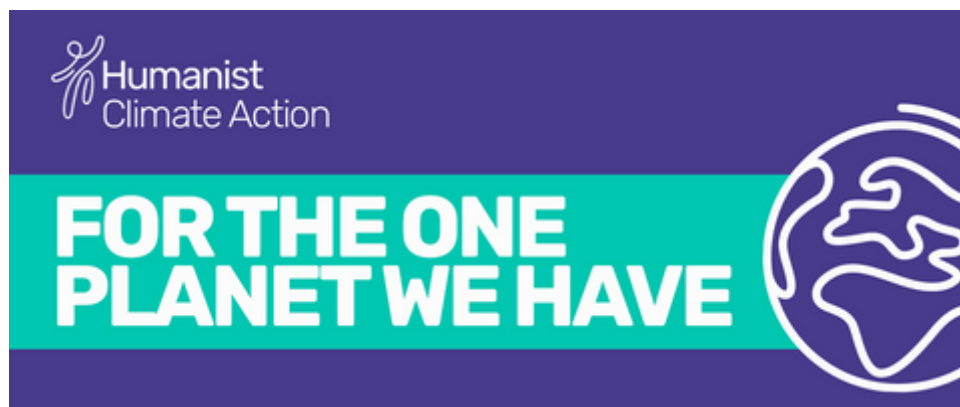




HUMANIST CLIMATE ACTION

NOVEMBER 2022 NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the November newsletter of Humanist Climate Action. Included in this edition are some big concerns at the national level, some ideas for things you can do, and an invitation to send us your thoughts.

DEFEND NATURE

An ancient proverb states that a society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they know they shall never sit. The ability of the current generation to leave a thriving environment and diverse ecology for our descendants to inherit has never been under so much doubt. With recent developments threatening our great society, we explore the background, what's happening at a national level, and what you can do for the environment in your back garden.

Liz Truss's short-lived Government embarked on [what the RSPB described as an 'attack on nature'](#), with plans to scrap laws protecting our natural environment, clean water, clean air, and clean beaches and rivers. There were also indications that it was considering abandoning plans for the Environmental Land Management scheme, which would support farmers and landowners enhancing nature and creating space for rare species and habitats whilst using their land to absorb carbon and work towards net zero. Rishi Sunak has as yet given no clear sign of a u-turn

away from these 'attacks on nature', other than dropping fracking plans. And like Liz Truss, he has also supported changes to reduce the areas for the successful production of green solar power, even though, as [CarbonBrief](#) has shown, land can be used for both solar and agriculture.

The [National Trust has announced that more than eighty percent of UK adults](#) believe more needs to be done urgently to protect and restore nature. Along with the RSPB and Wildlife Trusts it is setting up a [citizens' assembly for nature](#) to meet through November. A representative group of 100 people from across the UK will hear from leading scientists, politicians, industry leaders, and members of the public to understand the pressures UK nature is under, so they can understand and prioritise the solutions needed to protect and restore nature in the UK.

If you want your voice to be heard as part of the campaign to [Defend Nature](#), you can write to your MP and, with local and parish councils having responsibility for parks and nature in your areas, write to your [councillors](#) too.

While you write and campaign for action at a national level, there's still lots you can do for wildlife at home. As winter approaches, it's time to make [bee hotels, log shelters. and bug mansions that help native wildlife and birds](#) through the coming months. As our climate changes we must prepare for heavier downpours of rain between longer periods of drought.

A small part of your garden being changed makes a great eco-friendly island. Speaking to your neighbours and building a series of wildlife friendly areas creates a sustainable ecosystem that can support a much bigger diversity of life. A great society can work together, let's plant some shade. Tell us what you've been able to do on our [Facebook page](#).



Bug hotels made from recycled/reused timber and other materials by members of the Roehampton Community Shed in London (photos from HCA committee member John Burns)

Tom McMillen

You can [read more information](#) on the threats to the environmental laws and planning regulations that protect nature. You can find advice from the [RSPB](#) and from the [Wildlife Trusts](#) on writing to your MP to convey your concern.

COP27 AND COP15 DECLARATIONS



We've issued declarations giving our views on the [2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference, aka COP27](#), and the [UN Biodiversity Conference aka COP15](#), that you can read on our website.

DON'T MENTION CHRISTMAS!



I am a humanist but I love Christmas. I just can't help myself. The opportunity to get together with friends and family when the days are short, dark, and wet is a tonic and carefully buying gifts has always been a central part of the preparation.

The giving and receiving of presents is problematic as it involves so much waste. This year many people will be anxious about the cost of Christmas so may be grateful for a discussion that enables them to reduce expenditure.

So my suggestion is that you start by writing a list of who you exchange gifts with or give gifts to. Then split the recipients into the following categories:

1. Those who may be amenable to stop the exchange of gifts
2. Those who may like the concept of a donation to a charity of their choice

3. Those who would love to spend time with you. Invite them to supper or take them out for lunch or tea. Take them to the theatre, exhibition, or to a National Trust property. Making time to do something with an older relative may be the most appreciated of gifts
4. Groups where it may be possible to agree on a secret Santa where everyone gets a single gift from someone in the group.

My experience of these conversations is that if you think about which approach is appropriate and listen to the preferences of the other person or group it is not difficult to agree on a more sustainable option.

There are always people you will wish to buy a gift for and many recipients who will request things they really need. Young people going to university or setting up home will have items that are essential. My advice is find out what they want or get a gift receipt so an unwanted gift can be easily swapped (make it clear that you will not take offence and want the gift to be used).

Children are always going to be the most challenging. My strategy has been to buy high quality wooden gifts where possible. These can be sold on or donated after use. When purchasing clothes it is also beneficial to buy the best quality you can afford and check what the child actually needs. Arranging a trip or outing with them may also be a great way to reduce the environmental impact and spend time doing something fun with them.

I still buy presents but have a shorter list and work very hard to make sure what I buy is likely to be used.

Here are some items I have given in the past that have been well received:

- Guppy Bag – for using when washing clothes made of artificial fibres to capture the microplastics
- Eco Egg – use instead of detergent in the washing machine
- Solid Shampoo/conditioner without palm oil
- Bamboo pads for use with facial cleansers
- Reusable coffee cup or water bottle (as long as they don't already have one!)
- Subscription to [The Ethical Consumer](#)

BBC Good Food [provides](#) some other rather stylish options.

Pauline Element

P.S. Don't forget the option of making your own bug hotels to give as presents – see above.

ARE ORGANIC PASTURE-FED BEEF AND LAMB ‘THE WORLD’S MOST DAMAGING FARM PRODUCTS’?

One of the big debates within the environmental movement is about the case for and against livestock farming. [In an article in *The Guardian* this summer](#), George Monbiot argued that ‘the world’s most damaging farm products’ are ‘organic, pasture-fed beef and lamb’. This is not only because of the greenhouse gas emissions such as methane produced by farming animals, but also because of the carbon opportunity cost of pasture-fed beef and lamb. The cattle on organic beef farms, he argued, ‘take longer to raise and need even more land’, land which could be given over to ‘wild ecosystems which would store more carbon than the fields and pastures that have taken their place.’



[In an article written in reply to Monbiot](#), the cook and writer Thomasina Miers made the case for regenerative farming practised on small-scale farms that almost all use some grazing animals in their systems to aid the nutrient cycle in their soil. In these types of farms,’ she argued, ‘small herds of cattle or sheep graze diverse cover crops, boosting the biodiversity on their land, not reducing it.’

What do you think? We know that there are HCA supporters on both sides of this debate. Do get in touch and share your thoughts. Contact us at climateaction@humanists.uk.

HUMANIST CLIMATE ACTION IN GREAT BIG GREEN WEEK



As a contribution to Great Big Green Week we arranged a litter-pick in central London on Saturday 1 October for any Humanist Climate Action supporters who could make it. That turned out, however, to be a national rail strike day, which limited participation somewhat! We went ahead all the same, collecting several bagfuls of rubbish from Tavistock Square, Russell Square, Bloomsbury Square, Red Lion Square, and the streets between. We started from the sculptured bust of humanist writer Virginia Woolf in Tavistock Square and ended at the bust of the famous humanist philosopher Bertrand Russell. Not a world-changing event, but it was fun, and we took the opportunity to talk to passers-by about who we were and why we were doing it.



With Bertrand Russell in Red Lion Square