

HUMANIST CLIMATE ACTION

JULY 2026 NEWSLETTER



GOOD TO SEE YOU!



If you were at the Festival of Humanism in Bournemouth and visited our Humanist Climate Action stall, thank you for coming. We were asking people what they thought our priorities should be, and left it open whether this meant priorities for Humanists, for HCA, for people in general, or for the world, so we got a mix of responses. We also asked people to vote on the priorities which others had suggested. Here's a breakdown of what they told us.

They raised 18 topics covering a variety of issues:

- The topic with the most votes was corporate accountability for polluters.
- The topic with the second most votes was the issue of actually achieving action, given the conflict between the long-term nature of the challenges and our short-term politics.
- Members also took the opportunity to comment on HUK and the Festival itself, calling for greater focus on climate issues at the Festival and beyond, and more environmentally friendly supply chains.
- Water quality was also high on the agenda.

Corporate accountability	Accountability for the most prolific polluters, especially those with disinformation campaigns	12 votes
Getting action	Short-term politics vs long-term problems	8 votes
HUK + Festival	Greater focus on climate change from Humanists UK (campaigning) and climate focused talks at festivals (migration, inequality all relate to climate crisis)	7 votes
Water quality	Improving water quality (lakes, rivers, seas) - both immediate action/progress and longer term court cases etc.	7 votes
Environmental deregulation	Strengthen environmental protections	6 votes
Food production	Working with farmers to lobby for climate resilience	5 votes
Unified response	How do we (everyone) co-ordinate a unified global response to climate challenge	5 votes

Green space	Intergenerational access to green spaces that support biodiversity	5 votes
Climate/other issues	How to target these challenges e.g. is it climate and/or/vs other environmental issues?	5 votes
Festival catering	Water could be in cans/jugs and people told to bring own bottles/cups; single use plastics reduced; unhealthy and UPF (Ultra Processed Foods) - look at environmental impact of Humanist UK supply chains i.e. a green supplier strategy	4 votes
Renewables	Eliminate fossil fuels in favour of green energy	4 votes
Meat consumption	Eat less meat to reduce CO2	4 votes
Energy waste	Unnecessary air conditioning e.g. open fridges in supermarkets	4 votes
Biodiversity	Loss of biodiversity and destruction of the natural world	3 votes
Lobbying	HCA to agree on lobbying topics and hold an event	2 votes
NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard)	Allow solar panels in conservation areas	2 votes
Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)	Disruption due to climate change	1 vote
AI use	Control over use of AI due to environmental impact	1 vote

INTERVIEW WITH A HUMANIST

At the Festival of Humanism our HCA Chair, Lori Marriott, had a chance to sit down with Lizzi Collinge MP for our 'Interview with a Humanist' series. Lizzie is the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group (APPHG). Here is a transcript of their conversation.



Tell us a bit about yourself – how long have you been a humanist?

'My name is Lizzi Collinge and I'm the Labour MP for Morecambe and Lunesdale. I don't know how long I've been a humanist – I think forever, but I didn't name it until relatively recently, in the last fifteen years probably. I remember I lived in Spain for a bit and I worked in this garden and this Australian woman was also working there. She said, "Well, if there's no afterlife, what's the point?" I was like "We're in a valley, in the mountains in Spain. There are lizards skittering, there are vultures flying overhead, we are doing productive work of great value. What more do you want?" So I find meaning in so many different places and when I came into Parliament and I had to do my first speech, I thought "I need something to hang this on, some sort of frame to talk about what motivates me in politics". So I said "I'm a humanist and these values and beliefs informed my thinking", and then of course I had humanists coming at me from all different directions! In relation to what's going on with our climate and what we have to do to tackle changes to our climate, I think those humanist values are really important. It's about the importance of keeping our planet habitable for future generations and the fact that we are stewards and not owners. Also that thing about looking at the evidence base and making sure that as far as possible we are doing the right thing in the right way and we'll understand what impact it will have. So they meld together quite nicely when we're talking about climate in particular.'

How did you come to be interested in environmental concerns?

'I was lucky as a child, my parents were interested in the world in general and I had access to good newspapers. I remember actually one of the people who really set me on the path of

thinking about social justice and stuff like that was my Sunday school teacher! In this tiny Cumbrian village she sold Fairtrade products out of her house. The whole Fairtrade thing is not just about people, it's about the environment and all sorts. So I remember always caring – I wrote a letter once to the UN about whales, though I can't quite remember what provoked that. It's been clear within my lifetime that we have this anthropogenic climate change – the science is very clear about that, and we have to do something about it. I think that that movement has been building and I think we've got to a point now where real action is being taken, particularly on energy and that's something that I am really interested in is clean energy. I'm really interested in how we create energy abundance and how we make people's lives better while also tackling climate change. I think clean energy is a really big part of that.'

How do your humanist values lead you to want to take environmental action?

'The fact is it feels like a miracle that we live on this planet and that we are conscious and that we have this ability to enjoy our lives – and I want everyone to have that. Whether it's now, or whether it's in two hundred years. I think the moral imperative to make people's lives better at whatever point in time they will be at is really strong. So I think it's about valuing humanity, valuing people, thinking everyone should have a good life. And thinking that your time on this planet is it – that's what you get. So why wouldn't you try and do the right thing and try and make lives better? From both a political and an ethical point of view, tackling climate change is probably the biggest thing we have to do and the most important thing that we have to do right now, so that drives me.'

Do you think it is important for Humanist Climate Action to exist as a part of Humanists UK?

'I think it's really important that we organise on climate action at every level of society and I think doing that through the prism of humanist values is linking in people's minds how it is a humanist thing to care about climate change, to care about the environment. I think having a Humanist Climate Action network allows you to organise on that basis, it allows you to bring people in who may not have been brought in before and frame it in a way which is very much about following the evidence and about ethics and justice and all the kind of things that we as humanists care about.'

What's your biggest environmental concern?

'My biggest environmental concern... it's a tricky one because there is a lot, but food supply. I think that's probably my biggest one. So the impact of climate change on the food supply. The impact of world events on the supply of fertiliser and the energy intensity and water use of how we currently eat. How we go forward to make sure that it's not just those countries like us who can buy their way out of it. That every country will have access to food. I went to Spain a couple of years ago at the tail end of a heatwave, and as someone who represents a partly rural, partly agricultural seat, to see the withered, charred plants in the field was deeply, deeply upsetting. To see farmers in my constituency affected by flooding, affected by extreme weather is heartbreaking in and of itself, but also the worry about how we feed ourselves if we don't tackle climate change. It keeps me awake at night.'

What one thing would you encourage people to do on the environment or climate crisis?

'I would say support the infrastructure that will allow the energy transition. This is a really big thing that I see, people say that they are really concerned about the housing crisis, but then object to building houses. People say they are concerned about climate, but then object to the infrastructure being built, whether that's nuclear power stations (I could go on a whole jolly rant about how important nuclear is to tackle climate change), or oppose solar farms or whatever it is. Be actively supporting those large scale things that will make a huge difference. I think for too long, environmentalism and action on climate change has been framed as an individual moral issue and it's not. It's a system problem, it's a political problem. It's great when people take individual actions in their own lives, I think that's wonderful, but fundamentally we are only going to solve this with large scale infrastructure, with large scale changes – which should be improvements to our lives. Look at the impact of ULEZ in London on people's health, it has been fantastic. It's adding to people's lives – planting trees adds to people's joy. Having urban green spaces adds to people's joy. I'm particularly interested in how we make the everyday different, so having a little bit more messiness and greenery. We need infrastructure and we also need messy little things as well.'

HEATWAVES, PREDICTABLE MISINFORMATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL AMNESIA

As will come as no surprise to our UK readers, this June had the worst heatwave in Europe's recorded history. Seeing a record June temperature in the UK of 36.7C, Europe was engulfed in a so-called 'heatdome' that combined not just sweltering temperatures, but also record level humidity that exacerbated the impact. Over 100 million people will be affected and close to half of Europe's cities have been deemed not prepared for the consequences.

If you spent any time on social media this last month you might have stumbled on posts such as these:



Why highlight the Summer of 1976, as an angle for downplaying the severity of the current state of crisis?

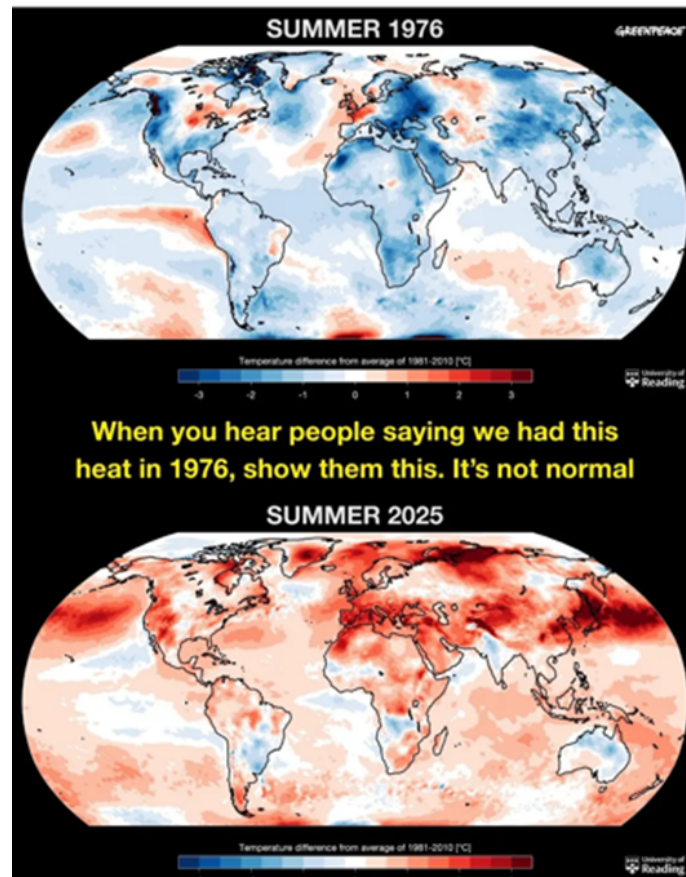
For those of our readers not old enough to remember, 1976 had a record 15 consecutive days of temperatures above 32°C in the UK. Coming after a period of drought, that heatwave brought record numbers of wildfires, lack of drinking water and an estimated 200 people died each day due to the heat.

50 years later, 1976 is remembered more fondly. Some older people have a romanticised and nostalgic memory of it as 'the best summer of my youth'. It has become a staple for Climate Crisis misinformation – 'Things aren't as bad as they seem, remember 1976, that was a scorcher.'

At the time it was an outlier and it makes sense that it stands out in people's memory, but in comparison with today it is sorely lacking in impact. If we replicated the conditions that led to the 1976 heatwave today, those 15 days would reach 39°C. A scorcher indeed, but not particularly impressive these days as modern heatwaves broke 40°C in the UK as early as 2022.

A more important point as shown in the picture below is that the intense weather of 1976 was much more localised – hence its prevalence in British shared memory. Today, the pattern is inverted, with only a few places on the planet not being roasted during the summer months.

Let's combat some misinformation about the 1976 heatwave being the same shall we? 📌



What we see with the focus on the summer of 1976 might be an example of 'Environmental Amnesia'. Human brains aren't built for grappling with large concepts like climate change. We favour short, snappy updates or events that appear out of the ordinary. Tracking slow, complex and confusing changes in macrosystems like climate over decades and then projecting that into an unknowable future is not what our primate brains are good at.

The 'boiling frog' nature of humans living with incremental temperature rises year by year also blinds us to the growing dangers of climate change as we blast past certain tipping points. For example, in 2014 the Worldwide Meteorological Organisation (WMO) invited news presenters worldwide to imagine what a weather report in 2050 would look like. They used the most reliable information they had at the time, yet when you see the forecast comparison below it shows we blew through those predictions 24 years earlier than expected.



While these posts might seem silly, the only darkly funny thing about the situation is that a conference in London on how international governance can respond to extreme heat was cancelled due to extreme heat. Everything else is quite grim. [In 2022, 60,000 people died due to heat in Europe](#). We don't have the total numbers for this year yet and many European countries are much better prepared, but the worst hit areas are reporting as much as a 40% increase in heat-related deaths compared to last year.

In the future, average summer temperatures in Britain are unlikely to fall under 40°C during the day and 29°C at night. Heatwaves could last months, not weeks. It would not be exceptional news, instead a new deadly normal. But these numbers could be as imprecise as those predicted by the French Newscast in 2014. They could be a lot higher.

So what can you do about this?

As with everything related to the Climate Crisis, we are dealing with a complex set of challenges, but here are some easy-ish steps:

Countering misinformation:

Always practise good information hygiene and double check everything you see online. If you know of someone who has started sharing misleading posts, it can be a long and difficult process to help them out of that mindset. The Centre for Climate Change Communication has created probably the best resource to help – the [Debunking Handbook](#).

Keeping yourself, your family and local community cool:

It's never too late to prepare and adopt new routines. But make sure to also reach out to those around you. We will all be feeling the heat and especially the elderly; those with small

children and pet-owners could probably use a helping hand. You can find a lot of good tips in [How to Cope in Hot Weather](#).

Becoming more informed and involved:

Besides being engaged with Humanist Climate Action, you can find and attend a screening of the **National Emergency Briefing**. It's a powerful documentary, and also an excellent event for any groups you are part of. Search the [map of screenings](#).

And remember, this hasn't been the hottest summer of your life, it may well have been the coldest summer of the rest of your life.

Christian Jensen

CHINA'S ENERGY TRANSITION



Are you desperate for some positive news?

You are not alone. While discussions on the energy transition in the UK still include the 'net stupid zero' voices, China has mobilised its manufacturing might to produce the goods required by the world to support the energy transition. While China has been slow to make commitments, it is noticeable that when it does, it under-promises and over-delivers (unlike most countries). This trend is one of the few rays of light when we are faced with such obvious proof that the climate is heating fast, and the USA and many other countries appear to have lost interest.

While right wing parties claim the energy transition is expensive and that fossil fuels should be fully exploited, what is the actual impact on an economy fully embracing the transition?

In this context I am interested in the energy transition in China, a country frequently criticised for its high fossil fuel usage and used as a justification for the UK not needing to take action. In fact, China is meeting its climate commitments early at the same time as solar energy,

EVs and clean energy technologies are driving more than 30% of economic growth and 90% of the rise in investment in 2025.

[*Carbon Brief*](#) states that China's clean energy sectors nearly doubled in real value between 2022-25, contributing \$2.1tn to the economy, equal to 11.4% of GDP.

To support this growth, China's investments in clean energy reached \$1.0 tn in 2025, roughly four times the \$260 bn put into fossil-fuel extraction and coal power.

What is extraordinary is the speed of change. China is providing a huge proportion of the products (at more and more competitive prices) required for the rest of the world to manage their energy transition. They are also demonstrating the massive benefit to their economy of utilising their manufacturing capability to support the domestic and global transition.

These investments in clean-energy manufacturing represent a large bet on the energy transition in China and overseas, creating an incentive for the government and enterprises to keep the boom going. China may have joined the push to net zero late, but they have also taken over as the manufacturing power house for the world and are now the most ambitious in terms of providing the goods countries rely on to successfully transition to clean energy.

China and the UK are extremely different in terms of their size and capability, but the next time someone tells you China is the problem, maybe explain why there is reason to hope that they are becoming an increasingly important part of the solution.

Pauline Element

PARENTS FOR FUTURE

We've talked previously about trying to overcome climate denial by appealing to people's concern for their children and grandchildren. Here our guest contributor Alex introduces the organisation 'Parents for Future'.



Parents for Future was formed in 2019 by a group of mums who wanted to encourage more parents/ grandparents/carers to join the climate movement. Since then, it's grown into the biggest parent climate movement in the UK and has built an incredible community of 40,000 supporters and 36 local groups.

The mission of Parents for Future is to empower parents to build resilient and powerful communities so we can create positive change together.

What do you see as the value of having a separate organisation to do this work?

We know that the climate crisis is going to affect all our children, and that enough isn't being done to protect them, now and in the future. There are over 19 million families in the UK, and over 99% of children across the globe are already exposed to one or more climate risk factors. All parents have a stake in this. It's so important that parents and carers come together, with all our anger and hope, to halt the worst of the crises future generations face.

Parents for Future's work is centred around love – our love for our children, the planet and nature. And we're focussed on community, both online and in our local area. Our 36 local groups are committed to raising awareness in their communities, as well as campaigning on local issues that are important to them.

It's also important to note that parents are incredibly busy people who have many spinning plates. The Parents for Future community welcomes everybody, no matter how much time they've got – even small actions can have a huge impact.

Do you think that the organisation might be able to help tackle the problem of climate change denial – or the reluctance of people to take action?

Climate change denial is fuelled (excuse the pun) by billionaires with vested interests. It's a well-funded machine to go up against. The climate movement has to stay resilient in the face of those who seek to divide and misinform just so they can continue to make obscene profits. Parents for Future's only vested interest is wanting a liveable future and so we aim to educate and inspire people in relatable and information-based ways. From dealing with misinformation to co-creating comedy sketches, from hosting climate circles to offering training and advice, we try our best to meet people where they are in their understanding of the crises we're facing.

And every day, more people are becoming aware of what the future holds if we don't demand action. That can be an overwhelming realisation, so Parents for Future is there to welcome those people with support and love, and to give them a community that thrives on active hope.

What particular actions is 'Parents for Future' undertaking?

We've got quite a few projects, run by a small but mighty team. We're working closely with others in the movement on the Stop Rosebank campaign, demanding that the government commit to not developing the UK's biggest undeveloped oil field. We're also working with the National Emergency Briefing team to encourage as many parents and carers as possible to attend a screening in their local area. Many of our local groups are also co-hosting screenings. We have a comedy series, working with a brilliant line-up of comedians to bring the climate crisis to a wider audience. And we offer a comprehensive training programme to

parents and carers, to allow them to hold meaningful conversations. This is just a snapshot of projects, there is so much more so do have a look at our website or social media.

Can you briefly describe your own role in 'Parents for Future'? Has it changed your thinking about climate change in any way?

I joined the Parents for Future community in 2021, when I realised that I needed to be able to talk to other parents about the climate crisis. I now coordinate the Kent group and am also a member of the Care and Advisory Council, recently created to support the co-directors and their small team. I also work in the environmental sector, so I am deeply entrenched in the movement.

The Parents for Future community is built on love, and active hope, and both things have given me a new perspective on taking action over the climate crisis. I know the climate crisis is already here, and that is terrifying (especially as I'm writing this during a heatwave that is smashing June temperature records), but knowing there are other parents out there who are feeling just as terrified, and are using those emotions to take action, is wonderfully reassuring.

If you want to find out more about Parents for Future, please look at our [website](#) or find us on social media. We'd love to welcome you into our community!

Alex Madgwick

ONE SMALL THING

'But the UK is just 1% of emissions'

This headline from the Guardian speaks to a frequently heard view from those arguing we can't afford the energy transition, but what followed was something I had never seen quantified and I believe is a very effective rebuttal to this position. [The three most populous countries \(USA, China and India\) were the only ones to emit more than 5% of the global carbon from burning fossil fuels in 2024.](#) That leaves 194 countries able to claim their emissions are somehow too small to be worth addressing. The argument falls when you consider that these countries together are responsible for just under half of yearly emissions. Next time you are talking to someone making the case for the UK not being able to make a difference, try asking what they think will happen if half the world fails to take action on the climate.

Pauline Element

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPPORTUNITY

We welcome feedback and responses to HCA newsletters. We aim to exemplify the humanist commitment to rational discussion and debate. You can contact us at climateaction@humanists.uk . All newsletters to date can be found on the [Humanist Climate Action section of the Humanists UK website](#). This may be useful if you want to forward to other people a link to the newsletter. We aim to produce a newsletter every two months.

Do you have social media campaigns experience? If so, we have an opportunity for a Social Media volunteer to join the Humanist Climate Action Committee! Further details will be posted on the [opportunities section](#) of the Humanists UK website.

As always, all signed contributions to the newsletter represent simply the views of the individual writers and are not necessarily endorsed by either Humanist Climate Action or Humanists UK.