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Ethical Union

February 2018

# Dorset Humanists

*Atheists and agnostics for a better world*

■ **Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February**  
**12.00pm/2.00pm Ticketed Event**  
Dorset Humanists Darwin Day at  
Bournemouth International Centre

## What Next for Humans in an Age of Machines?



Celebrate Darwin Day with a delicious three course buffet lunch in BIC's Purbeck Lounge, followed by a thought-provoking talk from our specially invited guest Dr Kate Devlin.

We have become dependent on machines, and we already have robots outperforming us in complicated tasks. We live in an age where automation of our everyday world is becoming increasingly achievable, and we barely notice artificial intelligence because it blends seamlessly into our lives. For as long as humans have existed, we've used technology - from sticks to smartphones - to improve our existence but will we reach a point where that technology usurps us? What happens if, or when, we become redundant, and where does life go next? Join us at our Darwin Day Celebration for an insider's view of what it means to be human in an age of ever-advancing machines.

Kate Devlin is a Senior Lecturer in Human Computer Interaction and Artificial Intelligence at Goldsmiths, University of

London. Her talk at the Humanists UK Conference in Cambridge was on 'Sex Robots'. She was recently named as one of London's most influential people.

**Lunch & Talk Ticket (12.00pm start): £25** including welcoming glass of wine or soft drink, followed by a 3-course Italian buffet lunch.

**Talk only Ticket (2.00pm start): £3** includes coffee or tea on arrival.

Bookings: ☎ Lyn Glass 01202 767323  
✉ [lyn.glass@btinternet.com](mailto:lyn.glass@btinternet.com)

■ **Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 7.30pm**  
Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX

## The Day after Tomorrow: Our Oceans and Climate Change

Our speaker Professor of Physical Oceanography Meric Srokosz coordinates the *Rapid Climate Change* programme looking at how changes in the north Atlantic circulation will affect UK and northwest European climate, and in this talk he will be exploring the role of the oceans in climate and climate change, and explain how our climate is changing and the consequent effects. Points of interest will include the impact of sea level rises, potential changes in global weather patterns, and a look at the effect of ocean acidification on marine ecosystems and human populations.

■ **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> February 7.30pm** and every first Thursday evening of the month at Moon in the Square, Exeter Rd, BH2 5AQ



## Pub socials

Enjoy stimulating conversation over a drink or two at our pub social evening. Look out for the Dorset Humanists signs on the table. We warmly welcome regulars and newcomers.

☎ Dean 07713 858773



## Sunday Walks

**18<sup>th</sup> February** about 6 miles starting near Hardy's cottage in Stinsford just east of Dorchester and exploring Puddletown Forest. We hope that some of the Dorchester group will be able to join us.

All walks are between about 6 and 9 miles and usually have an optional short cut.

Please check [Meetup](#) for further details and any last minute cancellations due to weather conditions. Phil ☎ 07817 260498



## Short Talks

■ **Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February 7.30pm** Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX. £2.00-3.00 donation requested.

## Global Warming, Agriculture, and Population

This evening will consist of a recorded presentation (video) on world population by Hans Rosling, introduced by Phil Butcher, and a talk by Michael Royde on a number of ideas for improving the effectiveness of agriculture, with benefits for reducing global warming, which he has developed over a long career, starting in Fisons as an industrial chemist. Come and join in a discussion, continuing from January, on "how are we going to feed the world".

Each talk is around 20 minutes followed by questions and discussion. See [Meetup](#) for further details.

■ **Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2.00pm**  
Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

## Members' Annual Lunch and AGM

Dorset Humanists is a community group which has provided a friendly meeting place for non-religious people in Bournemouth and surrounding areas for over twenty years. We have established ourselves as a respected voice for reason and humanity, and Humanists UK has recognised that we are one of its most successful partner groups. None of this would be possible without the loyalty and support of our subscribing members and so, as a 'thank you', we are once again providing a complimentary buffet lunch prior to our AGM. Visitors are also very welcome to attend but we ask for a £3.00 donation for lunch – or you can join Dorset Humanists on the day! We will keep the boring bits of the AGM to a minimum and we guarantee that this will be a sociable, enjoyable, and sometimes controversial event. ★ *We need some volunteers to help with serving and clearing up after the lunch.*

■ **Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> March 7.30pm**  
Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX

## The State of the Prisons

Andrew Neilson, Director of Campaigns at the Howard League for Penal Reform

Prisons are now overcrowded places where violence and death are commonplace, while purposeful activity such as work or training has levelled off as cuts to staff and resources have left prisoners locked in their cells for the vast majority of the week. If we want to see prisons as places of genuine reform, where people leave less likely to commit crime, then we have to ask hard questions about the purpose of prison and look again at who we are locking up in the first place. The Howard League is a charity that works for less crime, safer communities, and fewer people in prison.



## Other events of interest...

### ■ Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 10.30am

Aaron will be leading a cycle ride starting from Bournemouth pier and heading along the mostly flat route along the beach to Poole and Holes bay and returning. An easy gentle ride for anyone who hasn't used their bike in a while. Please note that exercise activities are at own risk.

✉ [aarondarkwood@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:aarondarkwood@hotmail.co.uk)

### ■ Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 7.30pm

Sandford Heritage Hall, Sandford Rd, Nr Wareham, BH20 7AJ (Next to Pine Martin Grange Care Home) 'Out of the Box' Humanist/Christian dialogue group presents

#### Christian Humanism: A contradiction in Terms?

Revd Hugh Maddox shares his unorthodox beliefs about Christianity which are certain to stimulate vigorous dialogue.

### ■ Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February 7.30pm

Brunswick Pub, 199 Malmesbury Park Rd, Bournemouth BH8 8PX. £3 donation.

#### What does it mean to be human?

**Jonathan MS Pearce** will explore questions that have interested philosophers for a long time: What does it mean to be human? What is personhood? When did we start being human? And what does it mean for the future? Jonathan is a popular blogger, author and speaker.

### ■ Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May – Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May

#### Weekend Retreat: 'NOT a Digital Detox: How to feel better without logging off'.

Last year, Dorset Humanists member Sue Thomas gave us a short talk about her book 'Nature and Wellbeing in the Digital Age'. She has been invited by the Othona Community, near Burton Bradstock, to run a retreat reflecting upon our online lives and our place in nature. Although Othona is rooted in the Christian tradition, it's very open and inclusive, and offers the chance to experiment with new ideas and practices. It is inexpensive to attend and bursaries are available. More information [here](#)

## Wessex Humanists

*South Central England Humanist Network begins to take shape*

David Warden and Aaron Darkwood attended a meeting of Wessex Humanists on 20<sup>th</sup> January in Winchester to vote on key proposals for a new regional humanist network. The key agreements were:

The Network will be run by a Council consisting of one representative from each Humanist Group in the region and led by an elected co-ordinator who will be a registered volunteer for Humanists UK.

Members of any constituent group can attend and participate in decision making at the AGM.

The **vision** of the network is 'To provide support for existing and emerging humanist local groups, and to seed new groups'

The **scope** of the network is set out in the five points below (with the opportunity to expand at a later stage):

1. Streamline, encourage, and facilitate the sharing of good resources and practice.
2. Provide advice and training for current and future leaders of local humanist groups to ensure the good running of those groups and support good succession planning.
3. Work with Humanists UK to seed new groups and grow existing groups in the Network's Region.
4. Facilitate appropriate regional events.
5. Within the region, facilitate and encourage Humanist UK's grass-roots campaigns.

The network's region will be: Dorset, Wiltshire, Surrey, Sussex, Isle of Wight, Berkshire, and Hampshire.

David Brittain (Basingstoke) was elected as Network Coordinator and Alan Montgomery (Farnham) was elected as Finance Officer. David Warden will represent Dorset Humanists on the Council.

■ These points have been extracted from the Network's Charter which is available from David on request.

## Friendship course

Our Friendship Course starting in February is now full. Please contact David Warden for late availability.

## Dorset Humanists Committee

We are very pleased to announce that Simon Whipple has been co-opted onto Dorset Humanists Committee. Simon has agreed to allow his name to be put forward for election at our AGM.

## Can you help us?

Could you help our busy events team on Saturdays and Wednesdays? Please ask David Warden for details of what's involved. In particular we could do with some volunteers to help serve lunch at our AGM and someone who can organise clearing up.

## Still paying your sub with old money?

If you pay your annual subscription to Dorset Humanists by cheque or cash this is greatly appreciated but it creates a headache for us throughout the year when we need to send out reminders, sometimes several. Many members have switched to a simple and safe Direct Debit system. You could help Cathy our Membership Secretary enormously by following their example. Please contact her for details.

☎ Cathy Silman 01202 740550

## Youth conference

David Warden and Ronnie Barr attended a meeting at Boscombe Link in January to explore the feasibility of having an 'interfaith youth conference' in November. Various organisations were represented including Dorset Race Equality, Rotary, and YMCA. More details to follow as the idea takes shape.

## School speaker training

Could you be one of our school speakers? Talking to school pupils about Humanism can be extremely rewarding and helps meet our aim that every child in Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset will leave school having heard about Humanism. Humanists UK are prepared to train us locally if we have enough expressions of interest in their training day. Please contact David Warden.

## Hidden Knowledge

*80 people, including a large number of local counselling therapists, packed into Moordown Community Centre for our informative January talk about adult sexual attraction towards children.*



In her challenging talk, highly respected researcher Dr Sarah Goode said that if we represent child sexual abusers as 'other than us' children will misrecognise what is going on and will

be unable to protect themselves or ask for help. The adults around the child will also misrecognise what is going on and fail to protect the child or confront the adult.

In the aftermath of the Savile enquiry, Sarah Goode wanted to know what was really going on. She set out to research how paedophiles deal with a stigmatized and hidden identity and how they manage that identity among their families and communities.

- In the UK 38,000 sexual offences against under-16s, of which 5,600 were rape of under-13s, are recorded annually
- At least 90% of sexual offences against children are committed by someone known to them (often a family-member)
- Many self-identified paedophiles live in the community, unknown to any authorities.
- Paedophiles are not a different order of beings. Some make destructive choices; some stay law-abiding; some do their best to do good in the world.



- Paedophiles typically become aware of their sexual attraction when they themselves are around 13-17 years old
- Society currently assumes they will become abusers. Most do not begin offending until late 20s / early 30s and an unknown proportion of paedophiles do not act on their sexual attraction.

Dr Goode said that we have a 'window of opportunity' to engage with self-defined young paedophiles and encourage them to stay non-offending. We should offer help and support before the first offence takes place.

Dr Goode drew attention to two frames of reference which have led to confusion about how we should respond to paedophiles and child sexual abuse. First, there is the 'Kinsey'-based frame of reference where sex is the most important good, trumping any other good such as the ability to give consent. Second, there is the child protection-based frame of reference: sex is good only when it is consensual, both parties are equals, are well-informed and developmentally ready. Both paedophiles and society in general have to negotiate their way through these conflicting ways of understanding sex. Currently, there is no straightforward message. Dr Goode left us in no doubt about on which side of the fence she sits. She said that "the intrusion, the invasion of privacy, of personal space, of autonomy and self-determination, that's where the harm is. It's a profound psychic attack".

Dr Goode wants young people who have become aware of their sexual interest in children to hear the following key messages:

1. You are not a monster and you are not alone
2. You are not responsible for your feelings: you ARE responsible for your actions
3. There is effective help and support available
4. Adult sexual contact with children (including viewing illegal images) is harmful and illegal

5. There are role-models of other people just like you living successful, law-abiding lives

StopSO (Specialist Treatment Organisation for the Prevention of Sexual Offending) [www.stopso.org.uk](http://www.stopso.org.uk)

Hurting2Healing (formerly Dorset Action on Abuse) [hurting2healing.org.uk/](http://hurting2healing.org.uk/)

VirPed (Virtuous Pedophiles) [www.virped.org](http://www.virped.org)



## Where does money come from?

*At our January evening meeting, 70 people packed into the Green House Hotel to hear Lucy Thom and David Moon from Positive Money explain how banks have been allowed to create a mountain of money which has been the main factor in pushing up house prices beyond the reach of most young people. They invited us to 'join the debate' on monetary reform.*

Lucy Thom and David Moon explained how in 2010 a frustrated economics student, Ben Dyson, discovered Michael Rowbotham's book 'Grip of Death: A study of modern money, debt slavery and destructive economics' (1998). It was a revelation and it led Ben to focus on monetary reform. He wrote 'Modernising Money' (2013) with Andrew Jackson and contributed to 'Where Does Money Come From?' (Josh Ryan Collins et al, 2017). Ben also started a blog on money creation and the need for reform, gathering much interest leading to the formation of Positive Money, now a thriving not-for-profit research and campaigning organisation.

The Great Financial Crash (GFC) of 2007/8 brought to a head many of the problems with the modern economy, growing inequality, house prices getting out of reach of younger generations, ever rising private debt, over use of the Earth's limited resources and environmental degradation. The Queen got no convincing answer to her

post-crash question at the LSE, “Why did no one see it coming?”. The complex economic models used by mainstream economists virtually exclude banks, money and finance on the understanding that banks intermediate between savers and borrowers. But this is completely wrong. Banks do not lend out existing money, they create new money when they make loans. And when those loans are repaid the money is destroyed. This was the key message of the presentation. Using supporting quotes from the Bank of England and example balance sheets, Lucy and David showed how this sleight of hand is achieved, accounting for the creation of 97% of all money, the remaining 3% being the notes and coins created by the Bank of England and Treasury. The banks have created too much money (debt) and directed it to the wrong parts of the economy. From 1983-2013 bank deposits grew from £158bn to £2,069bn, a 13-fold increase. Over the same period GDP doubled, house prices grew 6-fold and the stock market nearly 8-fold. About 8% of new money was directed to non-financial businesses, 8% to consumer loans, 31% to the financial sector and 51% to residential and commercial property mortgages, forcing up house prices far more than justified by simple supply and demand. Clearly the banks created too much money and did not direct it to the benefit of society as whole. As shown by the economist Hyman Minsky, in good times the banks will lend too much against ever increasing risks ending in a crash – a Minsky Moment. In bad times lending collapses draining money from the economy.

Positive Money believes the power to create money must be removed from the banks that caused the financial crisis and returned to a democratic, transparent and accountable body. Their proposal is for 100% reserve banking. Users would have no-risk transaction accounts held effectively at the Central Bank. Users could also deposit money for a fixed term or specified withdrawal notice in banks which carry risk but also reward in the form of interest. Money creation would be carried out by an independent body similar to that which currently sets interest rates (the Monetary

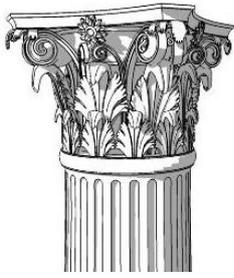
Policy Committee). How any new money enters the economy would be entirely at the discretion of the democratically elected government. Positive Money’s mission is to educate the public on how money is created and the need for reform, bearing in mind that a recent poll showed that 85% of MPs don’t know.

Turning to Quantitative Easing (QE), David and Lucy explained how banks settle accounts between them using Central Bank Reserves at the Bank of England and how banks act as a Chinese wall between the Bank of England and the real economy. As a result Positive Money calculated that of every £1 of QE created by the Bank of England only 8p reached the real economy, the remaining 92p ending up in the financial sector raising asset prices, increasing inequality. However with QE, the Bank of England has shown it can create money so why not create money and have the Government direct it to the real economy? Various suggestions of People’s QE have been proposed and Positive Money’s proposal reflects their long term ambition for monetary reform and debt free money creation. The Treasury would issue specially created perpetual zero coupon bonds. These bonds would be unconventional in that they would not bear interest and would have no maturity date. The central bank would credit the reserve accounts of the commercial banks who in turn (crossing the Chinese wall) would credit the Government accounts to spend into the economy to finance public investment spending and/or distribute directly to citizens.

Our speakers expressed optimism that Positive Money is part of fresh economic thinking coming particularly from young people to reform the teaching of economics and make it accessible to a wider audience. They encouraged us not to be put off by economics – understanding money creation is a good start. They invited us to join the debate which will be so important in resolving the problems that we are facing today.

<http://positivemoney.org/>





# Letters & Emails

*It's your column...*

*From Jeff and Christine Goodwin*

Thanks to your efforts and those of the team, the years continue to witness the most praiseworthy expansion of Dorset Humanists. Congratulations!

*From Aaron, Humanist of the Year*

Many of you will know that I faced homelessness last year. This caused an unbelievable amount of stress, resulted in an overdose and eventually I ended up in a tent for three weeks. Had it not been for the help and assistance of Dorset Humanists and its members during that time I would likely not be here. I'm reflecting on this now as a member of another humanist group in the region is enduring exactly the same thing with similar mental strains. There are times when we are individuals and times when we are a group, but human behaviour, programming and society dictates that when we have problems, when we struggle, we are to do so in silence. The shame of asking for help is huge, and quite often we either ask too late or simply don't ask at all, and the next thing we know we are no longer here, or living on the streets.

I'm not sure what we can do to help another humanist at this stage but I can say that what Dorset Humanists offers in its social capacity, its walks, its member interaction with the Short Talks and courses is invaluable to a single person such as myself, and with the Friendship course starting in February, yet another option for people to join together and build the closer community that we are. I would like to thank Dorset Humanists for being there through my dark times, and especially all those who helped me move home (twice), for Chris, Carolyn and David who supported me after my overdose, and David and John for putting up with my tent in their garden.

## Enjoy Dorset Humanists? But haven't joined yet?



**Dorset Humanists with Humanists UK  
President Shappi Khorsandi at Lighthouse**

Unlike many groups, Dorset Humanists doesn't artificially inflate its membership figures by counting online subscribers. This is because we highly value our subscribing members who, year after year, show their support for what we do and what we stand for by paying just £15 (concessions available).

For just £15 a year you can enjoy all the benefits of full membership of Dorset Humanists: a greater sense of belonging, knowing that your membership counts, the right to vote on how our group is run, and special discounts to events and courses.

*“Finding a group to belong to can be very difficult ... I felt the need in my life to carry on having interaction with people, and belonging to in a sense, yet the only options I knew about were churches. This is where for me the Humanist group comes in.” Nick*

Dorset Humanists is a charity funded entirely by member subscriptions and donations. If you haven't joined yet and would like to, pick up a membership form at one of our meetings or join online. It's really easy and you can help us even more by paying by Direct Debit. This cuts down enormously on our admin workload which is done entirely by volunteers. Together, we can make our Humanist voice heard in Dorset. Thank you!



Dorset Humanists  
**Chairman's View**  
February 2018



**H**umanism is caught on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, we seek constructive and friendly dialogue with religious people in order to identify common ground and in order to foster good relations and social cohesion. On the other hand, we seek to challenge religious faith and religious privilege. It is sometimes considered impolite to challenge the beliefs of others. There is a powerful social convention usually expressed as follows: "I don't mind what people believe as long as they're not doing anyone any harm". This sounds tolerant and civilised but really it's an excuse for complacency. What if the beliefs in question are harmful and what if they are easily 'caught' by the human mind, especially children and vulnerable adults? And what if those beliefs, if they were to gain the upper hand again, were to reassert intolerance of dissent? One of the ways to resolve this dilemma is by the disciplined practice of dialogue. Some interfaith initiatives can be criticised for being superficial but our monthly dialogue meeting with Christians in Wareham has matured into a forum for meeting each other at the level of our common humanity. Its essence is captured in two of our guidelines: "Dialogue means being open to the challenge of other worldviews. This takes courage and the willingness to change or modify our own beliefs in the light of new understanding" and "Dialogue requires listening and making an effort to see the world as others see it, without having to agree or believe what others believe." If practiced more widely, dialogue could transform the human world. I'm proud of what we have achieved in "Out of the Box" over the last two years.

I'm also proud of the fact that Dorset Humanists is prepared to tackle taboo subjects in its talk programme. Trainee counsellors often say that the client group they would least like to work with are paedophiles. Sarah Goode challenged us to consider the ordinary humanity of people who feel this sexual orientation and that a willingness to work with young paedophiles to help them manage their sexual feelings and sense of isolation represents a 'window of opportunity' to help reduce the number of those who go on to offend.

I don't fully understand all of the technical details of the proposal by Positive Money to remove the right of commercial banks to create vast quantities of money but I welcome their efforts to strip away the mystique surrounding finance and stimulate a democratic debate about how money is created and for whose benefit. We need banks to be responsible and socially useful and we need MPs to understand the fundamentals of the financial system.

*David Warden*

