

**British Humanist Association, operating as:**



**ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED**

**31 December 2024**

**Company Number: 00228781**

**Charity Number: 285987**

## Humanists UK

### Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2024

The Board (the Directors of the Company and the Trustees of the Charity) presents its annual report along with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2024 which are also prepared to meet the requirements for a directors' report and accounts for Companies Act purposes. The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102).

#### Legal and Administrative Details

Status	The British Humanist Association (Humanists UK) originated as the Union of Ethical Societies in 1896, was incorporated as the Ethical Union in 1928 and became the British Humanist Association in 1967. Its working name became Humanists UK in 2017. It is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 14 March 1928. Its governing instrument is its Articles of Association, adopted on 23 July 2011.			
	Company number:	00228781	Charity number:	285987
Registered office	39 Moreland Street, London, EC1V 8BB			
Honorary officers	Chair		Neil Hawkins	
	Vice Chair		Neil McKain	
	Treasurer		Ann O’Connell	
Other Board members	John Adentitire		Ruth Kaufman	
	Samira Ahmed (to 09 December)		Ewan Main (to 16 June)	
	Clive Coen (from 31 January 2025)		Sophy Robinson (to 23 June)	
	Alex Collis (to 16 June)		Andrew Russell	

	Roland Davis	Emma Shepherd
	Iain Deboys	Amy Walden
	Tamar Ghosh (from 15 June)	Simon Walker-Samuel
	Charley Jarrett	Kate West
President	Dr Adam Rutherford	
Principal staff	Chief Executive	Andrew Copson
	Director of Ceremonies	Deborah Hooper
	Director of Communications & Development	Liam Whitton
	Director of Humanist Care	Clare Elcombe Webber
	Director of IT	Andrew West
	Director of Organisational Operations	Catriona McLellan
	Director of People & Culture	Ann-Michelle Burton
	Director of Public Affairs & Policy	Richy Thompson
	Acting Director of Public Affairs & Policy (to May 2024)	Kathy Riddick
	Director of <i>Understanding Humanism</i>	Luke Donnellan
Auditors	Knox Cropper LLP, Chartered Accountants 65 Leadenhall Street, London, EC3A 2AD	
Bankers	The Co-Operative Bank plc 118-120 Colmore Row, Birmingham, B3 3BA	
Investment Managers	Barclays Wealth, 23 Lower Brook Street, Ipswich, IP14 1AQ BNY Mellon Fund Managers Ltd, PO Box 336, Darlington, DL1 9RF M & G, M&G Charity Department, PO Box 9038, Chelmsford, CM99 2XF	

## **Mission**

By advancing the humanist approach to life, we inspire and support non-religious people to be happy, confident, and ethical, and we work with them for a better society.

## **Charitable objects**

Humanists UK's Objects are: 'The advancement of Humanism, namely a non-religious ethical life stance, the essential elements of which are a commitment to human wellbeing and a reliance on reason, experience and a naturalistic view of the world; the advancement of education and in particular the study of and the dissemination of knowledge about Humanism and about the arts and science as they relate to Humanism; the promotion of equality and non-discrimination and the protection of human rights as defined in international instruments to which the United Kingdom is party, in each case in particular as relates to religion and belief; the promotion of understanding between people holding religious and non-religious beliefs so as to advance harmonious cooperation in society.'

## **Structure, governance and management**

The Board meets regularly during the year and at the beginning of each meeting members are requested to declare any conflicts of interest. These are detailed in notes 18 and 23 of the financial statements.

The Board reviews its performance and skills annually and new members are recruited to meet any needs or gaps identified.

The day to day management of the Association is delegated to its key management personnel as detailed in note 8 to the financial statements. Remuneration of the Chief Executive is set by the Board. Remuneration of other key management personnel is delegated to the Chief Executive.

## **Method used to recruit and appoint new Board members**

Board members are recruited by election or by appointment, as set out in the Byelaws. Co-options until the next election can be made to fill vacancies arising among the elected Board members.

## **Induction and training of new Board members**

New Board members are provided with a Trustee Handbook which contains information about their role and responsibilities as recommended by the Charity Commission. This includes: the trustee role description and personal specification relevant to the role, the confidentiality policy and the eligibility requirements for becoming a trustee, and a Code of Conduct. They are also supplied with a copy of the Articles of Association, and other governance documents including past reports. Induction meetings covering the background to current matters take place



with the Vice-Chair, the Chief Executive and key members of the staff team. Training on matters relevant to the role and responsibilities of Board members is encouraged and the Board subscribes to literature pertinent to good governance.

## **Public benefit**

The Board is confident that Humanists UK's work benefits the public in significant ways by promoting human rights and offering comprehensive support and services to humanists and the non-religious. Our activities are rigorously aligned with legal standards and Charity Commission guidelines on public benefit. The main areas where our work makes an impact include:

- We lead in educating the public about humanism, providing a moral framework for those without religious beliefs. Our efforts extend through various channels, including our website, public lectures, and educational materials designed for schools, ensuring that knowledge about humanist values and ethics is accessible to all.
- Our celebrants help meet the growing public demand for non-religious ceremonies—such as baby-namings, weddings, and funerals—that reflect personal beliefs. Our goal is for every individual desiring a humanist ceremony to have access to one, facilitated by our skilled network of highly trained humanist celebrants.
- We provide vital humanist pastoral support in environments traditionally served by religious chaplains, such as prisons and healthcare settings, ensuring that the non-religious receive the same level of suitable emotional support and care in times of need. Our trained specialists also provide expert assistance to vulnerable groups neglected by other services, namely 'apostates' and non-religious asylum seekers
- Our policy unit defends the rights of humanists and the non-religious by promoting compliance with the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010, particularly against discrimination by public authorities on the grounds of religion or belief. Our advocacy efforts include engaging with government bodies and calling for legal reforms to develop these protections further for the benefit of all.
- We bolster local humanist groups and contribute to building a harmonious, pluralistic society, building bridges between non-religious people and those with other beliefs. Our work supports the positive contributions of humanists in various community settings.

The Board considers that these initiatives not only support humanists and the non-religious but also enrich the wider public, fostering an environment of non-discrimination and enhanced understanding of humanist perspectives.

## Report on progress towards our five Outcomes

By advancing the humanist approach to life, we inspire and support non-religious people to be happy, confident, and ethical, and we work with them for a better society. Below, we report on our activity over the course of the year, against the five Outcomes set by the Board as our strategy. Many of our activities overlap and meet more than one Outcome.

### **More people knowing what humanism is and more non-religious people with humanist beliefs and values recognising themselves as humanists**

We continued to develop our various educational programmes to do with humanism.

#### Education resources (Understanding Humanism)

Our *Understanding Humanism* programme, which provides resources, school visitors, and support for teachers incorporating humanism into lessons, continued to flourish. The *Understanding Humanism* website saw 146,000 hits (163,000 in 2023) with resources downloaded over 35,000 times (39,000 in 2023) and videos viewed 12,000 times (20,000 in 2023). Our separate *Assemblies for All* website, which collates industry-best resources to assist teachers with putting on inclusive assemblies on a range of subjects, received 163,000 page views (191,000 in 2023). These figures seem lower than in the past but the growing use of ad blockers is probably responsible and spot cross-checking of our view figures with click through makes us think the real figures were probably much higher. Meanwhile, our network of 220 trained and accredited school speakers (205 in 2023) spoke to 75,295 pupils through classroom visits (71,000 in 2023) and trained 492 teachers (615 in 2023).

New resources added to the site included English Literature GCSE resources on humanism, and GCSE-level humanist perspectives on crime and punishment. We also commissioned new Welsh translations of our student handouts and *One Life, Live It Well* animated video (voiced by Professor Alice Roberts). We also developed a number of new animated films on humanism, plus eight short *Humanist Heritage* films about humanists from history, for 2025 release. Our popular Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) about humanism, previously hosted via Futurelearn, were re-tooled to host on our own website. We anticipate re-launching the first interactive course, *Introducing humanism* (presented by our patron Sandi Toksvig), early in 2025.

We continued to support other providers to offer better resources for humanism. We consulted on or assisted with resource creation for local councils, individual schools, humanist groups, commercial providers including Oak Academy, Jigsaw RE (formerly known as Discovery RE), and our sister organisation Humanists Malta. One new difficulty emerges as other resource providers trialled using artificial intelligence to create resources, which sometimes produced inaccurate statements such as 'humanism began in the Renaissance' or resources which otherwise mixed up uses of the word 'humanism' in other contexts. We submitted corrections to those providers.

We also continued to support local authorities to include teaching about humanism in schools by endorsing humanist representatives to be part of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education in England and Standing Advisory Councils on Religion, Values, and Ethics in Wales (known as SACREs in England and SACs in Wales). We ended the year with humanists representatives on 143 councils (138 in 2023), including 134 where a humanist sat as a 'full member' (114 in 2023).

### Humanist Heritage

2024 saw the second year of our two-year National Lottery Heritage Fund project 'Doers, Dreamers, Place-makers'. As part of this £160,000 project, we delivered an online interactive tour of Conway Hall Ethical Society (one of only two surviving buildings created by and for humanists) and a series of public engagement events. In 2024, this included a special focus on events celebrating our pioneering LGBT rights section LGBT Humanists. Feedback on the virtual tour was extremely positive, with teachers remarking on its usefulness as a classroom resource.

LGBT Humanists' 45th anniversary was marked by our *Picturing Nonconformity* public exhibition and *Lead Me Into Temptation, Please!* summer fair (both at Conway Hall in July). Both drew on extensive research by our Humanist Heritage team and project volunteers, and showcased findings from the archives, fruits of 17 new oral history interviews with current and former members of LGBT Humanists, and new creative works from public engagement and workshops. The summer fair saw 100+ attendees with a sold out opening night featuring poetry readings, performance art, community stalls, and a mixture of moving, comic, and rousing speeches from current and veteran activists. Meanwhile, *Picturing Nonconformity* sold 225 tickets and received overwhelmingly positive feedback. Performers included David Hoyle, activist Ted Brown, the London Humanist Choir, and *RuPaul's Drag Race UK* star Black Peppa.

Our *Humanist Heritage* website continued to expand on the entire history of non-religious thought in the UK. We added 72 new posts, articles, features, and map markers in all, bringing our total coverage to 370 pages. The timespan covered was vast, with articles on topics such as '*Opposition to Christianity in the ancient Roman world*' and '*Time for Reflection in the Scottish Parliament*' joined by oral histories of 'gay lib' era LGBT humanist campaigners and profiles on wide-ranging figures such as Epictetus, Doris Lessing, John Maynard Keynes, and James Baldwin.

Public engagement included talks for the Being Human Festival, the Bloomsbury Festival, Bloomsbury Radio, the Freethought History Festival, the Cremation and Burial Education Conference, Queer Britain, York Humanists, Bristol Humanists, Coventry & Warwickshire Humanists, Trans Day of Remembrance, and the Central London Humanists podcast. Guided walking tours of Cardiff, Bristol, Belfast, and Bloomsbury continued to be organised by both staff and volunteers. Meanwhile, our animated introductory video '*Humanist history: From radical ideas to common sense*' received an additional 3,000 views (4,300 in 2023 on launch).

Our Humanist Ceremonies Funeral Tribute Archive grew in size to 420 tributes (393 in 2023) and was supported by bespoke training delivered to humanist celebrants and warm coverage from the funeral directors website Poppy's. The archive is of immense value for prospective Humanist Ceremonies clients as well as anthropologists and social historians; it offers an invaluable window into the lives of the non-religious people in the 20th and 21st centuries.

#### Events programme

Our Annual Lectures and Medals series got off to a strong start with our Darwin Day Lecture in February, commemorating the anniversary of Charles Darwin, where our first medallist Dr Rebecca Wragg Sykes spoke on 'Humanity's superpower' to a combined online-and-in-person audience of 1310 (1098 in 2023), chaired by our Vice President Professor Alice Roberts. For International Women's Day in March, Claudia Hammond gave the Rosalind Franklin Lecture on 'The keys to kindness', attended by 890 (652 in 2023), chaired by Samira Ahmed. Our Voltaire Lecture medallist was philosopher and economist Dr Daniel Chandler, who spoke on ways to make society 'Free and equal', to an audience of 785 (879 in 2023) in August. Professor Sir John Curtice delivered the Holyoake Lecture in Manchester and online in October on 'What should we make of the culture wars?'; attended by 728 people (340 in 2023). In November, anthropologist Dr Brenna Hassett explored the evolutionary history of 'Growing up human' for our online Blackham Lecture, attended by 234 (935 in 2023).

Our largest event of the year was the Humanists UK Convention, held in Cardiff over three days in June, and attended by 550 (500 in Liverpool in 2023). We were delighted to have former First Minister of Wales Mark Drakeford MS as our keynote speaker, and a top-tier cast of entertainers, performers, campaigners, scientists, philosophers, historians, and authors. These included biologist Dr Adam Rutherford (our President), physicist Professor Jim Al-Khalili (Vice President), psychologist Dr Julia Shaw, former Plaid Cymru leader Leanne Wood (patron), Labour MS Julie Morgan (patron), Liberal Democrat peer Lorely Burt (patron), political scientist Brian Klaas, philosopher Julian Baggini (patron), author Catherine Nixey, sociologist Lucy Potter, and comedians Tadiwa Malunge, Jacob Hawley, and Dani Johns.

Our wider programme of both online and in-person events and lectures on various topics relating to humanism continued throughout the year, as well as our online *In Conversation With...* series featuring thinkers and entertainers on a subject where they have deep insight or expertise. Other highlights included a special live-streamed book launch event in December for the interview essay collection *What I Believe* with editor Andrew Copson and contributors Professor Alice Roberts and Natalie Haynes, hosted at the British Library for 200 people.

#### Web and social media content

The international social media landscape became fragmented across the year, particularly due to a sharp decline in the UK users of X (formerly Twitter) and the arrival of smaller rival platforms such as Threads (owned by Meta) and Bluesky (formerly a project owned by Twitter), and changes to user experience and content policies across

the many platforms. In all, across our 'Humanists UK' channels, we reached 12m people on our Facebook page (16m in 2023), 120k on Instagram (250k in 2023), and 15m on X (22m in 2023). Meanwhile, our videos on YouTube received 487k views (439k in 2023). Our summer campaign, *#HumanistBecause*, generated one million impressions across various platforms.

We saw positive results from investing time in producing videos for TikTok and Instagram Reels, where so far content supporting our campaigns work has tended to outperform educational content. The new channel recorded 76k views. On the audio side, our popular *What I Believe* podcast interviewing humanists in the public eye took a break in 2024, in large part due to the demands of launching and marketing the *What I Believe* book. A seventh and final series of the podcast is expected to air in 2025.

### Books about humanism

We entered into a new publishing deal with Hachette to produce more commercially popular books about humanism, following success with Andrew Copson and Professor Alice Roberts' *Little Book* trilogy (*The Little Book of Humanism*, *Humanist Weddings*, and *Humanist Funerals*), published between 2020 and 2023. These sold 5k additional copies, bringing total sales to date to 60k. All author royalties go to Humanists UK.

In 2024 we announced *What I Believe*, based on our popular interview podcast of the same name, with humanist contributors such as Stephen Fry, Sandi Toksvig, Tim Minchin, Siân Berry, Dan Snow, Joan Bakewell, AC Grayling, and Rebecca Goldstein. We organised a launch event for the book with editor Andrew Copson and contributors Natalie Haynes and Alice Roberts at the British Library in December. We also commissioned a major promotional campaign for the book across London Underground and National Rail sites. Booksellers sold over 5k copies in the run-up to Christmas. All author royalties go to Humanists UK.

### Dialogue

We continued to expand understanding of humanism among religious people through our dialogue programme. Our network of trained dialogue volunteers had an extremely productive year, with membership growing to 158 (124 in 2023).

Despite the demise of the national Inter Faith Network, we saw an increase in overall network activity, with 92 discrete sessions reported (83 in 2023). These were incredibly varied, including many local activities with councils, 'interfaith' or 'inter-belief' networks, and hospital trusts, including several Holocaust Memorial Day events. Highlights include a humanist-Buddhist dialogue series in London, International Eisteddfod, and sessions with the University of Central Lancashire, Leicestershire Fire Service, Network Rail, and the John Lewis & Partners internal staff network. Our volunteer Dialogue Officer also wrote a chapter on humanism and 'spirituality' for Professor Richard Norman's follow-up to his book *Religion and Atheism: Beyond the Divide*.

## **More non-religious people living happier, more confident, and more ethical lives**

Our network of trained and accredited humanist celebrants, *Humanist Ceremonies*, remained relatively stable at 559 members (567 in 2023) across England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey, and the Isle of Man. We saw relative stability in the number of recorded ceremonies (9.5k compared with 10.5k in 2023). Our weddings continued to be most popular in Northern Ireland, where they benefit from legal recognition.

Our Non-Religious Pastoral Support Network (NRPSN), whose members provide emotional support in hospitals, hospices, prisons, universities, and the armed forces, ended the year with 157 accredited members (127 in 2023). Within the network, the number of members in professional paid employment within their institutions grew, with 14 in healthcare (13 in 2023), four in prisons (three in 2023), and one each in the politics and higher education sectors. Nationally, around a third of the network continued to report 'inclusivity challenges' of various kinds, which ranged from discriminatory and exclusionary language through to unlawful discrimination on the basis of their being non-religious.

Our apostate support programme Faith to Faithless continued providing a schedule of socials and facilitated peer support sessions, policy research on apostasy issues, and assistance for humanist asylum seekers who meet our criteria for letters of support. In total, we supported 192 service total users (130 in 2023), and delivered 111 peer support and social events (85 in 2023). Our dedicated helpline, which piloted in 2023, received a full media launch early in the year and heard from 597 unique callers (20 in 2023). We received 18 new requests for asylum support (down from 24) from non-religious people in the UK fleeing persecution, including state persecution, assassination threats, and intrafamilial violence. A specialist Faith to Faithless conference in October brought together expert speakers Pragna Patel, Dr Kristin Aune, Dr James Murphy, Alexander Barnes-Ross, Rachel Reign, Zara Kay, and Yehudis Fletcher to discuss systemic religious abuse and experiences of apostasy in different high-control religious contexts, attended by 70 (primarily the policy-makers and stakeholders at whom it was targeted).

We continued to make significant investments in the help we offer local volunteers to coordinate local humanist groups and other activities. We did this by providing training, resources, volunteer management and recruitment support, insurance, and marketing. We ended the year with 12 Humanists UK Local Groups (six in 2023). To support the effectiveness of Local Groups, we developed a library of over 60 volunteer training manuals, how-to guides, and other resources covering everything from taking donations, running events, using Humanists UK web systems, and how to use social media. We saw especially well-attended launch events for new Local Groups in Oxford and Nottingham. We also continued to support another 28 affiliated 'partner groups' including through a revamped national training meeting.

Our special interest networks and sections continued to organise activities for different demographics within our membership. LGBT Humanists saw significantly increased activity on the back of *Humanist Heritage* work in commemoration of its 45th anniversary (detailed above under our first strategic heading) in addition to its usual stable of social events, lectures, summer Pride parades, and Trans Day of Remembrance. Defence Humanists participated in the National Service of Remembrance, and supported humanist groups to join in with local Remembrance ceremonies. Young Humanists enabled youth volunteering across the organisation, mainly within our dialogue, outreach, education, and local group programmes. And the London Humanist Choir continued to book performances around the capital, including its own annual 'One Life' concert.

### **More people enjoying greater freedom of thought, of expression, and of choice over their own lives**

Our year in campaigning on humanist issues is best seen in two halves, separated by the snap election in July. Around the election itself, our policy unit and communications teams shifted focus to promoting our policy agenda – centred around advancing freedom of thought, choice, and expression – to the major parties. We revised our tactics, analysed manifestos, met with party officials, provided guidance for humanist groups on organising local hustings, equipped our members to grill candidates on their doorsteps, and created new systems so that supporters could send questions to the thousands of different candidates standing for election.

The change of government following the election brought significant volumes of new work for our policy team. This included several pieces of legislation on issues where we already had major campaigns, including government bills covering House of Lords reform, school admissions, illegal religious schools, and the national curriculum, and a private member's bill on assisted dying, while for other campaigns we sought to make good on promises made by the government while in opposition. We also continued as secretariat to the All Party Parliamentary Humanist Group (APPHG), a cross-party group of over 120 MPs and peers who champion humanist issues at Westminster.

### **Freedom of thought**

Freedom of thought is a foundational requirement of a free society. Advocacy of this fundamental right by humanists goes back many centuries in this country and in others. Our public policy platform endorses the concept of the secular state as the best means to achieve freedom, fairness, equal citizenship, and peace in a plural and cohesive society. We maintain that only by maintaining a fair separation between public institutions and institutions of religion or belief (including those of humanism) can the state fully respect and promote freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief for all citizens, up to the limits of the rights and freedoms of others in a fair society.

#### Political institutions

We continued to campaign for reforms of Parliament to remove institutional advantages given to religious groups and to address discrimination against the non-religious. Relevant to our campaign to remove the 26 Lords Spiritual from the House of Lords, several of the major parties promised democratic reforms of the House of Lords in their election manifestos. The Labour Party promised immediate removal of hereditary peers and subsequent consultation on wider-ranging reform (less specific than its 2022 policy to move to a fully elected upper house). Subsequently, we worked with Sir Gavin Williamson MP and Baroness Harriet Harman on cross-party amendments to the House of Lords (Abolition of Hereditary Peers) Bill to put bishops firmly on the agenda for later wider reforms. A poll in November showed that only one in five Britons support the practice of granting religious representatives automatic seats in the Lords. Meanwhile, on the Isle of Man, MHKs voted in favour of the Constitution Bill, which would abolish Tynwald voting rights for the Bishop of Sodor and Man.

In the House of Commons we worked with the All Party Parliamentary Humanist Group on its campaign to abolish the use of prayer-cards to reserve limited Commons seating, which puts MPs that do not attend morning Anglican prayers at a disadvantage. At its January meeting, the group again endorsed the recommendations of its earlier *Time for Reflection* report examining this issue. We put these concerns to the Modernisation Committee, the remit of which is to make improvements to the House's procedures, standards, and working practices. Additionally, the APPHG called for reform of how chaplaincy and emotional support is provided to MPs (currently the exclusive preserve of an Anglican chaplain). It called for Westminster to adopt a version of the multi-belief chaplaincy model used in the Welsh Parliament, which has provided a humanist pastoral carer alongside Christian and Muslim chaplains since 2023.

We saw significantly more support on issues relating to modernisation of Parliament itself from MPs than ever before – reflecting the younger and less religious makeup of the Commons following the election. We sent out a press release containing an analysis of the religious beliefs of every member of Parliament, combining publicly available data from the parliamentary swearing-in ceremony with our own political intelligence and analysis. This data showed that the UK had elected its most non-religious cohort of MPs in history, with 40% taking a non-religious affirmation instead of a religious oath on entry to Parliament, including Sir Keir Starmer, who by our count was (at least) the seventh non-religious Prime Minister to be open about it during his lifetime – the first being our own 1890s President, Ramsay MacDonald. This attracted widespread UK and international coverage, including from the *Times*, *Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, and *Spectator*.

#### Religious state schools

Before the general election, the Conservative government pledged to lift the 50% cap that limits on faith-based selection for existing and future free schools. It also proposed to approve the country's first religiously selective special schools. Our media campaigning in opposition to this attracted widespread coverage across local BBC Radio outlets, BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 5 Live, LBC, the *Evening Standard* (three times), *Independent*, *Guardian* (front page), *Telegraph*, *i*, *Daily Mail*, *Herald Scotland*, *National*, *Schools Week*, and ITV News, along with 177 local media mentions.



Following the change of government, the Department for Education did not announce any decision on the prior government's consultation, but the Labour government's own Schools Bill was then published later in the year, which contained clauses which would effectively lift the cap in general through changes to the rules about which kinds of new schools can open. We believed this may have been inadvertent. We wrote to ministers about it and began preparatory work for it ahead of a major campaign in 2025 to prompt an amendment to address our issues with the Bill.

Across the year, we highlighted ways in which the Church of England and Catholic dioceses were openly using church schools as a means to recruit new converts and grow their congregation numbers, with the Anglican strategy described as a project to '*double the number of active disciples*'. In June, we identified that the Church of England had spent over £7 million on projects to evangelise children through state schools. In July, we drew attention to newly announced C of E plans to additionally target community schools with 'young missionaries' through further multi-million pound funding. We also challenged the Catholic Southwark Diocese Board of Education's 'teacher conversion programme'. This offered a clear example of why the UK should remove exemptions from equality legislation that allow faith schools to discriminate against prospective and current staff on the basis of religion.

#### Unregistered (illegal) schools

Early in 2024, we continued to urge the Conservative government to legislate to close down illegal schools – unregistered buildings where supposedly 'home educated' pupils were subject to rote religious learning without any substantial secular education at all, leaving children poorly educated. Action on this issue had been promised in the previous King's Speech but unrelated political difficulties with other parts of the draft legislation led to its wholesale abandonment.

As a result, the issue of illegal schools was a major feature in our pre-election lobbying work, asking parties and candidates to commit to tackling the issue through legislation. Following the election, the Labour government's Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill subsequently included long-promised provisions that would enable Ofsted and local authorities to properly investigate and shut down so-called illegal religious schools across England. If passed in 2025 this will fulfil a major campaign aim, for which our team can take substantial credit.

In Wales, we submitted a response in support of the Welsh Government's Children Missing Education Database, which proposes the implementation of a register for children not being educated in a school setting. During this process we engaged with the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales about the issue.

#### Balanced approaches to religions and worldviews: curriculums

Following the general election, the new UK government launched a Curriculum and Assessment Review, which created the opportunity for us to engage with policy formation about the inclusion of humanism in Religious Education lessons. We made the

case for an inclusive Religions and Worldviews education, reflecting the recommendations of the Commission on Religious Education's large-scale report some years back. Our education policy staff participated in regional 'roadshow' events organised as part of the review.

In Wales, we contributed to the development of a new subject framework from the Religious Education Council for England and Wales. We raised concerns with the WJEC Religious Studies GCSE, prompting improvements. We also shared concerns with the Education Minister concerning politically loaded, socially conservative viewpoints on issues like abortion in the Monmouthshire Agreed Syllabus. We continue to have concerns about the implementation of the new curriculum in Wales.

#### Balanced approaches to religions and worldviews: 'collective worship'

As part of our submission to the the Curriculum and Assessment Review, we asked for the terms of reference for the review to take into account the content of school assemblies, which currently are dictated by provisions from the 1944 Education Act which mandate 'broadly Christian' 'collective worship' in schools of no religious character. We also worked with parliamentarians on possible amendments to the government's separate Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill which would prompt reform of this outdated provision, which the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has told the UK runs counter to children's human rights.

Earlier in the year, we received widespread media attention following an incident after Michaela School won a court battle over its so-called 'prayer ban', which brought the not-fit-for-purpose nature of collective worship laws into public discourse. Our Chief Executive was interviewed on the Michaela ruling by ITV News, Sky News, and LBC, while our Vice President Polly Toynbee was interviewed on *World at One*. We were also quoted on it in BBC News Online, 11 pieces in the *Daily Mail*, the *Evening Standard*, *The Independent*, *Herald Scotland*, *The National*, and 188 local Press Association outlets.

#### Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)

In England, the Sunak government launched a review of the government's Relationships, Sex, and Health Education (RSHE) guidance, and proposed to introduce age limits at which certain topics could be taught, with potentially serious safeguarding implications. Our submission to the review emphasised the need for no faith-based carve outs to the age-appropriate education to keep children happy, healthy, and safe. Following the election, the incoming Labour government's announcement of a wider Curriculum and Assessment Review happily superseded this review.

#### Public services: Support for those leaving high control religions

In March, we raised objections to Network Rail when an Islamic hadith urging 'sinners' to 'repent' was promoted via the departure boards at King's Cross railway station. We said that this was not an appropriate way to acknowledge Ramadan, as it involved the state (embodied by Network Rail) endorsing conservative religious views that were insulting to non-religious people, apostates, divorcees, unmarried couples, LGBT people, and so on. Network Rail apologised for the breach of its policy, saying 'our main departure board

should be reserved for train information’ and that it would investigate why ‘general celebratory Ramadan messages weren’t used’. Messages on the departure board are distinct from in-station advertising, where religious and humanist advertising are typically subject to the same restrictions as each other.

#### Right to asylum

We repeatedly urged the Conservative government to abandon its proposed Rwanda deportation scheme for those claiming seeking asylum to the UK, which we said was ‘cruel’ and pointed out would have particularly severe repercussions for humanist asylum seekers sent there due to Rwanda’s blasphemy laws. Our concerns were raised in the House of Lords by APPHG members Baroness Whitaker, Baroness Massey, and Lord Dubs, including through a proposed amendment to the Rwanda Bill. The government’s Rwanda Bill sought to dis-apply specific legal human rights and set aside a ruling of the Supreme Court on the safety of Rwanda. We were pleased when the scheme was scrapped by the new Prime Minister shortly after the general election.

#### **Freedom of choice**

Freedom of choice is a cross-cutting priority in our policy work, intersecting closely with our work for greater freedom of thought and expression. It frequently underpins our request for equitable treatment for humanism and humanists in law, as with our campaign for legal recognition of humanist marriages. Freedom of choice also underpins our longstanding demands for equality and universal access to justice, and our commitments to human rights as a paramount legal and social endeavour. It is also embodied by the continued presence of racial equality, women’s rights, children’s rights, and LGBT rights as prominent themes in our public advocacy.

#### Assisted dying

In the first half of the year, we played our part in stimulating significant political movement, media reporting, and social media activity around the right to die, working with our partners in the Assisted Dying Coalition and with Dignity in Dying, which led to promises from both the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Leader of the Opposition Keir Starmer to allow a free vote on the issue in the event of either of the two major parties winning the election. Starmer additionally promised government time for a private member’s bill to pass through Parliament, which he fulfilled following the election when Kim Leadbeater MP came top of the Private Member’s Ballot in the House of Commons and chose assisted dying as her topic.

The Bill was restricted in scope to terminally ill adults only – narrower than our longstanding policy of supporting assisted dying for the incurably suffering – but we supported the Bill as a potentially once-in-a-generation opportunity to respect freedom of choice for people who are suffering beyond the reach of medicine and palliative care and so wish to end their lives sooner. Due to the lack of whipping on the Bill and the substantially new intake of MPs, we worked on an unprecedented scale to contact and work with a significant number of MPs in preparation for the Bill’s Second Reading, which contributed to an historic first ever vote from the House of Commons in favour of

end of life choice. We continued to work in support of the Bill to the end of the year, ahead of Committee Stage and Third Reading in 2025.

#### Legal recognition of humanist marriages

Our campaign for legal recognition of humanist marriages (so that humanist celebrants in England and Wales can conduct legally binding ceremonies as they can in Scotland and Northern Ireland) was stalled by the announcement of the general election.

During the election campaign, we expressed disappointment that the Labour manifesto did not take the opportunity to renew Labour's earlier promises to bring about swift legal recognition if elected. We were later very surprised when the new government spokesperson on marriage (who from the Opposition benches had been an outspoken champion of legal recognition, challenging his predecessors over unjustified delay and inaction) declined to provide any clarity on when the government would now look at the issue. As well as meeting privately with officials about the matter, we began preparation for the possibility of once again supporting couples who may wish to judicially review the Ministry of Justice's failure to act.

As part of our ongoing campaign, our patrons Stephen Fry and Sandi Toksvig headed up a letter to Labour leader Keir Starmer inviting him to recognise that lack of legal recognition of humanist marriages was not just discrimination against humanists, but indirectly against LGBT people as well; surveys consistently show the vast majority of LGBT people are non-religious. We also asked the Welsh Government to write to Labour on this issue, as they had previously done to state the Welsh Government position to the Conservative government. Legal recognition of humanist marriages was also our most visible campaign across the Labour, Conservatives, and Liberal Democrat party conferences in the summer.

#### Abortion rights

In January, we raised concerns after a Home Office consultation on Safe Access Zones to protect women from harassment outside abortion clinics in England and Wales showed the government was still considering implementing wide-ranging religious loopholes that had been explicitly rejected by votes in Parliament the previous year. This would have rendered the law ineffective in practice. In June, the Scottish Parliament voted for Safe Access Zones, which came into effect in September 2024.

We made swift implementation of Safe Access Zones and removal of abortion from criminal to civil law part of our general election campaign, asking prospective parliamentary candidates if they or their party would support such measures if elected. In September, we celebrated with our partners in the 'Back Off' and 'Voice for Choice' coalitions, new Safeguarding Minister Jess Phillips MP laid regulations to bring Safe Access Zones around abortion clinics in England and Wales into effect from 31 October. This meant that from November, Safe Access Zones were in effect in all four nations of the UK.

Elsewhere, we noted an increase in anti-abortion political activity, including some disguised as other things. We briefed APPHG members on the reading of a private member's bill on 'foetal sentience' in the House of Lords. Early in the year, we reported on figures that suggested a major increase in untraceable 'dark money' from the United States being directed towards UK organisations that seek to restrict women's reproductive rights. We continued to work with members of the Voice for Choice coalition to find legislative avenues to strengthen abortion rights by removing the criminal sanctions from abortion law, while leaving existing term limits and medical regulations in place (as is already the case in Northern Ireland, Canada, and much of Europe). We noted with alarm the growing number of UK women prosecuted for 'suspicious miscarriages' or suspected unauthorised abortions in recent years.

### LGBT rights

We continued to pursue a full legislative ban on harmful, pseudoscientific conversion practices, such as 'gay cure' ministries. We submitted a response to the Scottish Government's consultation and highlighted the campaign in relation to England as part of pre-election lobbying, alongside partners in the medical and NGO coalition to ban these practices.

We celebrated when a full ban was included in the new government's King's Speech after the election. We received assurances from the equalities team that, after seven years of promises, the UK Government was now preparing legislation in earnest. Our section LGBT Humanists once again took the lead on media work on this issue, and hundreds of its volunteers were visible at Pride events across England in the summer, with signage highlighting this campaign to great public acclaim at every event.

### Pastoral care and chaplaincy

We responded to a consultation by the Office for Veterans' Affairs about the support available to non-religious veterans. We highlighted how non-religious veterans are underserved in the provision of pastoral care and overlooked in remembrance ceremonies.

We continued to work with the Ministry of Defence in relation to the endorsement of non-religious pastoral carers in the armed forces, with private discussions to resolve unexplained differences in treatment between prospective non-religious pastoral carers and prospective religious chaplains.

### **Freedom of expression**

Free expression is a frequent cross-cutting theme in our policy work, much of which can also be categorised as issues of freedom of thought and/or freedom of choice. Our policy work and campaigning here is increasingly focused on challenging the existence of both formal and *de facto* bans on blasphemy and 'causing offence' in law, which history shows to have a significantly corrosive effect on both the quality of public discourse and on individuals' and communities' ability to shape their own lives and stake out an equitable role in society. This is true in the UK but also abroad, where we

advocate for greater diplomatic pressure from the UK on states where identifying publicly as a humanist can cost someone their life or their freedom.

#### Support for humanists at risk worldwide

In March, we analysed the government's new definition of 'extremism', welcoming its underpinning in human rights principles but requesting more clarity on how vague wording would apply in practice. We also raised concerns about whether there was the intention to broaden the application of the definition beyond the operation of government itself, where such vague wording could have serious implications.

We continued to raise the case of Mubarak Bala, the President of the Humanist Association of Nigeria, following his arrest and conviction for 'blasphemy' in 2020, particularly drawing attention to breaches of process and severe irregularities in his case. We were pleased when Mubarak was safely released late in the year, although a public announcement celebrating this decision was deferred to 2025 given ongoing concerns about his safety following release.

#### Broadcasting

We responded to Ofcom's consultation on protecting adults from illegal harms online to raise concerns that Ofcom's analysis of what causes harm failed to differentiate between causing 'harm' and causing 'insult', citing concerns that broadcasters could censor 'blasphemous' speech they might consequently label as 'harmful'. We also called for guidance on religious hatred to be made fully inclusive of the non-religious.

We also raised a complaint to the BBC concerning an episode of *Thought For The Day* with Canon Angela Tilby, after she attributed the Post Office subpostmasters scandal to the decline of religion in the UK (failing to mention that the Post Office administrator at the heart of the scandal was herself an Anglican vicar...)

#### Advertising rules

In November, we drew attention to an Advertising Standards Authority ruling banning a poster advertising comedian Fern Brady's tour. A bawdy poster depicting Brady as the Virgin Mary was banned over fears it could offend Christians. In December, we asked again for reform here to end 'inconsistent and arbitrary' Advertising Standards Authority religious 'offence' rulings after other blasphemy-related issues made headlines later in the year.

#### 'Blasphemy'-related issues

Our policy work on freedom of expression around sensitive issues in schools was influential, with some of our recommendations adopted as part of independent government reviews into curbing issues to do with blasphemy-related extremism and violence. In March, we welcomed Dame Sara Khan's review of Threats to Social Cohesion and Democratic Resilience and its recommendations to create buffer zones around schools to protect teachers and pupils from harassment; to tackle anti-blasphemy incitement and violence; and for a better understanding of 'apostasy'. In May, the subsequent Walney Review into political violence and disruption recommended that the

Government should issue statutory guidance on managing blasphemy-related incidents in schools, including a commitment to uphold teachers' freedom of expression, not automatically suspend teachers involved in such incidents, and not to publicly reveal their identities. (A former religious studies teacher in Batley still remains in hiding for his life after a previous incident of this nature in 2021.)

In September, we were pleased to see the new government's official position was to reject the APPG for British Muslims' proposed definition of 'Islamophobia' on the basis of it being incompatible with the Equality Act, which mirrors our own view. If taken up as government policy, the working definition would severely curb legitimate free expression on religions and particularly cause harm for the victims of cults and high-control religions, for whom being able to critique their former religion is part of their journey to psychological safety and empowerment. We support a definition that will allow action to address growing prejudice and discrimination against Muslims without these undesirable side effects.

Following a shocking question in the House of Commons in November calling for the Prime Minister to bring back blasphemy laws in line with a call sponsored at the UN by totalitarian states, we received reassurance from Downing Street that the UK Government had no plans to reintroduce any laws criminalising blasphemy, nor to otherwise restrict freedom of expression around religion.

In March, we responded to an Office for Students consultation on proposed regulatory advice and other matters relating to freedom of speech. We were broadly supportive of the draft guidance which we think would suitably protect against some of the censorship issues our Humanist Students societies faced on campuses in the 2010s. It represented a vast improvement on similar guidance previously issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

## **Ethical issues and global challenges**

Our policy continues to emphasise a number of areas where humanists, and humanist thinking, can make unique contributions to public debate.

### Public health

In November, we welcomed the UK Government's announcement that folic acid will be added to non-wholemeal flour – which would fulfil a longtime policy aim. This is a significant public health benefit which is expected to save lives and lead to fewer cases of serious and fatal foetal abnormalities. Our Chief Executive also served on a government ethical advisory group on water fluoridation.

### Environment

We continued to support our Humanist Climate Action (HCA) volunteer-led network. One major focus for the group was developing its communications to its 2,400 members (2,200 in 2023). As well as publishing an analysis of the new government's environmental policy, HCA endorsed environmental campaigns from Rivers Trust,

Surfers Against Sewage, RSPB, and Climate Cymru (among others) and encouraged members to participate in the the Climate Coalition 'Big Green Week', the March for Clean Water, and the March for Global Climate Justice.

#### Animal welfare

We launched a new social media ad campaign drawing renewed attention to religious loopholes in farming laws, which means that farm animals do not have to be first rendered insensible to pain prior to slaughter in *kosher* or *halal* abattoirs. Our policy remains that the loopholes should be closed. This was effected in Wallonia and Flanders and subsequently upheld by both the European Court of Justice and European Court of Human Rights. Until then we also campaign for supermarkets and butchers to label meat by method of slaughtering so that consumers can make informed choices.

#### International human rights

We were pleased when in July, the new government announced the Human Rights Act would not be amended or repealed and that it was committed to the UK's membership of the European Convention on Human Rights, following attempts from the previous government to replace the Human Rights Act with another (weaker) piece of legislation, as well as suggesting that the UK might pull out of the European Convention. We had previously helped to form a 250-organisation coalition to defend the Human Rights Act. Celebrating the news, we made plans with Amnesty and Liberty to organise a joint event in 2025, coinciding with the 25th anniversary of the Human Rights Act coming into force.

We used our position at the UN Human Rights Council to make a number of statements, including on our own domestic policy agenda as part of a review of the United Kingdom's compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights. Alongside the Danish Humanist Society, we criticised the 'blasphemy backslide' after Denmark, following threats of religious violence, bowed to extremist pressure by reinstating a version of its former blasphemy law. In a separate intervention, we drew attention to Afghanistan's human rights record in relation to punishments for 'blasphemy'. We encouraged states to adhere to the UN's so-called Rabat Plan of Action in relation to incitement to hatred around religion or belief, which carefully delineates between criticism of religion (protected freedom of expression) and incitement of harm. Elsewhere, we called for greater support for Eritrean humanists facing persecution, spoke out on the specific forms of discrimination faced by non-religious refugees, and raised the case of Nigerian humanist Mubarak Bala.

#### **Humanists UK is respected for our expertise and professionalism and recognised as the leading national voice for the non-religious**

Throughout the year, we enjoyed high-level engagement with numerous government departments across the various nations of the UK and across the crown dependencies, which continued to show that we are taken seriously as the voice of a large constituency in the UK. Post-election, we had an extremely busy agenda of meetings with MPs from all parties, new ministers, and special advisers. This reflected well on our



wide-ranging policy expertise and our pre-election networking and lobbying work to put humanist issues onto the political agenda.

We remained the go-to organisation for media inquiries about the non-religious, irreligion, humanism, and key campaigns. A strong year of media coverage saw 243 pieces of coverage in 'major' titles (247 in 2023), particularly to do with the Census results, faith school admissions, assisted dying, and the Michaela School/collective worship case. Our work and our parliamentary briefings were praised in the House of Commons (8 times) and Lords (20 times) in relation to our work on behalf of non-religious people, our education programmes, advocacy of freedom of religion or belief, and our campaigns for assisted dying and humanist marriage. One plaudit came from Catherine West MP, who praised our *'excellent work... to encourage the recognition of people who have no faith'*

Our Chief Executive was invited to the National Service of Remembrance in London on behalf of non-religious veterans and their families. Our President and Chief Executive were invited to pay respects on behalf of humanists and non-religious people at the ceremony for the Holocaust Memorial Day.

We were delighted to be invited by the United States' Ambassador to the UK to co-host a special World Humanist Day reception at the US Embassy in September, where the Faith and Belief Minister Lord Khan spoke of *'this government's support and appreciation for the humanist community in this country'*. The event was attended by a number of UK politicians from across the political spectrum, representatives of major religious groups and charities, and a significant number of our patrons, volunteers, and activists.

We were also delighted by attendance at a celebratory dinner for LGBT Humanists' 45th anniversary (paid for by a generous donor) held at the National Liberal Club, which saw attendance from activists, popular entertainers, journalists, charity leaders, members of the All Party Parliamentary Humanist Group, and government ministers from the Office for Equality and Opportunity, including Lord Collins. Speeches from our patrons Stephen Fry, Peter Tatchell, and Adèle Anderson toasted humanists' ongoing work for equality and social reform.

We were the only organisation in the UK to have two commissioners (Humanists UK patrons Dr Kate Devlin and Dr Susie Alegre) appointed to the UK Faith and Civil Society Commission on AI, engaged in driving forward the UK's conversations on the ethical dimensions of artificial intelligence policy debates amid rapid global technological advances.

Specific areas of work also saw commendation. Volunteers from our Faith to Faithless programme had their community work recognised by way of an invitation to the 2024 Buckingham Palace garden party. Later in the year, the national Helplines Partnership awarded one of the service's helpline volunteers Volunteer of the Year. Our Director of Humanist Care was elected Chair of the Network for Pastoral, Spiritual, and Religious

Care in Health, the sector body responsible for promoting best practice in chaplaincy and pastoral support. Our Chief Executive was invited to represent humanists at a Buckingham Palace reception for diplomats.

As detailed in this report in relation to our first aim, we also awarded medals to archaeologist Dr Rebecca Wragg Sykes, author Claudia Hammond, economist and philosopher Dr Daniel Chandler, biological anthropologist Dr Brenna Hassett, and psephologist Professor Sir John Curtice as part of our Annual Lectures and Medals Series, while former First Minister of Wales Mark Drakeford MS was the keynote speaker at our Annual Convention. We also appointed three new patrons of Humanists UK in the form of Dr Rebecca Wragg Sykes, peer and LGBT rights campaigner Michael Cashman, and former Ministry of Defence Director International Security Dr Roger Hutton.

## **Humanists UK is an expanding, financially healthy, and sustainable movement**

### **Merger with Rationalist Association**

After two years of negotiations, the Board of Humanists UK and the Board of the Rationalist Association (RA) agreed a merger. The merger saw Humanists UK taking ownership of the 140-year-old quarterly magazine *New Humanist* and the RA's subsidiary company the Rationalist Press Association (founded in 1885 by humanist publisher Charles Watts). The merger and its associated legal and financial due diligence was a significant undertaking for both Boards and for our Director of Organisational Operations and Chief Executive.

As well as retaining all the RA's intellectual property and financial assets, Humanists UK's substantially larger supporter list is expected to increase circulation of the magazine.

### **Our fundraising**

Our fundraising continued to navigate a period of global political uncertainties and economic challenges affecting UK charities. Our member retention rate remained very strong and membership grew continually over the course of the year – which, despite slower periods, also saw some of our strongest membership appeals on record. We were grateful for the extra support provided by some of our most affluent donors (particularly members of our Blackham Society major donor circle), including through 'matched funding' campaigns which helped improve response rates and average gifts on other appeals. This helped mitigate a challenging period in donation fundraising caused by the ongoing cost of living crisis.

2024 was the second year of our two-year National Heritage Lottery Fund Project 'Doers, Dreamers, and Place-makers', for which we received £160,000 over two years from the National Lottery.

## **People and systems**

Our People team continued to develop processes and systems to better support our 44 staff, 53 consultants, and around 1000 currently active volunteers and celebrants across the UK. It also continued to drive forward our agenda to improve equality, diversity, and inclusion within our organisation and wider movement.

Volunteer activities remained exceptionally varied, reflecting the unique breadth of our work, ranging from school visitors and office volunteers supporting administration right through to specialist researchers supporting our policy unit, assisting with asylum casework, or organising dialogue events with religious groups. Major changes in our volunteer force came from our National Lottery Heritage Fund project, which onboarded a large team of volunteer oral history researcher-interviewers, and from the rollout of our new Faith to Faithless specialist support helpline. Training events for volunteers were numerous, with year-round inductions, training sessions, and team days, as well as our 'Humanism in Action' day conference in Cardiff (for all volunteer types, coinciding with our Annual Convention), Education Day (for school speakers and SACRE reps), and the Groups Representatives Annual Meeting (local groups). Elsewhere in our workforce, the Ceremonies Network Manager undertook a 360-review of all aspects of celebrant communication from initial inquiries about training through to how we communicate with long-time celebrants and handle retirements from the network.

Reflecting the growing needs of our wider staff and volunteer team to do more in relation to data analysis, fundraising, case work, ceremonies, helpline support, and expanded training for local organisers, our IT department grew with the addition of a Website and CRM Developer. Other significant projects included improvements to our employee benefits package; logistical, technical, and personnel aspects of the merger with the Rationalist Association; and development of an e-learning platform to support staff, consultants, and volunteers to further develop key skills.

As well as continuing to comply with our Environmental Policy, our senior management team developed and approved an organisational policy on safe, ethical, responsible use of artificial intelligence technologies in the course of furthering our aims.

## **Financial review**

We ended the year with a deficit of just £70k. This was lower than budgeted, which was mainly thanks to higher than budgeted legacy income received during the year, plus higher than normal notifications of legacies (which are showing as debtors in the accounts). We do not usually find out why people have chosen to leave gifts to Humanists UK in their wills but 26 people did so and we would like to express our gratitude to every one of them for the enormous difference made by their gift.

We received grant income in furtherance of our Faith to Faithless programme, as well as the Understanding Humanism (Humanist Heritage) project. Restricted donations

continued to fund our dedicated Assisted Dying Campaign and, to a lesser extent, the Campaign against Faith Schools (where, once again, unrestricted donations filled the funding gap).

Membership and unrestricted donations income both performed in line with budgets, though the staff time devoted to fundraising and membership development remained high in order to achieve this. We did not increase our membership fee (recognising the cost of living crisis), but did benefit from some substantial gifts from our Blackham Society members.

Expenditure on charitable activity increased by 16%, reflecting ongoing inflationary pressures, but also areas of growing investment such as Public Affairs and Education & Public Awareness. The former saw significant work on core campaigns (Assisted Dying most notably) while the latter was partly attributable to ongoing public awareness efforts including publication of *What I Believe*, plus the Lottery-funded Humanist Heritage project.

Finally, our accounts show the merger with the Rationalist Association on 31 December, which added £1.185m to the Balance Sheet.

## **Reserves**

Reserves are unrestricted funds that are freely available to spend on any of the charity's purposes. The trustees consider that the target for reserves held by Humanists UK should be equivalent to three months of expenditure.

This target means that, if the worst happens and the charity needs to be closed down, there will be sufficient funds to meet all of its obligations and liabilities as part of a managed closure, including redundancy and other closure costs.

When reserves are 50% or more above the target, we will review them to make sure our future plans make best use of these funds.

Close-down costs are reviewed annually. Should they rise above the reserves target, a reserves review will be conducted. This policy is reviewed at least every three years.

At the end of the year total funds held amounted to £4,279,741 of which £213,850 were held for restricted purposes and £4,513 were represented by the Association's tangible fixed assets which can only be realised on their disposal. The financial assets of the Association were £4,275,228 (unrestricted: £4,061,378), currently more than sufficient to meet the requirements of our reserves policy (three months budgeted expenditure being £940k). For this reason we have adopted a deficit budget for 2025.

## **Fundraising policy**

Our approach to fundraising reflects the fact that supporters are at the heart of what we do, and fundraising materials are designed to ensure that donors and potential donors understand that they can withdraw from fundraising communications, or any

other communications, at any time, simply and without fuss. All of our fundraising and marketing activities adhere strictly to data protection laws and the terms of our organisational privacy policy.

We do not sell or licence data to (or buy data from) any external agencies or third parties. We send a weekly e-newsletter to subscribers (from which they can unsubscribe) sharing information about our charitable work and fundraising activities. All new marketing materials are checked to comply with the Fundraising Code of Practice as part of an internal publications sign-off procedure. On occasion we may work with or take advice from external fundraising consultants or contractors who may undertake fundraising activities on our behalf, when this is a cost effective way of increasing our capacity. We host a range of events throughout the year. Fundraising events are explicitly billed as such. Events are closely monitored at internal meetings before and after every event, and detailed profit and loss registers are kept for large events. We will never exert undue pressure on those invited to attend an event or to donate. All income and expenditure related to volunteer-led fundraising is reported to the appropriate line manager within the staff team, and annual statements are approved by both the volunteer and the responsible manager.

We take very seriously our responsibility and make our best efforts not to approach or pressure vulnerable people to support our work. We take a robust approach to complaints about fundraising, whether in person, or online, or by another medium; these are promptly followed up by the responsible officers, their line managers, or by a member of the Board (as appropriate).

### **Investment policy and objectives**

The Board's investment policy is to generate the highest possible returns over the long term, consistent with our risk appetite and appropriate protection for our capital, so as to maximise the resources that can be expended on our charitable objectives. We have short and long-term investment policies that reflect our needs over different timeframes. Monitoring of the investment performance takes place through regular investment reports and investment performance results are reported and discussed at Board and Finance and Audit Committee meetings and compared to industry benchmarks where applicable.

We entered the year with funds invested as cash deposits with Flagstone, which we retained through 2024. We also held a portfolio consisting of units held with Barclays (Charity Fund) and with BNY Mellon. This blend reflects the risk appetite necessary given the planned utilisation of funds over the course of our strategic period (to the end of 2025).

### **Risk management**

The Board is satisfied that appropriate systems and procedures have been established to identify and manage the major risks faced by the Association. They have developed a comprehensive risk management policy to ensure that all important risks are evaluated and appropriate mitigating action taken. Governance and management, operational, financial, legal and other risks are reviewed annually by the Board and continually

monitored by the senior management team who take responsibility for implementation of the policies and procedures identified to reduce risks. Corrective actions are based on the likelihood of particular events occurring and how critical the consequences would be.

In 2024 significant potential risks included an uncertain political environment bringing risks and opportunities, the reputational and legal risks associated with front-line service provision, reliance on core specialist staff, and improvements in succession planning. Actions taken to mitigate risks included preparatory work in advance on the General Election, updating our IT staffing situation, improving staff & volunteer inductions and support, ongoing work to draw together our policies & processes to ensure best practice across the charity, and an external review of our governance.

Looking ahead, new key risks now include missing the opportunities AI brings, and an inappropriate organisational structure. An AI strategy is being implemented, and a structure review is planned. Some potential reputational risks are also being reviewed, so as to ensure the focus of our staff team is not unnecessarily diverted. Work is ongoing to mitigate the ongoing risks of reliance on core specialist staff & potential loss of critical roles.

## **Future plans**

We are nearing the end of our five-year plan and will be putting into place changes that will take us through the 2026-2030 period. Our charitable activity is planned to continue in a largely business-as-usual manner through 2025 while we put in place the necessary measures to continue operating in as effective and sustainable a manner as possible.

One new project is the integration of the New Humanist magazine operations, following the merger with the Rationalist Association on 31 December 2024. Business planning for a sustainable future for the magazine is a key goal, for implementation from 2026. Another project relates to property. As we near the end of our office lease (in February 2026) we are looking to purchase an office space, giving the Association an asset rather than continuing to pay landlords for the space we need. We have funds in investments to support the initial costs of such a purchase and would seek a loan so as not to tie up all funds unnecessarily. A final key project is looking at our organisational structure and wider operating systems, including around use of artificial intelligence in a safe, ethical, and responsible way in line with our values. With investment in these key areas we believe we can make greater progress towards our aim of a fairer society for all.

## **Statement of Directors' Responsibilities**

Humanists UK's Board members are directors of the company for the purposes of company law and are responsible for preparing an annual report and financial statements in accordance with applicable company and charity law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the Directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Association and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure,

of the Association for that period. In preparing the financial statements, the Directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe the principles of the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Association will continue to operate.

The Directors are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Association and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Association and hence taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Directors are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the Association's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

The Directors confirm that, in the case of each of the persons who are Directors at the date of this report, the following applies:

- so far as each Director is aware, there is no relevant audit information (information needed by the Company's auditors in connection with preparing their report) of which the Company's auditors are unaware; and
- each Director has taken steps to make herself/himself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the Company's auditors are aware of that information.

## **Auditors**

In accordance with S485 of the Companies Act 2006, a resolution proposing the reappointment of Knox Cropper LLP as auditors will be put to the General Meeting.

**On behalf of the Board: Neil Hawkins, Chair, 10 May 2025**

# **Independent auditor's report to the members of the British Humanist Association for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024**

## **Opinion**

We have audited the financial statements of the British Humanist Association (the 'charitable company', operating as Humanists UK) for the year ended 31 December 2024 which comprise the statement of financial activities, the balance sheet, the statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 December 2024 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland'; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

## **Basis for opinion**

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

## **Conclusions relating to going concern**

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties



relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

### **Other information**

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

### **Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006**

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the trustees' report, which includes the directors' report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report included within the trustees' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

### **Matters on which we are required to report by exception**

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report included within the trustees' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or

- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemption from the requirement to prepare a Strategic Report or in preparing the Report of the Directors.

## **Responsibilities of trustees**

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

## **Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements**

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

- The Charitable Company is required to comply with both company law and charity law and, based on our knowledge of its activities, we identified that the legal requirement to accurately account for restricted funds was of key significance.
- We gained an understanding of how the charitable company complied with its legal and regulatory framework, including the requirement to properly account for restricted funds, through discussions with management and a review of the documented policies, procedures and controls.

- The audit team, which is experienced in the audit of charities, considered the charitable company's susceptibility to material misstatement and how fraud may occur. Our considerations included the risk of management override.
- Our approach was to check that restricted income was properly identified and separately accounted for and to ensure that only valid and appropriate expenditure was charged to restricted funds. This included reviewing journal adjustments and unusual transactions.

There are inherent limitations in the audit procedures described above and, the further removed non-compliance with laws and regulations is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less likely we would become aware of it. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement due to fraud is higher than the risk of not detecting one resulting from error, as fraud may involve deliberate concealment by, for example, forgery or intentional misrepresentations, or through collusion.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: [www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities](http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities). This description forms part of our auditor's report.

### **Use of our report**

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken, so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report or for the opinions we have formed.

Richard Billingham (Senior Statutory Auditor)  
For and on behalf of Knox Cropper LLP, Statutory Auditor  
65 Leadenhall Street  
London  
EC3A 2AD

May 2025

# Statement of Financial Activities including the Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31 December 2024

	Notes	£	Funds 2024		Total 2024	Funds 2023		Total
			Restricted	Unrestricted		Restricted	Unrestricted	
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOME FROM:</b>								
- Legacies and donations	2	490,084		1,496,475	1,986,559	231,516	1,721,690	1,953,205
- Other trading activities		-		-	-	-	-	-
- Investments	3	-		86,915	86,915	-	28,013	28,013
- Charitable activities	4	-		1,457,175	1,457,175	-	1,398,033	1,398,033
Total		490,084		3,040,565	3,530,649	231,516	3,147,736	3,379,251
<b>EXPENDITURE ON:</b>								
- Raising funds	5	-		(240,621)	(240,621)	-	(222,651)	(222,651)
- Charitable activities	6,7	(399,115)		(3,026,946)	(3,426,061)	(249,460)	(2,708,784)	(2,958,244)
Total		(399,115)		(3,267,567)	(3,666,682)	(249,460)	(2,931,435)	(3,180,895)
Net gains/(losses) on investments	11	-		66,140	66,140	-	61,561	61,561
Net income/(expenditure)		90,970		(160,862)	(69,893)	(17,944)	277,862	259,917
Exceptional items	9	-		1,185,328	1,185,328	-	-	-
Transfers between funds		-		-	-	-	-	-
<b>NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS</b>		90,970		1,024,466	1,115,435	(17,944)	277,861	259,917
Balances brought forward at 1 January		122,880		3,041,426	3,164,306	140,824	2,763,565	2,904,389
<b>BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AT 31 DECEMBER</b>		213,850		4,065,892	4,279,741	122,880	3,041,426	3,164,306

All amounts relate to continuing activities.

## Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2024

		2024		2023	
	Notes	£	£	£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>					
Office equipment	10		4,513		6,769
Investments	11		<u>2,239,135</u>		<u>2,101,464</u>
			2,243,648		2,108,233
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
Debtors	12	1,609,448		231,162	
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>612,992</u>		<u>998,179</u>	
		2,222,440		1,229,341	
<b>LIABILITIES</b>					
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	13	<u>(186,347)</u>		<u>(173,268)</u>	
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>			<u>2,036,093</u>		<u>1,056,073</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>			<u>4,279,741</u>		<u>3,164,306</u>
Represented by					
<b>FUNDS :</b>					
Unrestricted	14		4,065,891		3,041,426
Restricted	15		<u>213,850</u>		<u>122,880</u>
<b>Total Funds</b>			<u>4,279,741</u>		<u>3,164,306</u>

The accounts are prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act relating to small companies and with the Financial Reporting Standard 102.

**Approved by the Directors on 10 May 2025 and signed on their behalf by:**

Neil Hawkins \_\_\_\_\_ Hon. Chair

Ann O'Connell \_\_\_\_\_ Hon. Treasurer

Company number: 00228781

## Statement of Cash Flows for the year ending 31 December 2024

		<b>2024</b> <b>£</b>	<b>2023</b> <b>£</b>
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	24	<u>( 399,907)</u>	<u>130,308</u>
Cash flows from investing activities:			
Dividends and interest from investments		86,915	28,013
Purchase of property, plant and equipment		( 664)	( 8,138)
Proceeds from sale of investments		-	-
Purchase of investments		-	-
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities		<u>86,251</u>	<u>19,875</u>
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		<u>( 313,656)</u>	<u>150,183</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		2,336,054	2,185,871
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	25	<u><u>2,022,398</u></u>	<u><u>2,336,054</u></u>

# Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

## 1. Accounting policies

### Basis of preparation

These Financial Statements are presented in pounds sterling and have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant note(s) to these accounts. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (the Charities SORP FRS 102), the Financial reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Humanists UK meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the Association's ability to continue as a going concern. Although turbulence in the financial markets in early 2026 has negatively affected the value of our investments, it is not significant enough to affect our ability to operate as a going concern.

### Short term debtors and creditors

Debtors are recognised when the Charity is legally entitled to the income after any performance conditions have been met, the amount can be measured reliably, and it is probable that the income will be received. Creditors are recognised when the Charity has a present legal or constructive obligation resulting from a past event to make payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably.

### Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty are detailed in the above accounting policies where applicable.

### Prepayments and accruals

Prepayments and accruals less than £100 have not been taken into consideration.

### Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

All tangible assets costing more than £500 were capitalised and all tangible assets are valued at historic cost. Provision is made for depreciation on tangible fixed assets, at rates calculated to write off the cost or valuation less estimated residual value of each asset over its expected useful life.

Office Equipment:	20% p.a. straight line
Computer equipment:	33 1/3% p.a. straight line
Office fixtures & fittings:	10% p.a. straight line

### **Fixed asset investments**

Investments are a form of basic financial instrument and are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date using the closing quoted market price. The statement of financial activities includes the net gains and losses arising on the revaluations and disposals throughout the year.

Realised gains and losses on investments are arrived at by comparing the net sale proceeds with the market value at the end of the previous financial year. Unrealised gains and losses represent the difference between the market value of investments still held at the end of the financial year with their value at the beginning of the year or with their cost if purchased subsequently.

### **Value Added Tax**

The Charity is registered for VAT and where applicable amounts are included net of VAT.

### **Funds**

Unrestricted funds are those funds which can be used at the trustees' discretion. Restricted Funds are those funds where application is restricted by conditions set by the donor. Designated Funds are those funds, which have been earmarked by the trustees for specific purposes.

### **Deferrals policy**

Income is recognised when all the following criteria are met:

- Control over the rights or other access to the economic benefit exists
- It is more likely than not that the economic benefits will pass to the Association
- The monetary value of the income can be measured reliably.

### **Grants receivable**

Revenue grants are credited to incoming resources on the earlier of the date they are received or the date they are receivable, unless they relate to a specific future period, in which case they are deferred. Capital grants for the purchase of fixed assets are credited to restricted incoming resources when they become receivable. Depreciation on the related fixed assets is charged against the restricted fund.

### **Donations and legacies**

Donations and legacies are recognised as income when the Association becomes unconditionally entitled to receive them, and when the receipt is probable and its value can be predicted with reasonable accuracy.

### **Charitable activities**

Costs of charitable activities include direct expenditure and an apportionment of overhead, governance and support costs as shown in note 7.



**Allocation of overhead, governance and support costs**

Overhead and support costs are incurred centrally across the range of our activities throughout the year. Governance costs comprise all costs involving the public accountability of the Charity and its compliance with regulation and good practice. These include costs related to statutory audit. All these costs have been apportioned between charitable activities on the basis of staff time or office space depending on the nature of the cost. The trustees consider this to be a reasonable reflection of the utilisation of resources.

**Pensions**

The Charity contributes to various defined contribution pension schemes on behalf of employees and, as the charity's liability is limited to paying amounts as they fall due, the pension charge reflected in the accounts represents the amount payable for the year.

## 2. Legacies, grants, and donations

	2024			2023
	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	Total £	Total £
Donations and Gift Aid	242,693	891,047	1,133,740	1,074,732
Grants	147,291	-	147,291	68,450
Legacies	100,100	605,428	705,528	810,024
	<u>490,084</u>	<u>1,496,475</u>	<u>1,986,559</u>	<u>1,953,206</u>

Grant income included £99,791 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund as part of a multi-year Humanist Heritage project. Other grants were in furtherance of our Assisted Dying & Education campaigns, and the Faith to Faithless programme. In the preceding year Donations and Gift Aid included £231,516 restricted income, of which £68,450 were grants. We remain grateful for the generous legacies left by so many members and supporters.

## 3. Investment income

	2024			2023
	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	Total £	Total £
Interest	-	86,915	86,915	28,013
Dividends	-	-	-	-
	<u>-</u>	<u>86,915</u>	<u>86,915</u>	<u>28,013</u>

## 4. Income from charitable activities

	2024			2023
	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	Total £	Total £
Subscriptions	-	984,854	984,854	974,964
Celebrants' training	-	195,386	195,386	171,628
Celebrants' accreditation fees	-	112,713	112,713	108,070
Marriage administration fees	-	27,471	27,471	24,833
Events & activities	-	112,875	112,875	91,464
Sales of literature & merchandise	-	19,123	19,123	23,291
Education	-	3,138	3,138	2,814
Humanist Care	-	872	872	-
Sundry income	-	743	743	968
	<u>-</u>	<u>1,457,175</u>	<u>1,457,175</u>	<u>1,398,033</u>

## 5. Cost of raising funds

	2024			2023
	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	Total £	Total £
Fundraising costs	-	( 225,241)	( 225,241)	( 216,378)
Investment manager's fees	-	( 3,410)	( 3,410)	( 3,813)
Purchase of merchandise	-	( 11,970)	( 11,970)	( 2,460)
	-	( 240,621)	( 240,621)	( 222,651)

## 6. Analysis of costs of charitable activities

	2024		
	Direct Costs	Support Costs	Total
	£	£	£
Education and Public Awareness	( 618,008)	( 442,479)	( 1,060,486)
Humanist Ceremonies	( 412,341)	( 154,655)	( 566,996)
Humanist Care	( 231,126)	( 109,116)	( 340,242)
Public Affairs & Policy	( 726,509)	( 387,346)	( 1,113,855)
Activities for Members and Partner Groups	( 228,203)	( 116,278)	( 344,482)
	( 2,216,187)	( 1,209,874)	( 3,426,061)

  

	2023		
	Direct Costs	Support	Total
	£	£	£
Education and Public Awareness	( 497,321)	( 379,476)	( 876,797)
Humanist Ceremonies	( 387,769)	( 134,874)	( 522,644)
Humanist Care	( 190,478)	( 93,878)	( 284,356)
Public Affairs & Policy	( 613,932)	( 330,326)	( 944,258)
Activities for Members and Partner Groups	( 227,929)	( 102,261)	( 330,190)
	( 1,917,430)	( 1,040,816)	( 2,958,244)

## 7. Analysis of support and governance costs

	2024	2023
	£	£
Staff costs	( 786,581)	( 639,717)
Rent and rates	( 97,233)	( 133,485)
Repairs, maintenance & utilities	( 28,069)	( 27,786)
Postage and stationery	( 15,520)	( 16,291)
ICT	( 106,283)	( 92,641)
Irrecoverable VAT	( 43,456)	( 38,575)
Subscriptions	( 9,098)	( 6,169)
Bank charges & interest	( 56,547)	( 53,750)
Depreciation	( 2,920)	( 3,175)
Other costs	( 49,920)	( 16,445)
Governance	<u>( 14,247)</u>	<u>( 12,781)</u>
	<u>( 1,209,874)</u>	<u>( 1,040,814)</u>

Support costs have been apportioned between categories of charitable activity according to whether they are overheads or centrally incurred expenditure on charitable activities. Overheads have been apportioned in relation to the office space occupied by each area of activity, and centrally incurred expenditure on charitable activities has been apportioned in relation to the staff time employed in each area of activity. The trustees consider this provides a reasonable approximation to the utilisation of resources.

### Governance costs

	2024	2023
	£	£
Audit fee- current year	( 6,523)	( 7,000)
- previous year underprovision	-	-
Other professional expenses	( 34)	( 13)
Trustee meeting expenses	<u>( 7,690)</u>	<u>( 5,768)</u>
	<u>( 14,247)</u>	<u>( 12,781)</u>

## 8. Staff costs

	2024	2023
	£	£
Wages and salaries	1,750,673	1,612,609
Social security costs	185,084	171,479
Pension contributions	217,750	131,988
Total payroll costs	2,153,507	1,916,076
Staff recruitment	7,812	19,867
Temporary staff	-	-
	2,161,319	1,935,943
Average number of employees (FTE)	40	36
Average number of employees	43	39

	2024	2023
	£	£
Key Management Personnel remuneration:	768,182	706,408

Pension contributions are notably higher than in 2023 due to the introduction of a salary sacrifice scheme.

Key management personnel (£768,182) (2023: £706,408) includes Chief Executive, Director of Ceremonies, Director of Communications & Development, Director of Humanist Care, Director of IT, Director of Organisational Operations, Director of People & Culture, Director of Public Affairs & Policy and Director of Understanding Humanism.

Seven employees had combined salary and employer National Insurance payments in excess of £60,000 (2023: 8). These payments fell in bands as follows:

Band	2024	2023
£120,000-£130,000	1	1
£70,000-£80,000	4	1
£60,000-£70,000	2	6

We are enormously grateful for the work of 214 (47 FTE) (2023: 177 (39 FTE)) volunteers working across the organisation, embedded with staff teams or leading teams of their own, without whom we would not have achieved our many successes. We are also grateful for the many hundreds of volunteers who form our School Speaker and Non-Religious Pastoral Support networks, often volunteering directly with other institutions but accredited and supported by Humanists UK.

## 9. Exceptional income

On 31 December 2024, The Rationalist Association net assets were transferred to Humanist UK

The net assets transferred were:

	£
<b>Fixed assets</b>	
Investments	1,100,034
Tangible assets	-
	<u>1,100,034</u>
<b>Current assets</b>	
Stock	2,000
Debtors	29,458
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>82,503</u>
	113,961
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	-47,077
<b>Net current assets</b>	66,884
<b>Net assets as per The Rationalist Association accounts as at 31 December 2024</b>	<u><b>1,166,918</b></u>
Legacy debtor identified post year end	18,410
<b>Net assets transferred</b>	<u><b>1,185,328</b></u>

Transfer of the legal title to the assets is in the process of being finalised.



## 10. Tangible assets

	2024	2023
	£	£
<b>Office Fixtures, Fittings and Equipment</b>		
Cost at 1 January	118,261	110,123
Additions	664	8,138
Disposals	-	-
As at 31 December	<u>118,925</u>	<u>118,261</u>
Depreciation at 1 January	( 111,492)	( 108,317)
Charge for the year	( 2,920)	( 3,175)
Disposals	-	-
Depreciation at 31 December	<u>( 114,412)</u>	<u>( 111,492)</u>
Net book value at 31 December	<u>4,513</u>	<u>6,769</u>

## 11. Investments

	2024	2023
	£	£
Market value at 1 January	763,589	702,028
Additions	-	-
Disposal proceeds	-	-
Realised gains/(losses)	-	-
Unrealised gains/(losses)	<u>66,140</u>	<u>61,561</u>
Market value at 31 December	829,729	763,589
Cash with brokers	<u>1,409,406</u>	<u>1,337,875</u>
Total investments at 31 December	<u>2,239,135</u>	<u>2,101,464</u>
Investments at cost 31 December	<u>748,446</u>	<u>748,446</u>

Investments with a market value in excess of 10% of the portfolio were:

	2024	2023
	£	£
Barclays Charity Fund	377,995	353,704
Newton Sustainable Growth & Income Fund for Charities	<u>451,734</u>	<u>409,885</u>
Total	<u>829,729</u>	<u>763,589</u>

We continued to hold investments in *Barclays Charity Fund* and *Newton Sustainable Growth and Income Fund for Charities* and retained cash deposits with Flagstone.

## 12. Debtors

		<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Prepayments		46,272	31,022
Legacies receivable		226,902	61,500
Gift Aid		99,590	101,416
Other accrued income		51,356	33,754
Other debtors		-	3,469
Rationalist Association net assets	Note 9	1,185,328	-
		<u>1,609,448</u>	<u>231,162</u>

Prepayments are usually primarily event venue costs such as for our Annual Convention, plus rent. Accrued income includes grant payments from Heritage Lottery.

### 13. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year:

		<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Accruals		55,818	55,076
Taxes:	Payroll taxes	48,758	47,460
	VAT	10,274	12,474
Deferred income		38,424	39,422
Holiday accrual		<u>33,073</u>	<u>18,836</u>
		<u>186,347</u>	<u>173,268</u>

Deferred income usually relates to event ticket sales. All deferred income is recognised in the following financial year.

### 14. a) General reserves

	<b>2024</b>		
	<b>Revaluation Reserve</b>	<b>Accumulated Income</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Balance at 1 January 2024	-	3,041,426	3,041,426
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	-	( 227,002)	( 227,002)
Realised gains/(losses) on investments	-	66,140	66,140
Exceptional item	-	1,185,328	1,185,328
Transfer from designated funds	-	-	-
Balance at 31 December 2024	-	<u>4,065,892</u>	<u>4,065,892</u>



	<b>2023</b>		
	<b>Revaluation Reserve</b>	<b>Accumulated Income</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<i>Balance at 1 January 2023</i>	-	2,763,565	2,763,565
<i>Surplus/(deficit) for the year</i>	-	216,300	216,300
<i>Realised gains/(losses) on investments</i>	-	61,561	61,561
<i>Transfer on realisation</i>	-	-	-
<i>Transfer to designated funds</i>	-	400,000	400,000
<i>Balance at 31 December 2023</i>	-	3,441,426	3,441,426

## b) Designated reserves

	<b>Balance at 1 January 2024</b>	<b>Incoming Resources</b>	<b>Resources Expended</b>	<b>Transfer</b>	<b>Balance at 31 December 2024</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
LGBT Humanists		362	( 362)	-	-
Local Groups		566	( 566)	-	-
Music (London Humanist Choir)	-	448	( 448)	-	-
	-	448	( 448)	-	-

	<b>Balance at 1 January 2023</b>	<b>Incoming Resources</b>	<b>Resources Expended</b>	<b>Transfer</b>	<b>Balance at 31 December 2023</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<i>Music (the Humanist choirs)</i>	-	96	( 96)	-	-
	-	96	( 96)	-	-

## 15. Restricted funds

	Balance at 1 January 2024	Incoming Resources	Resources Expended	Transfer	Balance at 31 December 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Assisted Dying	96,364	107,662	( 123,554)	-	80,472
Campaign Against Faith Schools	7,202	75,933	( 48,607)	-	34,528
Ceremonies	-	99	( 99)	-	-
Defence Humanists	1,090	465	( 1,555)	-	-
Education	-	109,823	( 109,823)	-	-
Faith to Faithless	-	40,805	( 40,805)	-	-
LGBT Humanists	3,877	101,193	( 23,625)	-	81,445
Local groups	2,217	2,412	( 3,634)	-	994
Music (the Humanist choirs)	12,130	11,104	( 6,823)	-	16,410
Northern Ireland development	-	9,405	( 9,405)	-	-
Pastoral Support	-	811	( 811)	-	-
Public Affairs	-	30,373	( 30,373)	-	-
	<u>122,880</u>	<u>490,084</u>	<u>( 399,115)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>213,850</u>

	Balance at 1 January 2023	Incoming Resources	Resources Expended	Transfer	Balance at 31 December 2023
	£	£	£	£	£
Assisted Dying	88,432	73,674	( 65,742)	-	96,364
Campaign Against Faith Schools	24,365	32,300	( 49,463)	-	7,202
Ceremonies	-	236	( 236)	-	-
Defence Humanists	791	338	( 38)	-	1,090
Education	-	52,965	( 52,965)	-	-
Faith to Faithless	-	15,414	( 15,414)	-	-
LGBT Humanists	7,926	1,079	( 5,129)	-	3,877
Local groups	7,421	1,395	( 6,599)	-	2,217
Music (the Humanist choirs)	11,889	10,934	( 10,693)	-	12,130
Northern Ireland development	-	8,560	( 8,560)	-	-
Pastoral Support	-	17,424	( 17,424)	-	-
Public Affairs	-	17,197	( 17,197)	-	-
	<u>140,824</u>	<u>231,516</u>	<u>( 249,460)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>122,880</u>

The tables above do not represent the entire income and expenditure related to these areas of work. They show only the restricted donations and subsequent expenditure of the restricted donations. Additional expenditure is made from unrestricted funds, especially so in the Campaign Against Faith Schools.

### Assisted Dying

This fund was created in 2018 to manage donations to cover the payroll costs of one member of Humanists UK staff to work on the Assisted Dying campaign with the My Death, My Decision coalition. The fund also includes donations towards assisted dying legal cases.

## **Campaign against faith schools**

Campaign against faith schools appeal funds are restricted to Humanists UK lobbying and campaigning work relating to 'faith' schools and related education campaigns. Funds raised by appeal in excess of the target sought are restricted to the public affairs fund, and are disclosed as a transfer above.

## **Ceremonies**

This fund results from donations given to Humanists UK specifically for ceremonies work.

## **Defence Humanists**

This fund was created in 2012 to manage income and expenditure by the Defence Humanists, which joined as a new section in 2011.

## **Education**

This fund results from legacies and donations given to support Humanists UK's work in promoting the understanding of Humanism in the education sphere. This includes the Humanist Heritage project, which in 2024 was largely funded by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

## **Faith to Faithless**

This fund was created in 2015 to manage income and expenditure in support of our Faith to Faithless programme, which helps people who are leaving religions. This is part of our Humanist Care work.

## **LGBT Humanists**

This fund was created in 2012 to manage income and expenditure by GALHA (now LGBT Humanists) which joined Humanists UK as a section in 2012.

## **Local groups**

This fund is for activities relating to the development of local humanist groups, including Partner Groups and Humanists UK Local Groups.

## **Music**

This fund was initiated in 2010 by a donation from Alec Reed to fund a composer for two years and to establish the Humanists UK choirs on a secure footing. Current income derives directly from the activities of the London Humanist Choir.

## **Northern Ireland development**

This fund was created in 2017 to support the development of Humanists UK's work in Northern Ireland.

## Pastoral support

This fund was created in 2012 to collect donations supporting our new initiative directed towards providing pastoral support to non-religious people in prison or in hospital. This is part of our Humanist Care work.

## Public Affairs

This fund results from donations given to support Humanists UK lobbying and campaigning work. In 2024 these included donations in support of attendance at Party Conferences..

## 16. Operating leases

At 31 December 2024 the Company had the following commitments under non-cancellable operating leases as follows:

	Land and buildings		Other	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	£	£	£	£
Falling due within one year	97,608	97,608	8,353	9,843
Falling due between one and five years	10,845	108,453	19,551	27,715
Falling due later than five years	-	-	-	189
	<u>108,453</u>	<u>206,061</u>	<u>27,904</u>	<u>37,558</u>

The commitment in respect of land and buildings reflects the lease on the Association's premises which ends on 10 February 2026. We have set a £50k provision for any dilapidation costs associated with the end of this lease.

## 17. Taxation

Humanists UK is a registered charity and is potentially exempt from tax in respect of income and capital gains received within the categories covered by Part II of the Corporation Taxes Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that such income or gains are exclusively applied to charitable purposes.

## 18. Board members' remuneration and expenses

Alex Collis, a Celebrant, was paid £197 in fees & expenses as part of the celebrants training programme. Ewan Main, a Celebrant, was paid £156 in fees & expenses as part of the celebrants training programme. Amy Walden was paid £832 in fees & expenses as part of the Humanist Care training programme. Neil McKain was paid £50 in relation to the School Speakers training programme. Aside from these, no remuneration, directly or indirectly, out of the funds of the charity was paid or is payable for the year to any Board member or to any person known to be connected with any of them.

Board members were reimbursed a total of £3,000 (2023: £5,414) for travel expenses to attend meetings in connection with their duties. Expenses not reported in Note 18 normally include travel to various events, including Annual Convention, public lectures and fundraising events.

## 19. Capital commitments

There were no capital commitments at 31 December 2024 (2023: nil).

## 20. Pension commitments

The charity offers contributions to individual defined contribution pension schemes to all employees and most take them up. The assets of the schemes are held separately from those of the charity in independently administered funds. Total employer's contributions paid in the year were £217,750 (2023: £131,988), the increase being partly due to the introduction of a salary sacrifice scheme.

## 21. Net assets

	2024		
	Fixed Assets	Net Current Assets	Total
	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds	2,243,648	1,822,243	4,065,891
Restricted funds	-	213,850	213,850
	<u>2,243,648</u>	<u>2,036,093</u>	<u>4,279,741</u>

## 22. Reversionary interest

Humanists UK has been bequeathed a reversionary interest in a trust established under the terms of the Will of Christine Cotton, who died on 24 January 2000. The trust assets comprise a property that was occupied by a Life Tenant, investments and bank accounts. The Life Tenant passed away in 2024 and the estate is now in administration. The value of the investments as at 31 May 2021 (last update available) was £44,911 (31 May 2021: £44,911). The trustees have indicated to Humanists UK that the property (bought in 2002 for £85,000) had a value in 2024 of between £230,000.

Because Humanists UK cannot predict when it will become entitled to the receipt of this legacy and does not have a recent valuation of investments, no accrued income has been reflected in the accounts.

## 23. Related party transactions

Board members are not remunerated but are able to recover out of pocket expenses for attendance at Board meetings, the total amount reimbursed being disclosed in Note 18.

The Chief Executive of Humanists UK is also a Director and Trustee of Humanists International and their President. The Association paid an annual subscription to Humanists International of £28,328 (2023: £28,536) and contributed £3,500 (2023: £9,167) to Humanist International projects.

The Chief Executive of Humanists UK is also a Director and Trustee of ACEVO of which Humanists UK is a member and paid £469 in membership fees (2023: £469).

The Wales Coordinator is a Director and Trustee of the Religious Education Council, of which Humanists UK is a member and paid £900 in membership fees (2023: £900).

## **24. Reconciliation of net income/(expenditure) to net cash flow from operating activities**

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
Net income/(expenditure) for the reporting period	1,115,435	259,917
Depreciation charges	2,920	3,175
(Gains)/losses on investments	( 66,140)	( 61,561)
Dividends and interest from investments	( 86,915)	( 28,013)
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	( 1,378,286)	( 112,670)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	<u>13,079</u>	<u>69,459</u>
Net cash provided by/ (used in) operative activities	<u>( 399,907)</u>	<u>130,308</u>

## **25. Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year**

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Cash at bank and in hand	612,992	998,179
Cash at brokers	<u>1,409,406</u>	<u>1,337,875</u>
Total cash and cash equivalents	<u>2,022,398</u>	<u>2,336,054</u>

## **26. Statutory information**

The British Humanist Association, operating as Humanists UK, is a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in England. The Association's registered number and registered office address can be found on the Legal and Administrative page of this Annual Report.