



**Humanist
Society
Scotland**

For an ethical future

Cultivating Humanism: Our Strategy for Growth

Humanist Society Scotland
Strategic Plan 2024-27

Our Commitment to Humanist Ideals

It is with great pride and optimism that I present our new strategic plan for the Humanist Society Scotland for 2024 to 2027. Over the past few years, we have made significant strides in promoting humanist values, and this new plan sets a bold vision for our future.

Humanism in Scotland continues to grow and flourish, thanks to the dedicated efforts of our members, celebrants, volunteers, and supporters. We have celebrated countless key life events, campaigned for progressive change, and provided a community for those who share our humanist beliefs. Our commitment to fostering a caring, compassionate, and reasoned society remains steadfast.

As we embark on this new strategic period, our focus will be on nurturing and expanding our community, enhancing our ceremonies, and

ensuring that our voice is heard on important public policy issues. We aim to create more opportunities for engagement, build bridges with allied groups, and continue to support humanist principles both locally and globally.

I am immensely grateful to all who have contributed to the development of this strategic plan. Your passion and dedication are the driving force behind our success. Together, we will work towards a democratic and secular Scotland where dignity, autonomy, and rights are a reality for all.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to our shared vision.

Jennifer Buchan
Chair

Shaping Tomorrow: Our Humanist Blueprint

As we unveil our strategic plan for 2024 to 2027, I am filled with both excitement and determination for the journey ahead. Humanist Society Scotland has always stood as a beacon of humanist values, championing reason, compassion, and equality in Scottish society. This new plan represents our commitment to these principles and sets forth an ambitious roadmap for the next three years.

Over the past years, we have witnessed remarkable achievements. Our ceremonies have touched the lives of thousands, our advocacy has significantly influenced public policy, and our community has grown stronger and more vibrant. Yet, there is still much to be accomplished. This strategic plan is designed to build on our successes and address the challenges we face.

Our vision is clear: to nurture and grow the humanist community in Scotland, to ensure our ceremonies are accessible and celebrated, and to make our voice heard on critical issues such as end-of-life care, secular education, and human rights. We will

also continue to innovate and improve our digital presence, ensuring that our resources are accessible to all.

We will be doing all of this work with a backdrop of Scotland being a majority non-religious country for the first time, according to the most recent census. This gives us a bigger constituency of prospective supporters to engage with than ever before and gives us a big challenge to rise to.

Like Jennifer, I want to pay tribute to all of our members, celebrants, supporters, volunteers, and staff. Our success is based on your dedication and hard work. Let's continue to work together to build a democratic and secular Scotland where humanist values thrive.

Thank you for being part of this journey. I look forward to working with you to achieve our shared goals and make a lasting impact.

Fraser Sutherland
Chief Executive



OUR VISION

Our vision is for a democratic and secular Scotland where dignity, autonomy, and rights are a reality for all.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to embed humanist values in Scottish society. We do this by providing ceremonies, education, outreach, and campaigns, working with families, communities, and partners.

OUR VALUES

- Co-operation: We reach out and work with others for positive change
- Diversity: We embrace diverse voices, challenge discrimination, fight for equality, and represent an inclusive community.
- Kindness: We live and work with care and compassion.
- Integrity: We stand up for what we believe is right and act with openness and accountability.
- Reason: We listen to evidence, thought, and lived experience to guide what we do.
- Sustainability: We work in a sustainable way to protect our planet.



Community

It is important for humanists in Scotland to be part of a thriving community. As the national organisation for humanists we must work hard to make this happen. When we spoke to members and supporters about our strategic plan, they told us how important it was for us to provide spaces, events, and opportunities that would allow them to engage with other members of our movement and the wider humanist community.

To achieve this, our overarching goal during this strategic-plan period is as follows:

We will nurture and grow the humanist community in Scotland

As we work towards this goal, we have identified the following four aims, each of which includes a set of specific objectives.



Involve

We will ensure that members and supporters feel valued and involved in the work and aims of the society

- We will set out how we measure and evidence the frequency, reach and quality of our engagement activities, to ensure that we are meeting our commitments and building trust with the communities we serve.
- We will establish quarterly themed discussion seminars to discuss the main aims of our campaign work and how members/supporters can help progress our campaigns.

Together

We will provide meaningful opportunities to connect with other humanists through regular events, activities, and volunteering opportunities both locally and nationally

- We will support the development of member groups, including local groups and Young Humanist Ambassadors.
- We will oversee and promote a regular programme of meetings and events, both online and in-person both at a national level and locally.
- We will celebrate World Humanist Day with a programme of events.

Connect

We will reach out beyond the existing humanist community to establish connections with allied groups and causes

- We will work with Stop Climate Chaos Scotland on tackling environmental challenges and the climate emergency.
- We will ensure a humanist presence at Remembrance Day commemorations and Pride festivals.
- We will build bridges with under-represented groups in our membership and supporter base through co-hosted events.

Value

We will value and recognise the contribution of our volunteers

- We will employ good practice in the recruitment, selection, induction and ongoing support and development of our volunteers.
- We will support local groups through quarterly connect meetings.
- We will work to build up our network of chaplaincy/pastoral-support humanists in Scotland and develop a professional network to support them.
- We will engage with UK-wide and European humanist communities to learn how best to further develop pastoral support in Scotland and develop a bespoke action plan.
- We will celebrate Volunteers' Week and Trustees' Week.
- We will maintain our Investing in Volunteers accreditation.





Celebrate

The most significant impact of Humanist Society Scotland's work is undoubtedly our massively popular ceremonies. Market research commissioned by the society revealed that over a million people attend a humanist ceremony in Scotland each year. That equates to one in five of the population. In fact, although humanists were only legally authorised to conduct ceremonies in 2005, by 2022 there were more humanist marriage ceremonies in Scotland than all religious ceremonies combined. Our ceremonies enjoy very positive feedback from both clients and attendees. We want to build up

our ceremonies network so everyone who wishes to have a humanist ceremony in Scotland can book a Humanist Society celebrant.

To do this, our overarching goal in this strategic-plan period is as follows:

We will improve access to, and knowledge of, Humanist Society Scotland ceremonies across the whole of Scotland

Working towards this overarching goal, we have identified the following four aims and a number of accompanying objectives.

Availability

We will increase the number of celebrants registered with the society, particularly in areas with low availability

- We will recruit and train new celebrants, prioritising recruits from the Highlands and Islands, north-east Scotland, and southern Scotland.
- We will review how best to provide training to new celebrants in more remote areas to make our training more accessible.
- We will improve the information we provide to potential applicants about the training process.
- We will create a pool of mentors and provide guidance to new trainees about what they can expect from their mentor.
- We will reach local and rural communities across Scotland to recruit new trainees via social media and local media such as radio and newspapers.
- We will seek out applicants from under-represented groups to further build on the diversity of our network.
- We will review our training and recruitment processes each year to ensure our trainees receive the best possible experience.

Funerals

We will increase the awareness of our celebrants' ability to provide meaningful humanist funerals

- We will implement a new advance wishes tool for the public to record their funeral plans which will be integrated on our public website.
- We will use Demystifying Death Week to increase public conversations about humanist funerals and Humanist Society celebrants.
- We will carry out promotional marketing of our advance wishes tool across media platforms to increase awareness amongst the public.
- We will create new social media content around funerals and advanced wishes. We will seek to use our celebrants as a personal platform for sensitive and appropriate content.
- We will raise awareness and understanding of humanist ceremonies with funeral directors across the country.

Weddings

We will increase awareness of Humanist Society Scotland celebrants amongst couples planning marriage ceremonies

- We will carry out a review of our attendance at wedding shows across the country and identify how we can be represented as widely and as effectively as possible.
- We will increase engagement with social media content on our humanist weddings by seeking out industry best practice and new platform opportunities.
- We will move the Scottish Government to carry out a formal review of the proliferation of commercial humanist marriage providers not attached to belief bodies.
- We will engage with wedding couples to better understand what other services the society could usefully provide.
- We will engage with European humanist organisations to share best practice and seek a common minimum standard for humanist weddings continent wide.

Growth

We will increase awareness of other ceremonies such as naming ceremonies among the Scottish population

- We will find new ways to reach families to promote humanist naming ceremonies through promotional events with good public attendance levels.
- We will increase engagement with social media content on our humanist naming ceremonies by seeking industry best practice, learning from other wedding, funeral and ceremony providers, and new platform opportunities.
- We will develop a specific promotional plan for naming ceremonies to sit alongside our existing plans on weddings and funerals.
- We will look to learn from European partners about the potential of ceremony types such as confirmations that are not yet used in Scotland.



Awareness

Since our formation, a key charitable objective of the society has been to promote awareness of humanism and what it means to be a humanist. A cornerstone of our strategic plan is to set out how we seek to engage both core audiences and the wider public in Scotland.

To achieve this, our overarching goal in this strategic-plan period is as follows:

We will work to increase awareness and understanding of humanism in Scotland

As we work towards this goal we have identified four aims and a number of accompanying objectives

Newsworthy

We will deliver a programme of communications involving external media, including regular coverage in the press, contributions to news media and public appearances. We will enhance our status as a trusted and sought-out voice on humanist issues in Scotland and beyond

- We will incorporate objectives for working with external media and organisations into our annual communications strategy and measure our progress against these.
- We will seek out external press coverage and exposure at relevant points in the political cycle, on topics pertinent to our values and aims.

Communicate

We will deliver an engaging programme of communications through our website and social channels, keeping people informed and enthused by the work of the society

- We will deliver a regular programme of articles and blog posts, publicising these through social media channels and tracking engagement through our communications strategy.
- We will regularly update our social media channels according to a specified and regularly updated social media plan, tracking and seeking to increase engagement.

Engage

We will offer an exciting and informative programme of activities and content for our members and supporters

- We will host an annual conference, giving our members and supporters the chance to meet up, network, and learn about important issues for the humanist movement.
- We will offer members a regular schedule of newsletters, magazines, and articles that keep them engaged and informed on humanist issues.

Collaborate

We will endeavour to use our communications skills to grow and diversify the support base of humanism in Scotland

- We will make targeted use of marketing, working with external partners where needed.
- We will develop and publicise more resources for educational purposes, working with schools, teachers and other partners.
- We will use our communications work to reach out to allied organisations and groups, particularly those who connect us to more diverse audiences.





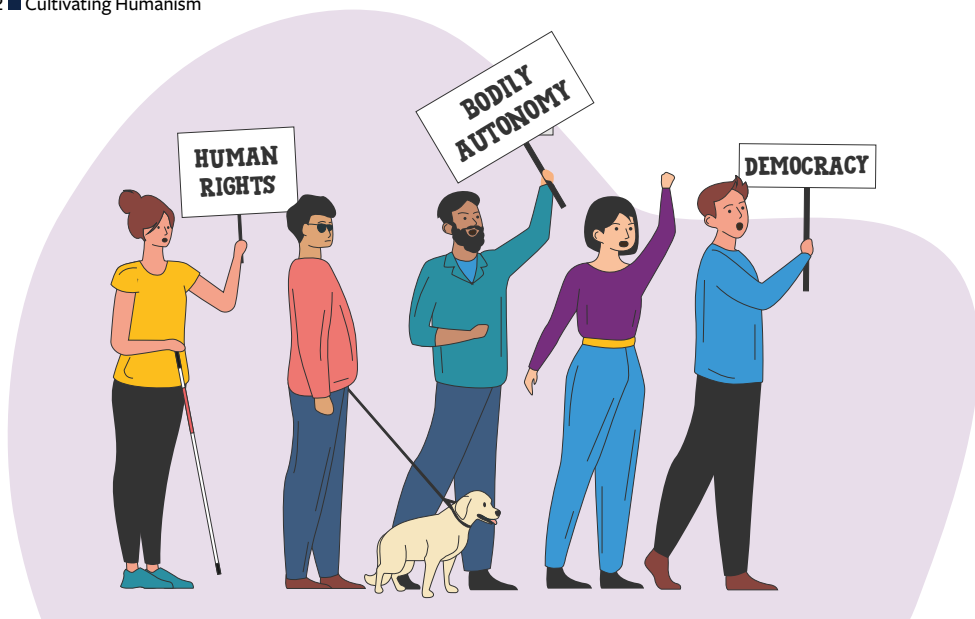
Influence

Humanists and humanist organisations have always been public activists on causes such as secularism, bodily autonomy, democracy, and human rights. Humanist Society Scotland has a proud tradition of advocating for and campaigning on issues of importance to our members. Engagement with members has shown us that assisted dying, secular education, abortion rights, human rights, and democracy remain key priorities for the organisation, which we should promote with key decision-makers.

To do this our overarching goal during this strategic plan period is as follows:

We will ensure the humanist voice is heard on key public policy matters

Working towards this overarching goal we have identified six aims for the society over the next three years, and a number of accompanying objectives.



End of Life Care

We will support the Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill (Scotland) Bill and advocate for its passage through the Scottish parliament

- We will provide the necessary resources to support drafting and research to the member in charge.
- We will increase our members', supporters', and the wider public's awareness of the bill and encourage them to respond to the Scottish parliament's call for evidence.
- We will provide themed briefings for both our members and MSPs, outlining the humanist position on key components of the bill.

Democratic Education

We will build on our success in removing voting rights from unelected religious representatives on local education committees

- We will engage with councillors in local authorities yet to consider the issue to bring the matter to full council for debate and decision.
- We will work with media partners at both national and local level to increase awareness of the campaign.
- We will utilise our network of members and supporters to engage with local representatives.

Abortion Access

We will support the implementation of the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill and make the case for improvement of abortion care

- We will engage with the Scottish parliament in its consideration of the bill.
- We will encourage supporters to engage with calls for evidence and make the case to their elected member to support the bill at voting stages.
- We will communicate with members on the progress of the bill and how they can support its passing.
- We will build a coalition of partners to make the case for decriminalisation of abortion in Scotland, building on and complementing the efforts of allied organisations.
- We will produce a policy report identifying issues around the current legal position of abortion criminalisation.

Freedom of Thought in Schools

We will pressure the Scottish Government to change the law on religious observance to ensure young people are not required to participate in religious worship during school

- We will build a coalition of organisations who share our desire for reform.
- We will produce policy reports with associated press briefings and public events to encourage the discussion of the issue.
- We will hold an event in the Scottish parliament to engage with MSPs on the importance of reform.
- We will initiate a wider conversation on the role of religion in education and build a case for reform through events and actions.

Human Rights and the Environment

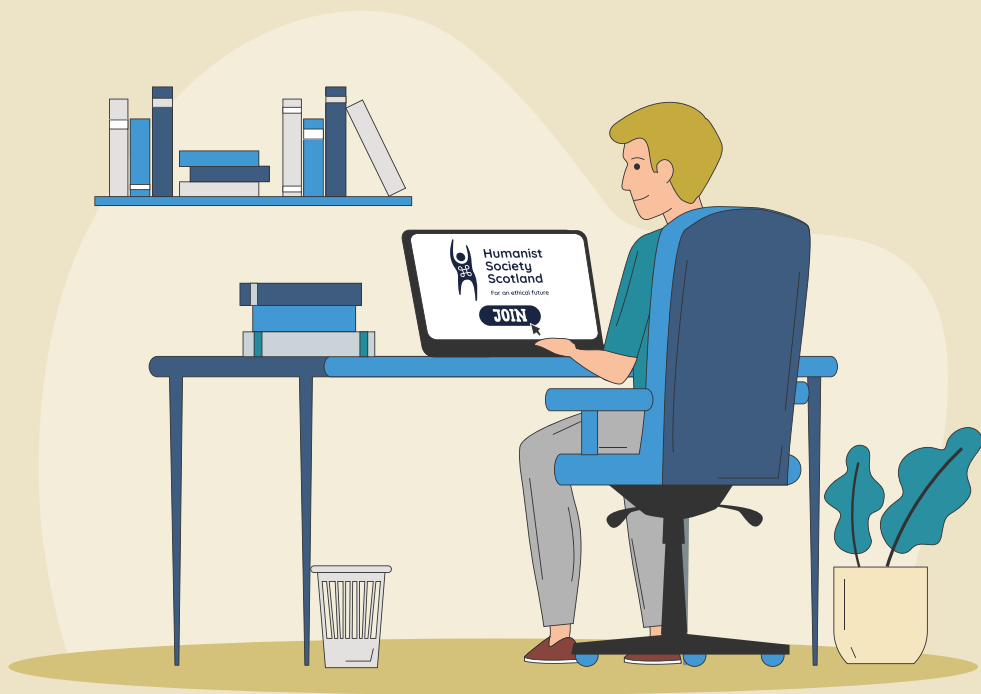
We will promote human rights and champion environmental protection by working closely with key partner organisations

- We will promote the work of Humanists International in raising awareness of humanists at risk at an international level.
- We will emphasise the importance of Scotland's membership of the European Convention of Human Rights.
- We will ensure that religious organisations do not get special status in the law that seeks to ban conversion practices.
- We will work with Together Scotland to promote the full integration of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scottish law.
- We will work with Stop Climate Chaos Scotland to make the case for environmental protection and action on climate change.

Advocacy

We will ensure Humanist Society Scotland is engaged with parliamentarians and local councillors on matters of importance to humanists

- We will attend party political conferences to promote our campaigns.
- We will build relationships with Scottish political journalists and content producers to ensure better representation of humanist perspectives.
- We will respond to government and parliamentary consultations and calls for evidence on relevant issues.
- We will campaign around the 2024 general election and run hustings for the 2026 Scottish parliament in conjunction with other groups.



Innovate

To achieve the ambitious plans set out in this document, the society will need to develop new ways of working, continuing to utilise digital technologies and ensuring that our key decisions are data driven.

To do this our overarching goal in this strategic plan period is:

We will continue to innovate digitally and invest in developing our data literacy

Working towards this overarching goal, we have identified five areas of work for the society over the next three years.

Web Accessibility

We will ensure content created for our website, social media channels, or any other digital service we provide remains accessible and inclusive

- We will ensure all staff receive training and refresher training on both EDI and accessibility best practice.
- We will ensure staff apply accessibility principles to the work they create.
- We will continually review existing content and update this where needed.
- We will ensure that accessibility and inclusivity are at the centre of all that we do.



Digital Skills

We will build robust core digital skills across the organisation

- We will hold digital one-to-ones with all members of staff and undertake a digital skills survey.
- We will identify skills gaps and learning opportunities highlighted in our digital skills survey.
- We will implement a plan to respond to these findings through self-guided learning and one-to-one training sessions.

Data Analysis

We will ensure that departmental managers understand the data required to monitor the impact of their departmental activities, and that they can gain further insights from data analysis

- We will work with staff to define relevant data streams for strategic aims of all departments.
- We will develop a culture of actively engaging with data in order to gain new insights.



Knowledge Sharing

We will develop a knowledge base that is actively maintained by all members of the staff team

- We will engage with staff to develop a suitable platform for managing knowledge as a remote team.
- We will build a base of documented processes in the resulting knowledge base, and routinely review and amend content as required.
- We will encourage staff to develop new ways of working and collaborate on these processes with colleagues.

Innovation

We will develop a culture in which we aren't afraid to try new things or to stop doing things

- We will ensure that we understand the purpose of our work, and therefore how to measure its success.
- We will review our ongoing tasks and processes to ensure that they are still the most effective way of fulfilling their intended purpose.
- We will identify and reconsider any tasks that are ineffective or that no longer serve any identifiable purpose.



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