



IMPACT REPORT 2023

Covering July 2022 - June 2023



INTRODUCTION

FROM ANDREW COPSON
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

We are delighted to present to you the Humanists UK *Impact Report* for 2023, showcasing the significant influence your subscriptions and donations have had on our collective vision of an inclusive society, founded on compassion, tolerance, and reason. Despite facing political uncertainty, a cost of living crisis, and an increasing entanglement of religion and state, we are immensely proud to confirm that we have made substantial and tangible advancements towards a more compassionate and inclusive society.

This success is in no small part due to the unwavering support of our members, who have all empowered our campaigns, services, and our exceptional work through their generosity. It is with the support of committed individuals like you that we can achieve all the wonderful work outlined in this year's *Impact Report*. By standing with Humanists UK, you actively contribute to this collective effort, and we cannot express our gratitude for your steadfast commitment to our shared mission enough. Thank you!



We want a world where
rational thinking and **kindness** prevail

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

We're a national charity working on behalf of non-religious people, and we've been at the forefront of progressive social change in this country for 127 years. Today, we're powered by over 110,000 members and supporters. The ingenuity, enthusiasm, and generosity of every single person in our movement is absolutely vital to what we do. It's what allows our important work to grow, expand, and flourish – as this report details!

Our policies are formed with the support of more than 200 of the world's most prominent thinkers and experts, including scientists, philosophers, writers, academics, and public figures. We also work to advance our policies with the help of over 115 parliamentarians who are members of the All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group (APPHG).

CHAMPIONING IDEAS FOR THE ONE LIFE WE HAVE

We promote wider awareness and an enriched understanding of the humanist approach to life.

THINK FOR YOURSELF, ACT FOR EVERYONE

We provide resources and services to help people navigate difficult moments and important occasions in life, and to connect with like-minded people.

LASTING CHANGE FOR A FAIRER SOCIETY

We promote freedom of thought and choice for everyone, changing law and public opinion through our campaigns.

BRINGING NON-RELIGIOUS PEOPLE TOGETHER

We speak up on behalf of non-religious people and give them a voice in public debate. We champion and defend their rights and freedoms.

YEAR IN NUMBERS



A quick snapshot of our impact in the last 12 months



Over 1,000 people volunteering for Humanists UK



11,000 humanist ceremonies conducted by our celebrants



53,000 people took our 'How humanist are you?' online quiz



6,000 people attended our online lectures and events



73,000 people tuned into our *What I Believe* podcast



32,000 people from 113 countries visited our Humanist Heritage website



16 employed humanist pastoral carers in the NHS, prison service, and universities



50,000 pupils heard from one of our humanist school speakers

PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING

We've made real strides in promoting the understanding of humanism. Our school speakers spoke to over 50,000 pupils last year – our best year to date. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of people have logged on to our Understanding Humanism website. We've published an influx of new content having released new resources on inspiring humanist women who changed the world, new lesson plans for pupils aged 3-4, translated resources into Welsh, and published the new university textbook *Understanding Humanism*.

We also took advantage of our large social media following with the launch of a new animation for schools, *One Life, Live it Well*, narrated by our Vice President Alice Roberts. The accompanying campaign reached over 250,000 people upon its launch, and has already become a favourite among teachers.

Meanwhile, our podcast, *What I Believe*, had its fifth season, with upwards of 73,000 people tuning into interviews with famous humanists about how humanist values inform their lives, including our patrons: the historian and author S I Martin [pictured above left],



stand-up comedian Angela Barnes [pictured above middle], and rock musician Frank Turner [pictured above right].

And in June, we launched the *The Little Book of Humanist Funerals*, which follows in the tradition of *The Little Book of Humanism* and *The Little Book of Humanist Weddings*, as a pocket-sized introduction to humanist wisdom.



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

ANNUAL LECTURES AND MEDALS

We had a brilliant Darwin Day Lecture with **Professor Anjali Goswami** in February at Conway Hall. In *The Speed of Life: A Deep Time Perspective*, Anjali explored the evolution of biodiversity, the variable rates of evolution among species, mass extinctions, and the urgency with which governments across the globe must act if we are to preserve Earth's dwindling biodiversity. We were honoured to award Anjali our Darwin Day Medal in recognition of her groundbreaking research in the fields of evolutionary biology.

And last winter, hundreds of people joined **Dr Sarah Chaney** for our online Voltaire Lecture, *Am I Normal*, chaired by our President Dr Adam Rutherford. A roaring success, in her lecture Sarah explored 'the birth of normal' and argued that so many desirable 'ideals' which exist today are often based on

biased data and actually aren't at all as common as they seem. Sarah was awarded our Voltaire Lecture medal for her illuminating research on human emotions and wellbeing.

This was preceded by our Holyoake Lecture, attended by over 150 people in Manchester. Our patron, **Kenan Malik**, delivered *Towards a Humanist Politics: The Struggle to Transcend Race*, tracing the intellectual history of 'race' to the Age of Enlightenment and European expansion. He identified the collision between notions of 'all men born equal' and the inequalities perpetuated by colonialism and industrialised society, giving rise to a new way of viewing human beings. Kenan was awarded our prestigious Holyoake Lecture medal for his work championing universalist, humanist values through his writing.

Over 6,000 people
attended our events
in the past year

And in November, over 500 people joined us in November to hear **Professor Simon Baron-Cohen** deliver our Blackham Lecture on society's improving understanding of the gifts, talents, and challenges of neurodiverse people, held in association with Birmingham Humanists.

In March, on International Women's Day, author **Sarah Bakewell** delivered our prestigious Rosalind Franklin Lecture at Conway Hall, with her talk *Humanly Possible* on the subject of her book of the same name. It was so inspiring to look back through 700 years of history and to hear Sarah unpack the stories of seven women who, against the prevailing norms of their time, chose to think for themselves and act for everyone.

In May, comedian and former doctor **Adam Kay** delivered an in-conversation event with our President Adam Rutherford to an audience of 700 at University College London's Logan Hall. The event was a moving and hilarious discussion about life on the NHS frontline. Originally scheduled to happen in 2020 but postponed by the pandemic, we were overjoyed to finally be able to award Adam Kay the 2020 Voltaire Lecture medal – in recognition of his work to champion the NHS and the well-being of frontline healthcare workers.



Watch our events online
on our YouTube channel:
[youtube.com/humanistsuk](https://www.youtube.com/humanistsuk)

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Our network of humanists working on the ground now includes 556 humanist celebrants, 208 active school speakers, 139 representatives on council bodies which set RE syllabuses, 206 pastoral carers, and 19 volunteers supporting 'apostates', across England, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man, and the Channel Islands.

Our services

- **Humanist Ceremonies**, including non-religious weddings, namings, funerals, and memorials
- **Humanist pastoral care**, in settings like prisons, hospitals, hospices, and universities
- **Faith to Faithless**, providing community events and peer support for so-called 'apostates' (people who've left high-control religions)
- **Asylum support** for humanists who would otherwise be deported to countries where they face death or persecution
- **Humanist communities**, including events and activities organised by LGBT Humanists, Defence Humanists, Young Humanists, and the London Humanist Choir
- **Local groups**, including Humanists UK branches and partner groups



HUMANIST CARE IS THRIVING



Our programme of work covering pastoral care, apostate support, and asylum continues to break new ground. We have 14 pastoral carers employed in the NHS, one in the prison service, and for the first time ever, a humanist pastoral carer is a chaplaincy lead at a UK university.

We have 206 fully accredited pastoral care volunteers as part of our Non-Religious Pastoral Care Network, of whom 106 are currently in active placements in hospitals, hospices, and prisons. We are also making strides with humanist inclusion in the Armed Forces, with whom we've had many meetings as part of an internal pastoral care review.

And, thanks to donor investment, we've also been able to recruit three part-time Faith to Faithless staff to support our work helping people who've left high-control religions and cults. We now have three Faith to Faithless staff in total, and are working on new developments for the service. The government-sponsored *Bloom Review* in April called on ministers to give state funding to services like Faith to Faithless. We intend to bid for this if recommendations are taken forwards by the UK Government.

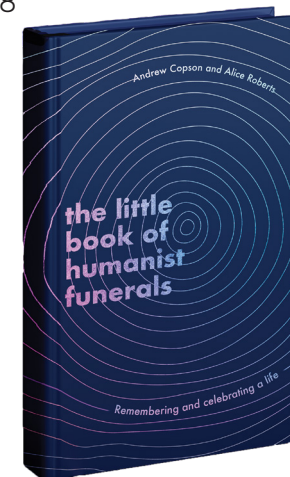
BEST YEAR ON RECORD FOR HUMANISTS CEREMONIES

Demand for Humanist Ceremonies has reached new heights. In 2022, our network of celebrants shattered previous records by conducting 11,288 humanist ceremonies! This figure includes 2,564 weddings, 8,178 funerals, and 546 naming ceremonies. We officiated more than 1,000 weddings in England and Wales, an extraordinary achievement.

THE LITTLE BOOK OF HUMANIST FUNERALS

June saw the release of *The Little Book of Humanist Funerals* and we hosted an online launch event in May, attracting over 300 people.

It's heartening to see a growing interest in the humanist approach to life and the wonderful work of all of our celebrants. *The Little Book of Humanism* and *The Little Book of Humanist Weddings* continue to enjoy strong sales, selling 3,650 copies in 2022.



PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND POLICY

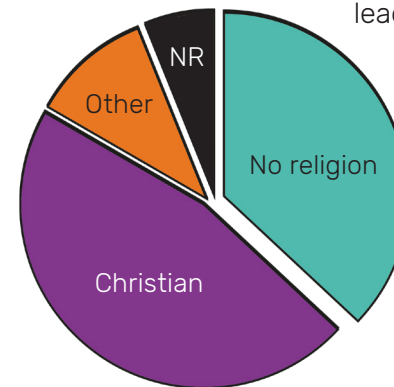


More people enjoying greater
freedom of thought, of expression,
and of choice over their own lives



NON-RELIGIOUS POPULATION SURGES IN 2021 CENSUS

It's official: England and Wales are among the least religious countries in the world, according to 2021 Census data. 37% of people in England and Wales ticked 'No religion' and the results also saw those ticking 'Christian' falling below 50% for the first time. In Wales, those ticking 'No religion' (47%) outnumbered Christians (37%) for the first time. Similarly, the Census in Northern Ireland also revealed a dramatic demographic shift, with one in six people now ticking the non-religious box. These results highlight the need for a wider public debate on the relationship between church, state, and education. The figures for the non-religious are likely much higher, too, given that the question on religion is optional, and also written in a leading way proven to garner a more religious response.



Christian 46%
No religion 37%
Other religion 10%
No response 6%

Pictured: Census 2021
results for England and Wales

HUMANISTS PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

We may have succeeded on a vital front: the UK Government will reportedly shelve the 'Bill of Rights', also known as the Rights Removal Bill. The Bill is a widely discredited endeavour aimed at discarding our Human Rights Act, which forms is the legal basis on which 20 years of progress for the non-religious has been won. The Act allows court's and public bodies to 'read additional words' into laws in order to make them human rights compliant. For us, this has meant that 'religion' can be interpreted to include the non-religious. The removal of this power would be take away the right of non-religious people to challenge discrimination. In addition to rallying our members to write to their MPs and readying humanist parliamentarians for debate, we've organised what we believe to be the largest coalition of organisations committed to defending human rights the UK has ever seen. Over 250 charities, trade unions, and human rights organisations banded together with us to save our Human Rights Act. Together, we've protected it - but we must remain vigilant in the face other attempts to undermine it, including through the Illegal Migration Bill, or the Victims Bill attacking human rights for political ends.





OUR UPDATE ON ILLEGAL SCHOOLS

UK Government plans to tackle illegal schools in England have been left in parliamentary limbo with 'no timetable for being revived. The Schools Bill, which was passing

through Parliament last year, came to a grinding halt due to unrelated, controversial sections relating to academisation. The Government's failure to salvage illegal schools clauses from the Bill is concerning, because currently around 6,000 children are stuck in these woefully unsafe environments.

We have been campaigning tirelessly for over a decade to bring them to an end and have successfully influenced Ofsted to establish the 'Unregistered Schools Team,' responsible for investigating over 100 illegal faith schools since 2016. In March this year, our efforts led to an investigation and sustained coverage from the *Times* about these illicit institutions. The UK Government say they want to reintroduce the legislation, but only if time allows, and they there is currently no timetable to do so. The so-called *Bloom Review* also provides a small glimmer of hope, by recommending sensible measures to crack down on illegal schools.

HUMANISTS UK ADDRESSES THE *BLOOM* REVIEW

The *Bloom Review*, a significant UK Government report on religion and state, was published in April. While certain aspects of the report deserve recognition and support, which would represent progress on addressing illegal faith schools, supporting people leaving high-control religions, and preventing forced marriages, there are many other recommendations that raise serious concern.

The report puts forward alarming recommendations that would regress policy changes that would further elevate religious groups with vested interests, including a 'Faith Partnership Charter' imposed on local authorities, the establishment of a well-resourced office for a Government 'Faith Champion', and increased high-level engagement between the Government and religious leaders, all of which exclude the non-religious. These proposals lack rational justification, go against public sentiment, and are based on a flawed analysis of demographics in the UK. We have been vocal in challenging these recommendations that would give religious groups preferential treatment, both privately with stakeholders and in the public domain.



GOVT U-TURNS TO SUPPORT GLOBAL ABORTION RIGHTS

We celebrated a major achievement in December when the UK Government committed to new multinational statements protecting

abortion rights. We had previously exposed the Government's deeply alarming deletion of abortion rights from an international statement on gender equality. Our dedicated campaign to reverse the deletion' gained support from over 20 human rights, pro-choice, and international aid organisations, as well as the governments of Denmark, Norway, and the Netherlands. Together, we influenced the Government to publicly endorse and defend comprehensive sexual and reproductive health rights for all. And in March, we were buoyed further as the House of Commons voted in favour of establishing safe access zones around abortion clinics in England and Wales. We provided detailed briefings to Members of Parliament in the All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group, leading to a decisive majority of 299-116. This outcome is significant, given the growing presence of evangelical protests that harass and intimidate women seeking reproductive healthcare. The implementation of safe access zones can't come soon enough.

LANDMARK HIGH COURT WIN FOR HUMANIST ON RE COUNCILS

Humanist Steve Bowen successfully challenged his local authority's attempt to block him from its religious education committee. Kent County Council had refused him membership of his local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) on the grounds that he is a humanist. Steve's victory represents the biggest win for humanists in education in recent years.

It means, essentially, that humanists should now be considered full members of SACREs everywhere in England. SACREs are groups attached to the council made up of teachers, councillors, and representatives of different religious groups in each council – and in 42% of cases, humanists too. They help set the RE syllabus for schools in the area and make decisions about whether schools can change the nature of their daily collective worship. It's vital that humanists are members of these groups, because when it comes to learning about religion or belief in the classroom, children deserve a broad and balanced approach.



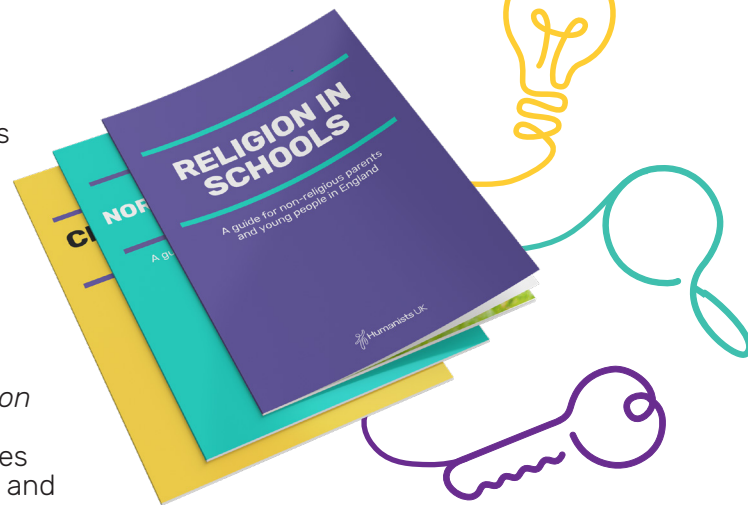
Pictured: Steve Bowen, second from right

NEW PARENTS GUIDES FOR RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

Over the years, we have received hundreds of emails from concerned parents across the UK who are seeking practical advice on navigating religious matters in schools. Many of them find themselves in faith schools against their preferences, have issues with collective worship, or are concerned about RE in their children's schools. In response to this, we published our latest guides for parents in April: *Religion in Schools – A Guide for Non-Religious Parents and Young People*. The three guides are tailored to assist non-religious parents and young people in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland to understand their rights. We understand that this can be a complicated topic, which is why our guides provide all the necessary information regarding collective worship, inclusive assemblies, admissions, RE, the teaching of creationism, and promoting humanism in the classroom.

FIRST EVER HOUSE OF COMMONS INQUIRY INTO ASSISTED DYING

We've reached a key moment in our campaign for compassionate assisted dying laws in England and Wales. After decades of campaigning, the UK Parliament finally launched an inquiry in December.



This is the first ever House of Commons inquiry into assisted dying, and the first in Parliament to happen in 17 years. On the heels of this decision, we rallied our members to respond, while also submitting evidence that stressed the importance of listening to accounts of both terminally ill and incurably suffering people – people like our former members and right-to-die activists Tony Nicklinson, Omid T, and Paul Lamb. We will continue campaigning for them, and for others who are terminally ill and incurably suffering who have made a clear and settled wish to die, to have the choice of an assisted death.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

We are making progress towards inclusive education in Northern Ireland. In 2021, the Northern Ireland Executive tasked the Independent Review of Education with considering what a 'single education system' would look like. We responded to the survey, and which reported that 72% of people who responded agreed that a single education system should be 'free of historic divisions and religious influence'. The Independent Review's *Excellent Education for All* report, released in October, also stated that religious segregation was judged by respondents to be the system's 'biggest weakness'.

And in July 2022, the High Court in Belfast ruled that Northern Ireland's Christian-focused RE, and collective worship, are unlawful, and breach the Human Rights Act. The judge ruled that the laws requiring these religious practices violated the freedom of religion or belief of a non-religious family. The Department of Education, the Church of Ireland, and the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches are appealing the decision, and we are intervening.

CAMPAIGNING FOR HUMANIST MARRIAGES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

The long-awaited Law Commission report on marriage reform was finally published in July 2022, prompting our immediate call for recognition of humanist marriages in England and Wales. The excuse of the report's pending publication had been used for years by the UK Government to delay progress. Now it's out, there is no longer any justification for delay. The All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group report, *No Lawful Impediment* published last year, highlighted that the UK Government has had the power to grant legal recognition since 2013, and that the High Court ruled in 2020 that the lack of recognition amounted to 'discrimination'.

And in April 2023, LGBT charities threw their weight behind humanist marriages by co-signing a letter from our patrons Stephen Fry and Sandi Toksvig which made national headlines, highlighting how damaging the lack of humanist marriages was for their community.

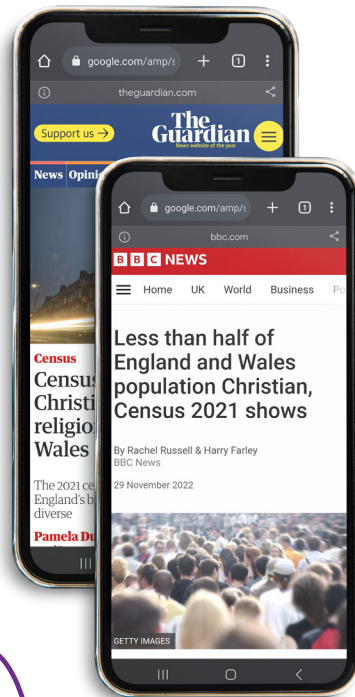
Additionally, the report's author, Colin Bloom, called for the legal recognition of humanist marriages following the *Bloom Review*. While wholesale marriage reform may take years to accomplish, the Government has the ability to act now, and should do so.



GROWTH & ESTEEM

HUMANISTS RECOGNISED AT CORONATION

Our Chief Executive Andrew Copson attended the coronation in May, along with other representatives of civil society, at the invitation of the UK Government. Objectively speaking, the invitation demonstrated growing national recognition for all the good work humanists do across the UK. However, we also expressed that it was a shame the ceremony was otherwise entirely rooted in Christian religious worship, and failed to reflect the shared values of a diverse nation where most people aren't religious. We argued that any future inauguration events for any future UK head of state should be secular and inclusive throughout. We also condemned the disgraceful arrests of republican protesters on the day – a tragic example of the increasing limits being placed on free expression.



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

OUR BEST YEAR EVER FOR MEDIA COVERAGE

We're thrilled to announce that 2022 was our best year on record for media coverage. Whether campaigning for humanist marriage, raising awareness of the latest Census results, standing up for free speech, ending collective worship, or championing freedom of thought and belief, we have put a rational, tolerant, and optimistic humanist voice out there in front of millions of new people. In total, we gained almost 400 pieces of coverage in major national media, and gained international press, too. This record-breaking coverage serves to underscore the reputation of our charity as a trusted source of commentary on ethical and constitutional issues, about humanism, humanist ceremonies, and on issues affecting the non-religious in the UK.

HUMANIST HERITAGE GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

In February, our Humanist Heritage project was awarded a significant grant of £160,000 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks to this generous grant, we have the opportunity to further explore the fascinating history of humanist activism and shed light on the remarkable individuals who have positively influenced our society. Among them is the notable suffragist Emma Martin, who received a blue plaque in Bristol in February after successful fundraising campaign by Bristol Humanists. It is heartening to see, too, a resurgence of interest in humanist history within the literary world. We have celebrated the release of two outstanding books that delve into the narrative of humanist history: Sarah Bakewell's captivating work, *Humanly Possible*, and another remarkable publication titled *The Humanist Movement in Modern Britain* authored by Professor Callum Brown, Professor David Nash, and Dr. Charlie Lynch – a comprehensive history of Humanists UK. We are immensely grateful to The National Lottery Heritage Fund for their support, as well as the authors and contributors who have expanded our understanding of humanist history.



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



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
INCLUDING THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022

| | Funds 2022 | | | Funds 2021 |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | £ restricted | £ unrestricted | £ total | £ total |
| INCOMING RESOURCES | | | | |
| Incoming resources from general funds | | | | |
| Legacies and donations | 182,907 | 1,115,105 | 1,298,012 | 1,387,532 |
| Other trading activities | - | - | - | - |
| Investments | - | 8,432 | 8,432 | 8,536 |
| Incoming resources from charitable activities | - | 1,301,802 | 1,301,802 | 1,297,248 |
| Total incoming resources | 182,907 | 2,425,339 | 2,608,246 | 2,693,316 |
| RESOURCES EXPENDED | | | | |
| Costs of generating income | - | (217,066) | (217,066) | (183,015) |
| Costs of charitable activities | (160,706) | (2,315,155) | (2,475,861) | (2,136,965) |
| Total resources expended | (160,706) | (2,532,221) | (2,692,927) | (2,319,980) |
| NET INCOMING RESOURCES/(RESOURCES EXPENDED) BEFORE TRANSFERS AND INVESTMENTS | 22,201 | (106,882) | (84,681) | 373,336 |

OUR FULL FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR IS AVAILABLE ON THE CHARITY COMMISSION WEBSITE AND AT [HUMANISTS.UK/MEMBERS](https://humanists.uk/members)



Humanists UK: an expanding,
financially healthy, and
sustainable movement

| | Funds 2022 | | | Funds 2021 |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|------------|------------|
| | £ restricted | £ unrestricted | £ total | £ total |
| STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES <i>(continued)</i> | | | | |
| Net gains/(losses) on investments | - | (58,204) | (58,204) | 11,786 |
| Net income/(expenditure) for the year | 22,201 | (165,085) | (142,885) | 385,122 |
| Transfers between funds | - | - | - | - |
| NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS | 22,201 | (165,085) | (142,885) | 385,122 |
| Balances brought forward at 1 January | 118,623 | 2,928,650 | 3,047,273 | 2,662,151 |
| BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AT 31 DECEMBER | 140,824 | 2,763,565 | 2,904,388 | 3,047,273 |

SENIOR STAFF

Chief Executive Andrew Copson
Director of Public Affairs and Policy Richy Thompson
Head of People Ann-Michelle Burton
Director of Operations Catriona McLellan
Director of Communications Liam Whitton
Director of IT Andrew West

BOARD OFFICERS

Chair Neil Hawkins
Vice Chair Neil McKain
Treasurer Ann O’Connell

Auditors Knox Cropper
Bank The Co-Operative



THINK FOR YOURSELF, ACT FOR EVERYONE

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