

# Humanist Climate Action



Welcome to this month's update on the work of Humanist Climate Action. As well as a round-up of what we're up to, you can find our thoughts on COPs 26 and 15, the current work of the Climate Coalition, and a plea to all members to make a personal climate pledge.

## What have we been up to?

Since launching, Humanist Climate Action has been campaigning to make sure the humanist voice is heard on environmental issues. Back in November 2021 we marched alongside representatives from other religion and belief groups in Glasgow and London for Climate Action during the [COP26 summit](#). This was a great opportunity for humanists to gather and show our commitment to tackling environmental issues and particularly climate change. We also [wrote to support](#) the Multi-Faith Declaration for COP26 and called for determined action from governments to prevent climate and nature breakdown. Despite the [limited progress at COP26](#), HCA has not been discouraged and has pressed on, in particular responding to UK Government consultations on [plastic pollution](#) and [biodiversity net gain regulations](#). We are also working on our first event of 2022: '[In the footsteps of Darwin – protecting biodiversity in the era of climate change](#)' taking place on 18 May – and we would love to virtually see you there!

**Lori Marriott**

Coordinator, Humanist Climate Action

## A Tale of Two COPs

Last year it was COP26, this year it's COP 15. The first was the Conference of the Parties on Climate Change, and we heard a lot about it. The second is the Conference on Biodiversity, and we've heard very little about it. That's partly because the former was in Glasgow and the venue for the latter is Kunming in China. It's partly because COP15 has been postponed four times – after the third postponement it was scheduled to be happening now but has been delayed again until late summer. But it also reflects the general lack of awareness of the biodiversity crisis. Last year the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee [said](#):

'Damaging changes in the planet's biodiversity are not being treated with the same urgency and ambition as changes in the planet's climate. This is unacceptable. Measures to counter the collapse in biodiversity must be raised up the political agenda: each Government department must consider the potential impact of its actions on biodiversity, and such considerations must be factored into decision-making across the public and private sector. We have seen a shift towards this with climate change: the same is possible for biodiversity. To prevent biodiversity collapse becoming a global crisis, action must be taken now.'

The Committee's Report summarised the scale of the crisis:

'The world is witnessing a colossal decline in global biodiversity. One million animal and plant species are threatened with extinction.... Since 1970 there has been a 68 percent decrease in population sizes of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and fish. This global picture is reflected in the UK, one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. 15 percent of UK species are threatened with extinction. Of the G7 countries, the UK has the lowest level of biodiversity remaining. At a minimum, the UK has failed to meet 14 of the 19 Aichi biodiversity targets, the global nature goals the UK committed to meet by 2020.'

Species decline is something we're all aware of at one level. 40 years ago I would hear cuckoos regularly nearby at this time of year. Now I hardly ever hear them. 40 years ago, hedgehogs would regularly visit our garden. Now we never see them. The biodiversity decline not only risks the loss of important resources for human use. It is also a direct loss of the richness and beauty of the natural world from which we draw our emotional sustenance, our source of inspiration and delight.

Action on biodiversity loss and action on climate change don't have to be in competition. Climate change is itself one of the causes of species decline. And nature-based solutions to climate change have a vital role to play, protecting and restoring the trees, hedgerows, and grassland which can absorb carbon emissions. As a report by scientific experts [said last June](#), 'Biodiversity loss and climate change are both driven by human economic activities and mutually reinforce each other. Neither will be successfully resolved unless both are tackled together.'



Photo credit [Gibe](#)

Humanist Climate Action is equally committed on both fronts. Our terms of reference spell out our ‘belief that human beings are part of a wider natural world which must be treated sustainably for the sake of current and future generations’, and that ‘we have a duty to protect nature’s integrity, diversity, and beauty in a secure and sustainable manner.’ We shall continue to act on those commitments and encourage other humanists to do the same.

**Richard Norman**

## HCA at COP26

Supporters of Humanist Climate Action taking part in demonstrations on 6 November 2021 before COP 26, in London...



...and in Glasgow, with members of Eco-Humanists Scotland.



## The Climate Coalition

HCA is a member of [The Climate Coalition](#), and represented at its meetings by Geoff Sallis. The Coalition has recently been drawing attention to a major [new international report](#) which was released on 4 April, saying that immediate action on climate change in the next few years is critical to stop our world from warming beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The Climate Coalition is calling on the UK Government to implement the [expert advice from the Climate Change Committee](#). Follow that link to read more about what The Climate Coalition is doing and what it is calling for.

## Make a Climate Pledge

So often you hear people say the climate crisis needs to be solved by governments and that individual actions cannot solve the problem.

While this statement is largely true, it overlooks the contribution individuals can make. While everyone has to start by looking at their impact on the environment to make changes in their life, it is what happens next that can provide the magic. When individuals become engaged with making changes they can become influencers in their personal and professional environment. It is this ability to start a virtuous wave that is exciting.

***From newbies to hardened eco warriors everyone can make a difference, so this is a call to action for every Humanist to make a personal Climate Pledge.***

But I don't know where to start, we hear you say. We have a suggestion that we hope will provide that elusive starting point.

## TAKE THE FIRST STEP

If you don't understand the environmental consequences of different aspects of your life, how can you know what will have the most impact if you make changes? So start at the beginning by calculating your carbon footprint. There are many different tools to do this but my testing shows they come up with similar results.

If you are doing this for the first time our favourite calculation tools are the [World Wildlife Fund My Footprint App](#) and the [Earth Hero App](#).

These provide a reasonable estimate of your carbon footprint and have simple challenges and reminders that are helpful in identifying improvements. If you are just starting out the WWF App may be better. The Earth Hero App requires more time but has many more suggestions for how to reduce your climate impact.

To understand your carbon footprint versus others in your area and comparisons to other areas, there is a [brilliant website for England](#) that provides data on consumption at a macro level. It does not take long to conclude that it is the more affluent members of our communities who

have the largest carbon footprints, but who also have the greatest ability (and responsibility) to make the most significant reductions.

*That's all well and good but what about the current energy crisis? What can be done to help control increases in gas and electricity prices?*

The first thing to concentrate on is the reduction of waste heat. This means insulating your home and controlling the heating and appliances effectively. How well you are able to do this will depend on whether you own your home or are renting and whether you have the means to invest.

Everything from using draft excluders to insulating the loft, installing cavity wall insulation/external insulation, or replacing windows will make a difference. Running washing machines and dishwashers with full loads and not leaving appliances on standby are easy wins. If you have not heard of vampire appliances yet then [this Guardian article](#) is well worth a look.

Having effective central heating controls and thermostats on individual radiators allow you to heat the rooms you use to different temperatures. The usual message is, turn your heating down by 1 degree, but this could be inappropriate for anyone elderly or with mobility issues who will need more heating to stay comfortable and safe. The ideal, for those who can afford it, is a system that enables them to control their heating in hour slots and remotely like Hive or Nest.

For those shocked by the results of their carbon footprint calculation, and with the money available, now may be the time to consider solar panels, investing in a Wind Farm Cooperative through an organisation like Ripple, or if replacing a boiler exploring Heat Pumps.

**Pauline Element**

***HCA would be interested in hearing from readers on their Climate Pledges and any ideas they would like to share.***

**Get in touch if you want more information about Humanist Climate Action at [campaigns@humanists.uk](mailto:campaigns@humanists.uk). Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).**