

 **Humanists UK**
Convention 2024

Cardiff Students Union
Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3QN

**FOR A TOLERANT
WORLD WHERE
RATIONAL THINKING
AND KINDNESS PREVAIL**

#Humanists2024
14–16 June 2024
Cardiff



Read on
your phone

WELCOME

Hello to all – new faces and familiar ones – gathered in Cardiff for this year’s Humanists UK Convention. I’m thrilled to welcome you here. This occasion is a personal annual highlight for me, and I look forward to meeting hundreds of members and supporters in person around the venue. Please say hello!

Being in Cardiff means this is also an opportunity to celebrate the remarkable successes of Wales Humanists in recent years. It’s been inspiring to see our efforts come to fruition in shaping the curriculum and pioneering new laws on ethical issues here in Wales. As you know, the recent census demonstrated that the non-religious are the largest group in Wales, it is one of the least religious nations in Europe, and its devolved institutions are totally secular. This has brought huge benefits. Wales Humanists’ success shows what we can all achieve together in pursuit of kindness, equality, and rational thought.

Wales has an inspiring history of humanist thinkers and reformers. From Robert Owen’s fight for a ‘rational religion’ which inspired the creation of humanist societies, to Millicent Mackenzie’s groundbreaking role in education, Nye Bevan’s creation of the NHS, to our

late patron Rhodri Morgan’s cultivation of a secular Welsh Parliament and government, we aren’t just surrounded here by hills and valleys – we are in the presence of giants. Some of the talks this weekend will draw on that exciting history.

As well as stimulating talks from world-class speakers and performers, there’ll be entertainment, camaraderie, and good company in spades, too. For me, and I hope you’ll agree, one of the best parts of these Conventions is the community we find together and the new connections and friendships developed over the weekend.

It’s important too, that we acknowledge the progress humanists are making towards a fairer society – in Wales and right across the UK. The general election in just a few weeks’ time gives us a unique opportunity to raise the profile of humanist issues. You’ll have seen and heard some of the fruits of this already on your television screens and radios. For example, we’ve seen vocal cross-party support for humanist marriages, and there has been more momentum than I’ve seen before in the campaign for assisted dying.

We are a movement of compassionate, rational people championing ideas for the one life we have, and



supporting lasting change for a better society. And this weekend, we celebrate. Whether it’s your first Convention or the latest of many, I’m delighted to have you here.

Here’s to a wonderful weekend ahead, filled with learning, laughter, and the shared pursuit of humanist values.

Andrew Copson
Chief Executive,
Humanists UK

YOUR TICKET

REGISTRATION

Register and collect your name badge at the registration desk in the foyer.

Registration for Humanists UK Convention 2024 is open from 18:00 on Friday, 08:30 on Saturday, and 09:30 on Sunday.



Celebrant, School Speaker, Pastoral Support Volunteer, Dialogue, First-time attendee
Young Humanists, LGBT Humanists, Defence Humanists,
Humanist Climate Action, Attending solo



Convention ticket

Convention ticket-holders are welcome to join us at any talk or panel discussion throughout the weekend.



plus lunch

Join us for teas, coffees, and lunch on Saturday and Sunday.

Coffee is served at 10:50 and 14:50/15:00 on Saturday and Sunday.



plus dinner

Join us for drinks from 19:30 on Saturday evening, and for the Gala Dinner at 20:00.

There is no designated dress code for the dinner; come as you feel most comfortable.



plus lunch and dinner

Join us for teas, coffees, and lunches on both days, and for drinks and the Gala Dinner on Saturday evening.

FRIDAY

18:00	Registration opens	Foyer
19:00	Cashless bar	Great Hall
20:00	Friday Evening Entertainment Dani Johns, <i>The Ego Trick</i> with Julian Baggini and Callum Weaver, Tadiwa Mahlunge, Jacob Hawley	Great Hall
22:00	Welcome drinks (cashless bar)	Great Hall

SATURDAY

08:30	Registration opens	Foyer
09:00	Welcome	Great Hall
09:05	Global humanisms Julian Baggini, <i>Andrew Russell</i>	Great Hall
10:00	Josiah Hughes and the humanist tradition in Wales Madeleine Goodall, <i>Emma Shepherd</i>	Great Hall
10:50	Tea and coffee (Lunch ticket-holders only)	Taf
11:10	Special Keynote Guest Speaker <i>Interviewed by Andrew Copson</i>	Great Hall
12:10	Lunch (Lunch ticket-holders only)	Taf
13:00	Humanist values in our politics Baroness Burt, James Evans MS, Julie Morgan MS, Leanne Wood, <i>Andrew Copson</i>	Great Hall
14:00	Blasphemy, 'apostasy', and asylum in the UK Jamie Bell, Aseel M, Lucy Potter, <i>Amy Walden</i>	Great Hall
14:50	Tea and coffee (Lunch ticket-holders only)	Taf
15:10	Heresy: Jesus Christ and the other sons of God Catherine Nixey, <i>Andrew Copson</i>	Great Hall
	Recovering from religious trauma: how Faith to Faithless is helping Donna Craine, Yvonne Quaintrell, <i>Clare Elcombe Webber</i>	Y Plas

SATURDAY

16:10	Chance, chaos, and why everything we do matters Brian Klaas, <i>Kathy Riddick</i>	Great Hall
17:00	Close	
19:30	Drinks reception (Gala Dinner ticket-holders only)	Taf
20:00	Gala Dinner (Gala Dinner ticket-holders only)	Great Hall

SUNDAY

09:30	Registration opens	Foyer
10:00	The story of time Jim Al-Khalili, <i>Ann O'Connell</i>	Great Hall
10:50	Tea and coffee (Lunch ticket-holders only)	Taf
11:10	Shaping tomorrow: humanist campaigning from education to assisted dying Nathan Stilwell, Lewis Young, <i>Kathy Riddick</i>	Great Hall
12:00	Lunch (Lunch ticket-holders only)	Taf
	AGM registration opens	Foyer
13:00	The hidden culture, history, and science of bisexuality Julia Shaw, <i>Nick Baldwin</i>	Great Hall
	Humanism and community engagement Wayne Mills, Mari Vaughan-Owen, <i>Emma Shepherd</i>	Y Plas
14:00	DNA vs hip hop Adam Rutherford, <i>Nicole Shasha</i>	Great Hall
15:00	Close, tea and coffee (Lunch ticket-holders only)	Taf
15:30	Humanists UK Annual General Meeting (Members only)	Great Hall
17:00	Drinks with board members (Members only)	Taf

All appearances and timings are subject to speakers' work and other scheduling commitments.

SESSIONS (FRI/SAT)

Friday Evening Entertainment

Dani Johns, Julian Baggini, Callum Weaver, Tadiwa Mahlunge, Jacob Hawley

Friday 19:00–Late

A fun, easy, social start to the weekend! The bar opens at 19:00, and comedy kicks off at 20:00. And why not stay for a few drinks with attendees old and new from 22:00?

Welcome

Great Hall

Andrew Copson

Saturday 09:00–09:05

Global humanisms

Great Hall

Julian Baggini, Andrew Russell

Saturday 09:05–09:50

If humanism is based on reason and evidence, does that mean that it is a universal belief system for all times and all places? Julian Baggini makes the case that our current, Western version of humanism may not be the only or even best kind. By learning lessons from non-western philosophies, we can see how humanists should question our historical emphasis on the sovereign free individual, how we conceptualise rationality, and the moral values we hold dearest. He will argue for a pluralist, global humanism in which differences are not only possible, but inevitable.

'More courage is required to be a Freethinker in Bangor than in London'

Josiah Hughes and the humanist tradition in Wales

Great Hall

Madeleine Goodall, Emma Shepherd

Saturday 10:00–10:50

In 1891, an article in *Watts's Literary Guide* (now the *New Humanist*) described Welsh tradesman and author Josiah Hughes as having an 'intense sympathy for all things human and natural'. A freethinker in 'emphatically orthodox' Bangor, Hughes was praised for his bravery and 'sturdy self-reliance' – it requiring, they said, more courage 'to be a Freethinker in Bangor than in London'. Using Hughes as a starting point, we'll explore the history of humanism in Wales, from deists and dissenters, to radicals and reformers.

SPECIAL KEYNOTE GUEST SPEAKER

Great Hall

Interviewed by Andrew Copson

Saturday 11:10–12:10

Join Humanists UK Chief Executive Andrew Copson in conversation with a very special guest speaker.

SESSIONS (SAT)

Humanist values in our politics

Great Hall

Baroness Burt, James Evans MS, Julie Morgan MS, Leanne Wood, Andrew Copson

Saturday 13:00–13:50

Join figures from across the political spectrum to hear their thoughts on how we can put humanist values into our politics, featuring: Baroness Burt, Liberal Democrat peer and former MP; James Evans MS, Shadow Minister for Shadow Minister for Farming, Food, and Rural Affairs; Julie Morgan MS, Member of the Senedd for Cardiff North, and until recently Deputy Minister for Health and Social Care; and Leanne Wood, formerly a Member of the Senedd (2003–2021) and leader of Plaid Cymru (2012–2018).

Blasphemy, 'apostasy', and asylum in the UK

Great Hall

Jamie Bell, Aseel M, Lucy Potter, Amy Walden

Saturday 14:00–14:50

Apostasy and blasphemy are illegal in many countries, and those who reject their religion often face persecution and prosecution that prompts them to seek asylum in the UK. Evidencing the risk they face depends on being able to evidence their lack of belief, which is often difficult to demonstrate. Faith to Faithless plays a key role in supporting atheists and apostates in evidencing their lack of belief, but the process is challenging and compounded by the lasting impact caused by family rejection, communal shunning, risk to personal safety, and precarious living. In this session, we'll navigate the complex issues with asylum researcher Lucy Potter, immigration lawyer Jamie Bell, and successful humanist asylum claimant Aseel M.

Heresy: Jesus Christ and the other sons of God

Great Hall

Catherine Nixey, Andrew Copson

Saturday 15:10–16:00

'In the beginning was the Word,' says the Gospel of John. This sentence – and the words of all four gospels – is central to the teachings of the Christian church and has shaped Western art, literature and language, and the Western mind. Yet in the years after the death of Jesus there was not merely one word, nor any consensus as to who he was or why he had mattered. There were many different Jesuses, among them the aggressive Jesus who scorned his parents and crippled those who opposed him, the Jesus who sold his twin into slavery, and the Jesus who had someone crucified in his stead. Moreover, in the early years of the first millennium there were many other saviours, many sons of gods who healed the sick and cured the lame. But as Christianity spread, they were pronounced unacceptable – even heretical – and they faded from view. In this session, based on her book of the same name, Catherine Nixey tells their extraordinary story, one of contingency, chance, and plurality. It is a story about what might have been.

SESSIONS (SAT/SUN)

Recovering from religious trauma: how Faith to Faithless is helping

Y Plas

Donna Craine, Yvonne Quaintrell, Clare Elcombe Webber

Saturday 15:10–16:00

What we believe only has meaning when we have freedom in those beliefs. Living in a high-control religious group can be isolating, abusive, and oppressive, and people can assume that leaving is therefore automatically and uncomplicatedly joyous and liberating. Unfortunately, leaving can come at an extremely high cost, and the abuse and control which people leaving are subjected to can have a long-lasting impact. Specialist support is needed to help people establish their lives and identities outside these groups. Join Donna Craine, Yvonne Quaintrell, and Clare Elcombe Webber to explore the psychological, practical, and emotional impact high-control religious groups can have, what kind of support individuals need to recover, and how Faith to Faithless and expert professionals are building healing communities for those who need them.

Chance, chaos, and why everything we do matters

Great Hall

Brian Klaas, Kathy Riddick

Saturday 16:10–17:00

Our world is defined by chance encounters, random fluctuations, and chaos theory. Many – if not most – people make sense of this bewildering state of affairs by either ignoring it, ascribing it to a higher power, or confidently stating that ‘everything happens for a reason.’ To do otherwise, many suggest, leads to nihilism. It doesn’t have to be that way. In this talk, Brian Klaas will explain why the world is governed by chaos theory, but that rather than destroying our sense of purpose, it is the bedrock of how we can make sense of the vast improbability of our existence and the awe of the world around us. Brian will show how we can all draw on science and rationality to understand that we control nothing, but influence everything – and that amidst chance, randomness, and uncertainty, everything we do matters.

SUNDAY

The story of time

Great Hall

Jim Al-Khalili, Ann O’Connell

Sunday 10:00–10:50

Questions about the nature of time are some of the most enduring. Yet despite our ever-deepening understanding of the physical universe, we have yet to reach a consensus about the meaning of time: does it flow like a river, carrying us along, or does it flow past us? Can it be stretched and squeezed, or even reversed? And why does it point towards the future and not to the past? Humanists UK Vice President, broadcaster, and professor of physics Jim Al-Khalili answers some of the biggest questions about the nature of time and time’s arrow. It’s a story that will forever change the way you think about the passage of time and your place within it.

SESSIONS (SUN)

Shaping tomorrow:

Humanist campaigning from education to assisted dying

Great Hall

Nathan Stilwell, Lewis Young, Kathy Riddick

Sunday 11:10–12:00

Can humanists change the law? Turns out we can, and we are actually pretty good at it! This talk will give you a brief overview of the way humanists have impacted law in the past to give you more autonomy, compassion, and freedom, before delving into how we're going to shape the future. Lewis Young, our Education Campaigns Manager, and Nathan Stilwell, our Assisted Dying Campaigner, will guide you through our campaigns and what you need to do if you want to be a changemaker. Hosted by Kathy Riddick, our Wales Coordinator, who has made her mark on Wales already.

The hidden culture, history, and science of bisexuality

Great Hall

Julia Shaw, Nick Baldwin (LGBT Humanists)

Sunday 13:00–13:50

In writing and researching her book *Bi: The Hidden Culture, History, and Science of Bisexuality*, Dr Julia Shaw explored how people have defined and measured bisexuality, uncovered its surprisingly long and important history, and learned about some famous bisexual, pansexual, and 'plurisexual' activists and scholars whom everyone should know. She turned to the animal kingdom, to look at behaviorally bisexual animals, and to try to understand whether there is 'a bi gene', and looked around the world, coming to understand the devastating reality of criminalisation and human rights abuses that so many bisexual people around the world face today. In this session, Julia Shaw will take us on a whistle-stop tour of what there is to know about the world's largest sexual minority.

Humanism and community engagement

Y Plas

Wayne Mills, Mari Vaughan-Owen, Emma Shepherd

Sunday 13:00–13:50

What is community engagement and how do we engage with different communities? Should we be building humanist communities or seeking to engage with wider multi-belief groups - are these aims mutually exclusive or can they support each other? And what is our responsibility as humanists to reach out to each other and build supportive groups? In this session, you will learn about some positive and negative engagement, share your own experiences and leave with an action list for building communities in your area.

DNA vs hip hop

Great Hall

Adam Rutherford, Nicole Shasha

Sunday 14:00–14:50

The fundamental nature of creativity is founded on a word that we mostly consider a pejorative: copying. Yet evolution relies on this, and is the most creative endeavour that the universe has produced. In a desperate attempt to make evolution and genetic engineering less boring, Adam Rutherford will draw out the shocking similarities between evolution and music, between genetic engineering and hip hop, in the most Gen X, convention hangover-nurturing talk imaginable. Warning: will feature Led Zeppelin, The Beatles, and 2Pac.

SPEAKERS

Jim Al-Khalili is a theoretical physicist at the University of Surrey where he holds a Distinguished Chair in physics as well as a university chair in the public engagement in science. He has written 14 books on popular science and the history of science, between them translated into 26 languages. His latest book, *The World According to Physics*, was shortlisted for the Royal Society Book Prize. He hosts the long-running weekly BBC Radio 4 programme, *The Life Scientific*. Jim is a past president of the British Science Association and a recipient of the Royal Society Michael Faraday medal and the Wilkins-Bernal-Medawar Medal, the Institute of Physics Kelvin Medal and the Stephen Hawking Medal for Science Communication. He received an OBE in 2007 and a CBE in 2021 for 'services to science'. He is a Vice President of Humanists UK.



Julian Baggini is the author, co-author or editor of over 20 books including *The Godless Gospel*, *How The World Thinks*, *The Virtues of the Table*, *The Ego Trick*, and, most recently, *How to Think Like a Philosopher*. He was the founding editor of *The Philosophers' Magazine* and has written for numerous newspapers and magazines, as well as for the think tanks The Institute of Public Policy Research, Demos, and Counterpoint. He has served as Academic Director of the Royal Institute of Philosophy, is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Kent, and has been a member of the Food Ethics Council since 2016. He is a patron of Humanists UK.



Nick Baldwin is Coordinator of LGBT Humanists, Co-Chair of the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Group at Humanists UK, and a funerals, weddings, and namings celebrant with Humanist Ceremonies. He leads LGBT Humanists in their 45th anniversary year, as they continue to promote humanism and protect LGBT equality, working to reduce prejudice and discrimination for a better, safer, happier world for all.



Jamie Bell is a solicitor who works in the Public Law Department at Duncan Lewis Solicitors. Jamie works primarily with asylum seekers, helping them with their initial asylum claims as well as working on complex public law challenges relating to issues such as death in detention, HIV, and access to legal aid. Jamie has worked with Humanists UK for a number of years assisting service users to be granted refugee status. As well his legal work, Jamie also acts a trustee at Phosphoros Theatre and Social Workers Without Borders.



Lorely Burt, Baroness Burt of Solihull is a Liberal Democrat member of the House of Lords and most recently Vice-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group (APPHG). She is a patron of Humanists UK. She speaks in Parliament on all forms of equalities, but particularly on inclusion, and has worked with Humanists UK and the APPHG to bring several Private Members' Bills to make school assemblies more inclusive and to include teaching about humanism in RE. Her recent Private Member's Bill sought to end the discredited and harmful practice of so-called 'conversion therapy'.



SPEAKERS

Andrew Copson is Chief Executive of Humanists UK. He became Chief Executive in 2010 after five years coordinating Humanists UK's education and public affairs work. Andrew is also the current President of Humanists International. He is the author of *Secularism: A Very Short Introduction* and, with Alice Roberts, *The Little Book of Humanism*, *The Little Book of Humanist Weddings*, and *The Little Book of Humanist Funerals*. He is also editor of the forthcoming collection of humanist essays, *What I Believe*, and hosts the Humanists UK podcast of the same name.



Donna Craine is Apostate Services Manager for Faith to Faithless. She oversees all the work of Faith to Faithless, including the helpline, peer support, social groups, training for professionals, and the support service for people seeking asylum because of the persecution and danger they face due to their non-religious beliefs. Prior to working for Humanists UK, Donna managed a helpline supporting victims of religious abuse for two years, and has brought a wealth of trauma-informed experience to the service.



Clare Elcombe Webber is Director of Humanist Care for Humanists UK, and oversees two of our programmes which support people. She manages our strategic work to make traditional chaplaincy services inclusive for people with non-religious beliefs. She also manages the operational delivery of this, through the Non-Religious Pastoral Support Network, which trains and accredits individuals to work and volunteer in institutions. She also oversees the work of Faith to Faithless, our programme supporting individuals who have left high-control religions, and working to improve the policy and practice which impacts their lives.



James Evans MS is Senedd Member for Brecon and Radnorshire, and Shadow Minister for Farming, Food, and Rural Affairs. In 2017, James was elected as a County Councillor for the Gwernyfed Ward, later becoming a Cabinet Member in Powys County Council. In May 2021, James was elected to the Senedd as a Member for Brecon and Radnorshire. The first Welsh Conservative MS for this constituency, he currently holds the portfolio of Shadow Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing, and Mid Wales. He also sits on the Children, Young People, and Education Committee, and the Legislation, Justice, and Constitution Committee.



Madeleine Goodall is the Humanist Heritage Coordinator for Humanists UK, researching and writing about the history of humanism to celebrate the organisation's 125th birthday. She has a background in education, museums, and community history, and is also Humanists UK's Wikimedian in Residence. She currently leads on a two-year National Lottery Heritage Fund project – Humanist Heritage: doers, dreamers, place makers – which focuses on the remarkable freethinkers and activists who changed the world, and the communities they built around themselves.



SPEAKERS

Jacob Hawley is a multi-award winning stand-up, writer, and performer. He has performed stand-up on Sky Max's *The Russell Howard Hour* and ITVX's *Secrets of The Irish Comedy Circuit*, as well as appearing on *The Stand Up Sketch Show*, BBC Three's hit sitcom *Ladhood* and multiple BBC Comedy shorts. He has performed three critically acclaimed shows at the Edinburgh Fringe, his first two shows *Howl* and *Faliraki* were both translated into BBC Radio 4 *Stand-Up Specials*, with his second special *Class Act* being named Pick of the Week by the *Guardian*. His third show, *Bump*, was described by the *British Comedy Guide* as 'An impeccable hour of man-and-mic stand up', awarded four-star reviews, and then toured across the UK to sell-out rooms.



Dani Johns is a rising star on the comedy circuit: quick witted, brutally honest, and full of Bristolian charm. With an energetic mix of storytelling and serious over-sharing, Dani is an instantly likeable act and described as a 'pocket rocket of a comedian' whose 'sassy delivery captivates every audience member'. Since starting stand up comedy just a few years ago, Dani has firmly planted herself on the comedy scene and is a regular performer at some of the best comedy clubs in the UK. She's performed at pubs, clubs, festivals, charity events, corporates and one particularly memorable patch of grass known as 'Turbo Island', but that's another story... Off stage, Dani has written for the *Guardian* and a variety of local publishers. She's also appeared in multiple film and TV projects, including *Casualty*, *Skins*, and *The Sarah Jane Adventures*.



Brian Klaas is an expert on democracy, authoritarianism, US politics, Western foreign policy, political violence, and elections. In the past, he has advised governments, US political campaigns, international politicians, the European Union, NATO, and more. Brian is the author of *Fluke: Chance, Chaos, and Why Everything We Do Matters*, *The Despot's Accomplice*, *The Despot's Apprentice: Donald Trump's Attack on Democracy*, and *How to Rig an Election*. He is also the creator and host of *Power Corrupts*, a podcast about the hidden – and often nefarious – forces that shape our world. Brian holds a doctorate in politics from the University of Oxford and is a Fellow in Comparative Politics at the London School of Economics. Recently, he has worked with individuals at the highest levels of government and public affairs in Thailand, Tunisia, Madagascar, Zambia, Belarus, Nigeria, and Côte d'Ivoire.



Aseel M is a former Muslim from a conservative religious society, and a country where apostasy is punishable by death. She started questioning her religious beliefs when she discovered her passion for science. After years of battling with her doubts, she lost her faith, which put her life and safety at great risk. Aseel fled her home country and came to the UK where she was granted asylum in late 2023. Aseel is now actively involved in helping other apostates facing similar struggles, enjoying her newly found freedom, and working on rebuilding her life after she had to leave everything behind.



SPEAKERS

Tadiwa Mahlunge, billed as 'one of the country's top new comedy acts' by *The York Press*, has performed at, among others, the Latitude, Greenman, and Greenwich Comedy Festivals – alongside the biggest names in comedy – and has provided tour support for Kiri Pritchard-McLean and Jessica Fostekew, and TV warm up for Desiree Birch's Amazon Prime special. As seen on BBC One, BBC Two, Dave, Comedy Central, UTV, Comic Relief, and heard on BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio Wales, BBC Radio Northampton and BBC Sounds, Tadiwa Mahlunge has established himself as one of comedy's hottest prospects. As such, he featured on the 2022 Pleasance Comedy Reserve at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.



Wayne Mills is the Local Group Volunteer Coordinator at Humanists UK. He is responsible for mentoring and supporting Humanists UK Local Group volunteers, supporting them with the day to day activities of their role, and making use of Humanists UK systems. He supports their annual planning, and volunteer recruitment, helping to make sure that necessary volunteer roles are identified and filled, and every Local Group committee has the skills required to deliver their annual plan.



Julie Morgan MS is a patron of Humanists UK, served as a Labour MP from 1997 to 2010 and has been a Member of the Senedd from 2011. Since campaigning for Jim Callaghan in the 1965 general election, she has had a lifelong commitment to politics in Wales and she continues to be heavily involved in the fields of women's rights, the welfare of children, and black and minority ethnic and disabled people's rights. Julie worked as a social worker and an assistant director of Barnardo's before entering Parliament. She was instrumental in the creation of the Children's Commissioner for Wales role, removing the defence of reasonable punishment, and securing significant funding for autism support services across Wales. Julie has long campaigned for a change in the law on assisted dying. She was until recently the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Care in Wales where she held responsibility for social care, mental health provisions, and children's and young people's rights and entitlements, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Julie continues to serve her constituency of Cardiff North and provides support to Humanists UK's campaigns.



SPEAKERS

Catherine Nixey is a journalist and author. She currently works as a writer at the *Economist*; her writing has previously appeared in *The Times* and the *Financial Times*, among others. Her first book, *The Darkening Age*, was published in 2017 and was an international bestseller, was translated into 12 languages, and won a Royal Society of Literature Jerwood Award and the Morris D. Forkosch Book Award from the Council for Secular Humanism. Her second book, *Heresy: Jesus Christ and the Other Sons of God*, was published in March 2024.



Ann O'Connell is a member of the board of Humanists UK. A committed humanist, she shares the Humanists UK vision of personal fulfilment found in our connections with others, and finding meaning in science, reason, compassion, and creativity. Ann is a trustee and treasurer of the Leicestershire and Rutland branch of Emmaus UK, a national charity which works to end homelessness. She is also a Director of Leicester Health Insight (LHI) a not for profit company which aims to facilitate improvements in health and social care for the population of Leicester city.



Terri O'Sullivan is the Apostate Services Development Officer for Faith to Faithless, a service of Humanists UK. She runs the peer support programme, coordinates social events for the ex-religious all over the UK, she trains service professionals on the issues apostates face through Apostasy Awareness courses. In 2007, she founded XJW Friends, a support and social group for former Jehovah's Witnesses now with nearly 2,000 members. She holds a BSc. and MSc. in social psychology from the University of Kent and Tilburg University in the Netherlands, where she conducted research on the psychological effects of long-term ostracism from a religious community.



Lucy Potter is a PhD candidate within the department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield. In collaboration with Humanists UK, she is exploring how blasphemy and apostasy form a basis for an asylum claim. Lucy's academic interests are based in the field of non-religion as well as migration studies.



Yvonne Quintrell is an experienced counsellor who specialises in supporting those who leave religion behind. She herself left an Evangelical church some years ago, and trains therapists on the needs of so-called 'apostates'. She is a volunteer for Faith to Faithless where she offers therapy services to apostates and is on the Faith to Faithless Advisory Board.



SPEAKERS

Kathy Riddick leads Humanists UK's work in Wales as Coordinator of Wales Humanists, the section bringing together all of Humanists UK's members and supporters in Wales. She is also Campaigns Manager in the Public Affairs and Policy team working across all Humanists UK campaigns. She came to Humanists UK after a successful career in business consulting and communications. As well as representing Wales Humanists to senior stakeholders in the Welsh Government, Kathy ensures that the voice of humanists in Wales is fully represented in public policy discussions, Senedd debates, and in the media, and works to expand the availability of humanist ceremonies, pastoral support, and resources for teachers in Wales.



Andrew Russell is a public affairs and communications consultant, and investor specialising in the education and healthcare sectors. At present he is working with clients trying to tackle the care crisis across Europe. Passionate about rational, respectful dialogue and debate, between 2015 and 2022 he served as a trustee of The Philosophy Foundation, a charity that promotes the teaching and practice of Philosophy across the UK. In his spare time he runs two book clubs with over 5,000 members and is forever trying to finish a book of his own. He is a board member of Humanists UK.



Adam Rutherford is a scientist, writer, and broadcaster, and is the President of Humanists UK. He is a Lecturer in Biology and Society at UCL, and has written and presented award-winning series and programmes for the BBC, including Radio 4's *Start the Week*, *Inside Science*, and *The Curious Cases of Rutherford & Fry* with Dr Hannah Fry. He's written a number of books including *A Brief History of Everyone Who Ever Lived*, the very humanist *Book of Humans*, the *Sunday Times* bestselling *How to Argue With a Racist*, *Control: The Dark History and Troubling Present of Eugenics*, and, most recently, his first book for children, *Where Are You Really From?*, published in 2023.



Nicole Shasha is a Humanists UK volunteer based in Leicester. As well as being the co-coordinator of Young Humanists and a humanist celebrant, she is also Leicester Humanists Coordinator, and takes part in Humanists UK's dialogue and school speaker programmes.



Julia Shaw is a psychological scientist at University College London, the author of multiple best-selling books, and a BBC science communicator. She is best known for her work in the areas of false memory, bisexuality, and criminal psychology. Released in the summer of 2022, Julia's third book *Bi: The hidden culture, history, and science of bisexuality* is an eye-opening, rigorous, and personal exploration of sexuality. According to the *Guardian*, 'the book opens up conversations that might just lead to more visibility, understanding and empathy for all people, however they define themselves'. She co-hosted the BBC podcast *Bi People* and is the founder of the Bisexual Research Group.



SPEAKERS

Emma Shepherd has over two decades of experience in the third sector, with a specific interest in grassroots community action. She is currently the National Head of Wales for BBC Children in Need, and a non-executive director of the Pen-Y-Cymoedd Community Fund. Previously chair of Wales Humanists, Emma has been involved in humanist campaigns in Wales, particularly around education. Passionate about people and community, she regularly runs events to bring people of all backgrounds and beliefs together in her local area. She is a board member of Humanists UK.



Nathan Stilwell is Humanists UK's Assisted Dying Campaigner. He also works for the organisation My Death, My Decision and is the secretariat for the Assisted Dying Coalition. He has presented to parliament in the Isle of Man, written multiple reports and consultations on assisted dying, and has been on Sky News, BBC News, and several radio stations to argue for a compassionate law. He joined Humanists UK at the start of 2022 after working for the Jo Cox Foundation.



Mari Vaughan-Owen is a trained and accredited member of the Non-Religious Pastoral Support Network and, in October 2023, became the first humanist chaplain for staff and Members of the Senedd. For the past 41 years, Mari has worked as a nurse and health visitor, working in many clinical and community areas across London and Cardiff. Mari is also a humanist celebrant, conducting funeral ceremonies across South East Wales.



Amy Walden has worked for HM Prison and Probation Service for 20 years. During this time she has worked in a variety of settings including community probation teams, courts, and prisons. She is a qualified probation officer and currently works as Head of Offender Management Delivery and Resettlement at her local prison. She has a BA (Hons) in Criminology from Southampton Solent University and a Diploma in Probation Studies from Portsmouth University. In 2011, Amy identified the need for non-religious pastoral support for prisoners and initiated this provision. Since that time she has played an integral part in developing and expanding non-religious pastoral care. As a founding member of the Non-Religious Pastoral Support Network, she held the positions of Chair and Vice Chair. She is also involved in the design and delivery of training for pastoral carers.



SPEAKERS

Callum Weaver is a professional close-up magician with a contemporary style of performing. He is a member of The Magic Circle, the world's premier magic society. He has over two decades of experience as a magician, specialising in both Close-Up and Parlor magic. He is a multi-award-winning, Gold Star member of the Bristol Society of Magic, winning the Close-up Magician of the Year award three years running.



Leanne Wood is best known for her tenure as the first female leader of Plaid Cymru from 2012 to 2018. She was a Member of the Senedd from 2003 to 2021, first representing the South Wales Central region, and then the Rhondda constituency. Leanne has been a strong supporter of Wales Humanists' campaign for inclusive schools in Wales. During her time at the Senedd, she worked alongside Wales Humanists on campaigns such as abolishing collective worship in Welsh schools, and today is a patron of Humanists UK. Her leadership platform in 2012 included a call for 'real independence', emphasising economic and environmental concerns alongside Plaid Cymru's aim of an independent Wales.



Lewis Young is Humanists UK's Education Campaigns Manager. He leads Humanists UK's faith schools, religious education, and collective worship reform campaigns. He joined Humanists UK at the beginning of 2024 and previously worked as a Communications and Campaigns Manager for a member of the Shadow Cabinet.



GET INVOLVED

Meet humanists in your area

Join your local humanist group – if there isn't one, we'll help you set one up!

humanists.uk/community/local-humanism

Become a school speaker

Become a humanist school speaker and help raise young people's understanding of humanism.

humanists.uk/school-speaker-training

Join your local RE committee

Join your local RE advisory committee and help us to make religious education in schools more inclusive of humanism.

humanists.uk/education/sacres-and-ascs/volunteer-as-a-sacre-representative

Uncover Humanist Heritage

Help us to uncover the history – and tell the story – of humanist thought and action in the UK.

heritage.humanists.uk

Humanist pastoral care

Find out more about the Non-Religious Pastoral Support Network, including how to volunteer or build a career as a pastoral carer.

nrpsn.org.uk

MA degree in pastoral care

Explore the post-graduate course in *Pastoral Care: Existential and Humanist Practice*.

nspc.org.uk/course-directory/ma-in-pastoral-care-existential-and-humanist-practice

Faith to Faithless

Supporting people leaving high-control religions.

faithtofaithless.com/how-can-we-help/volunteer

Train as a humanist celebrant

Train as a humanist celebrant to deliver meaningful funerals, weddings, or naming ceremonies for people in your community.

humanists.uk/ceremonies/become-a-celebrant

Join LGBT Humanists

Get involved with LGBT Humanists campaign for equality and diversity, particularly relating to sexual orientation and identity.

humanists.uk/community/lgbt-humanists

Join Young Humanists

Aged 18–35? Get involved in all elements of Humanists UK's work, while meeting other young people.

humanists.uk/community/young-humanists

Dialogue

Our dialogue work supports better conversations between people from different worldviews – why not get involved?

humanists.uk/community/dialogue-with-others

Volunteer with Humanists UK

Explore the many ways you can volunteer directly with Humanists UK.

humanists.uk/vacancies/type/volunteer



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