

When you invite everyone,

The squirrels swing from the lighting

The rhinos knock down the walls

The hippos won't stop fighting

The gibbons screech down the halls

The giraffes can't read the minutes

The fish in the sea feel left out

The house cats upset all the linnets

The snakes won't stop slithering about

The gazelles get spooked by the lions

The lions get peeved by the bears

The bears gobble up all the pastries

The antelope lurk by the stairs

The elephants sometimes forget to come in

The warthogs forget to go out

The okapi eat the agenda

So no one knows what we're talking about.

"The hyenas laugh in our faces

And in short, the whole meeting's a farce

Because nobody stays in their places

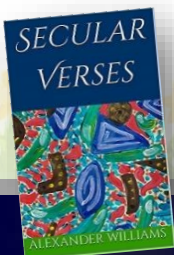
And the boardroom gets covered in grass.

I agree that's it's anthropocentric

But please trust it's been put to the test.

If you want to get anything done around here

Then meetings with humans are best."



Alexander Williams is a writer, teacher and singer from Watford. His new collection of poems [Secular Verses](#) is now published and available on Amazon. Click the link or the book image and help support his great work. Details of his previous books can be found at www.thedialup.blogspot.com

Poet's Corner
By Alexander Williams



Click
Image

Garden of Eden

The Garden of Eden, fat with sinuous rills
And rampant ripples of undulating hills,
Has plump warm grass just tall enough to tease
The rounded ankles of the streams that ease
Lazily down between the portly roots

Of sudden trees and yellow sprouting shoots.
Embedded in a land of fertile turf
The River Wonder gurgles round the earth
Bubbling over troves of crystal jade
Dancing through the sunlight and the shade
Drenching LIFE in plentiful profusion

Of nourishment, fecundity and ILLUSION.
For somehow at the centre stands a man
Bare-footed, un-accommodated ape
A two-pronged fool whose purpose in this plan
Is to shit and eat and sleep and fuck and rape
And hoard and waste and murder, multiply,
Be lord of this dominion, fart, then die.

The joke of our existence lies in this:
We turned the garden into an abyss.

Why not listen to Alex read his poem to you? [HERE](#)

GLOBAL WARMING TOOLKIT

The Heat is on

By Aaron Darkwood

How much do I cost the planet?

That's the question I've been pondering, so I found out. There are many carbon footprint calculators online, so I just picked the first one I found that wasn't an advert and here are my results.

I generate 3.68 tonnes of CO₂ per year, primarily down to my eating habits and energy usage, with transport being a small fraction of the total. Ninety per cent of my journeys are by foot with only occasional bus, car share, and train journeys. Carbon-footprint.com will tell you what you use and suggest ways to offset that amount ranging from £25 in paying towards green energy initiatives to £54 for planting trees (which you could do personally).

Total To Offset = 3.68 tonnes of CO₂ [Offset Now](#)



Click the image to calculate your carbon footprint

- Your footprint is 3.68 tonnes per year
- The average footprint for people in United Kingdom is 6.50 tonnes
- The average for the European Union is about 6.4 tonnes
- The average worldwide carbon footprint is about 4.8 tonnes
- The world target by 2050 is 0 tonnes

It's very easy to feel that this is someone else's problem: the government, big business, coal power stations in China, but we all have a responsibility to do our bit and to do a bit more. How many of these are you doing now?



Some green tips:

- Buy only what you need to, buy it locally
- Reduce what you use, portion sizes, etc.
- Recycle things that still have life in them
- Sell unwanted items on Gumtree / ebay and make some extra cash
- Buy from [Gumtree](#), it's local and reasonably-priced or even free
- Use Freecycle to give away things
- Repair items in your home rather than replace, maybe sell them on or give away
- Upcycle items into new uses for extended life and gain more value from them
- Give things away to your neighbours
- Give spare food to local homeless people
- Use environmentally-friendly transport
- Insulate your home inside and out
- Fit [ground source heat pumps](#) / [solar panels](#) [Government incentive](#)
- Grow your own food or help someone who has an allotment.
- Reduce your water usage, save rainwater
- Compost your waste, recycle the rest



This video will paint the entire picture of the scale of the problem



GLOBAL WARMING BINGO CARD

Will you get a line or a full house? There are no prizes from us on this one, but the planet as a whole will thank you for the higher score you get.

Turn off and unplug electrical appliances, standbys are very bad	Turn off water whilst brushing your teeth	Do your washing on a lower temperature setting	Dry clothes naturally outdoors or on an ailer	Eat one extra meatless meal per week
Pay bills online, go paperless where possible	Increase your recycling efficiency, use less packaging	Take bags when you go shopping, use bags for life	Use a dual flush for toilets, or only flush solids	Reduce shower time to less than 5 minutes to save water
Use rechargeable batteries in your remote controls etc.	Turn your thermostat down for heating and water heater	Reuse gift wrap paper for presents & make your own cards	Only cook what you need, monitor portion sizes	Buy food in bulk to reduce packaging and save cash
Recycle your unwanted items on GumTree, Ebay Freecycle	Use a tablet or laptop instead of a desktop computer	Reuse scrap paper for notes, only print items if essential	Walk or cycle to local places; it's better for you and saves the planet	Drive below 60mph as driving faster burns more fuel
Save garden rainwater for the plants and lawn	Carry a travel cup and water bottle to save disposable ones	Save serviettes at restaurants, they will only be thrown away	Save spare food in containers or give to neighbours or homeless	Car share to all your humanist meetings with friends
Add insulation to your loft, replace roof tiles, fix holes and draughts	Add external insulation to your home, reduce heat loss	Compost your waste to reduce landfill, feed the birds and wildlife	Plant some trees locally or increase the greenery in your garden	Explore ground source heat pumps for your home

Humanistically Speaking Coverage

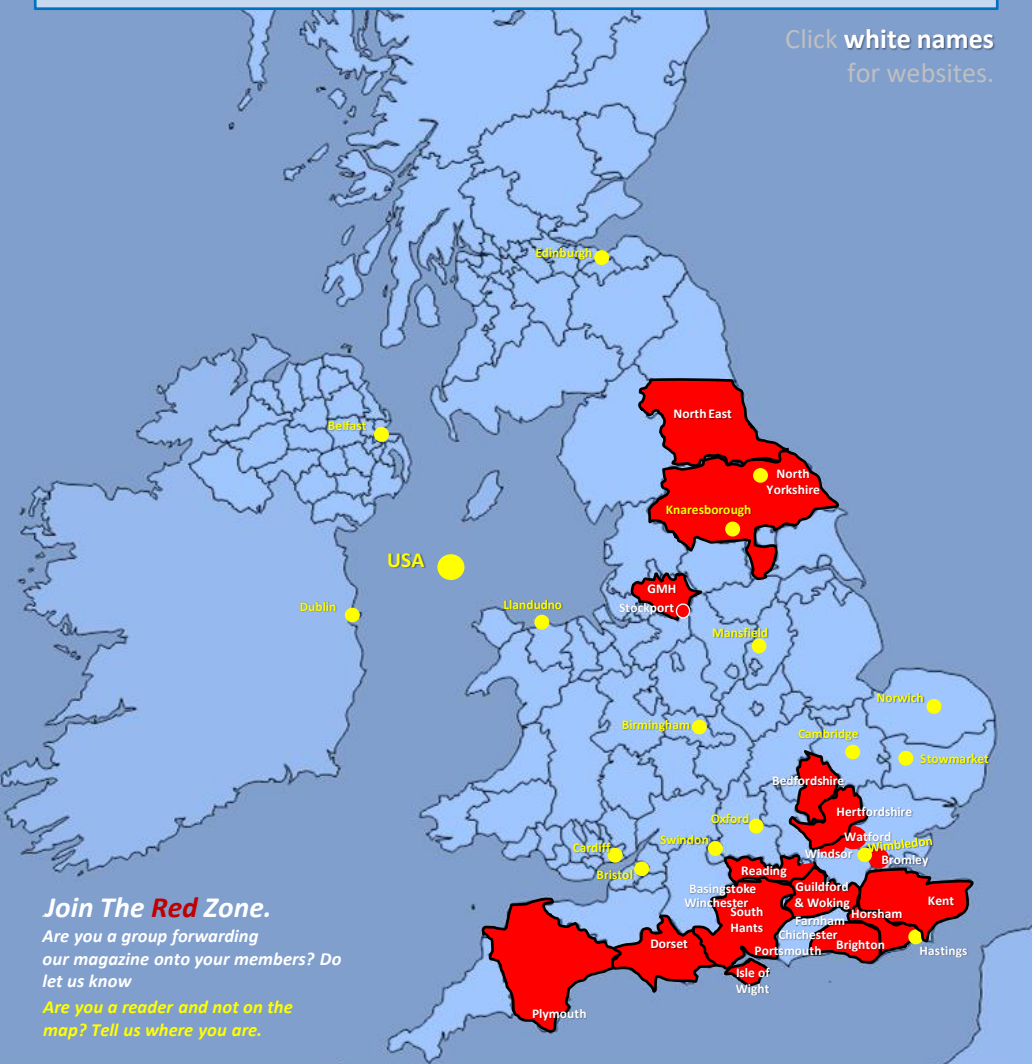
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Click white names
for websites.



Do you live in a town where you think a group could flourish?
Contact us and we will see what can happen with the Network's help.

*Humanism is an ethical non-religious worldview. It's about tolerance, kindness, knowledge, and friendship. Although *Humanistically Speaking* is for Humanists, everyone is welcome to read and contribute, regardless of faith or belief.*



Click the 'Happy Human' symbol above
to learn more about Humanist values

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In addition, we have our vital back-office support team of:

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