

Death Café – breaking the taboo

Saturday 11th May ❖ 2.00pm at Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Ave, BH9 1TW.
Please RSVP via Meetup or email.



Death Cafés are surprisingly popular and fun to attend. There's no set agenda. We may provide a few discussion prompts but the basic idea is an opportunity for you to talk candidly about death, dying, mortality, funerals, legacy, hopes, fears, etc., in an informal and relaxed atmosphere over coffee, tea, and cake. If you would like to contribute a home-baked cake that would be fantastic. Please let David Warden know on 07910 886629 or email chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk.

This is not a therapeutic or counselling event. Our pastoral team offers confidential support to members of Dorset Humanists.

Human flourishing – what is it and how can it be realised?

Wednesday 22nd May ❖ 7.30pm at West Cliff Hotel 7 Durley Chine Rd, Bournemouth BH2 5JS.
Please RSVP via Meetup or email.

Humanists talk a lot about “human flourishing” but what does it mean and how can humanism actually help people to flourish? Millions of people live in dire poverty and so glib talk about “human flourishing” may mean little to them. For millennia, religions have promised an escape from human existence and suffering and the realisation of eternal bliss or nirvana. What is the humanist analogue of such a promise? Can humans find bliss in the midst of life with all of its setbacks and vicissitudes? David is a qualified humanistic therapist and he will offer some reflections on these challenging questions.



Dorset Humanists spends £1732.06 on food donation



Thanks to the amazing generosity of our members and supporters, we were able to spend £1732.06 on a massive food drop for the Hope for Food charity. Hope for Food said: “An amazing donation from Dorset Humanists. It took two van collections to get it back to the unit and an army of volunteers to unpack and sort. Now it’s all ready to go into our food parcels. Thanks you so much for your continued support.” Many thanks to Dean Robertson for organising this.

Is “Just War” a contradiction in terms?

Edward Hadas, a Research Fellow at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford University, gave us an excellent talk on this topic at the end of April. You can watch the talk and discussion [here](#).



Dates for your diary

Saturday 11 th May 2pm	Moordown	Death Café. A surprisingly popular subject for humanists! Come along for coffee and cake and have your say.
Wednesday 22 nd May 7.30pm	West Cliff Hotel	Human flourishing. A talk by David Warden
Saturday 8 th June 2pm	Moordown	Transhumanism & superintelligence. A talk by David Wood, Chair of London Futurists
Wednesday 26 th June 7.30pm	West Cliff Hotel	How can we trust science? A talk by Tom Whipple, science editor at <i>The Times</i> .
<i>Plus other social events and walks which will be announced on Meetup. Please check all events nearer the time in case of any changes.</i>		

Summer trip to Down House



Book soon to reserve your place!

Simon Whipple has kindly offered to organise a Dorset Humanists trip to Down House – the historic home of Charles Darwin near Orpington in Kent.

Visiting Down House allows you to explore the very rooms where Darwin lived and worked, including his study where “On the Origin of Species” was written. The house is set within beautiful gardens that Darwin used as a “living laboratory” for his experiments. Highlights include a guided tour, an observation hive to watch bees, and Darwin’s “thinking path” through the gardens. For more details, you can visit English Heritage’s page on Down House.

Tuesday 3rd September

Pickup1 : Westbourne at 9.00am

Pickup 2: Ringwood (timing tbc)

Comfort break at Fleet services

Arrival approx. 12.00

One-hour separate guided tours arranged to visit the house and garden. Picnic lunch in the garden (bring your own sandwiches).

Departure time: 15.30

Going to: The Bridge Inn, Shawford, Winchester SO21 2BP ETA 17.30

Departure time: 18.30

Returning to pickup locations

Vehicle size: 34-seater

We regret that there are no provisions for disabled persons other than that the coach can sit down a little when people enter it, and wheelchairs are available for use at Down House.

Cost £36.80 per person. Free entry to Down House for English Heritage and National Trust Members, otherwise £12.33 for adults, and £10.80 for jobseekers and those aged over 65. Dorset Humanists Hardship Fund grants may be available to members without the means to pay. Contact David Warden or Cathy Silman.

To book:

Book and pay a deposit of £10.

Email simon.whipple@hotmail.co.uk

Or phone 07740 432159 or 01725 238237



Martin Houlden (Reform), Jon Nicholas (Lib Dem), Tom Hayes (Labour), Joe Salmon (Green Party), David Warden

More than fifty people attended our lively hustings event at Moordown Community Centre in April. We gave each candidate five minutes for their opening statement as to why humanists should vote for them, followed by questions and answers. These are edited transcripts of their opening statements which give you a flavour of their policies and personalities. You can watch the whole event on our YouTube channel, including at 1:44 when Joe Salmon lost his rag with a member of Dorset Humanists.

Tom Hayes – Labour Party

Unfortunately we won't be having a General Election in May – that would have been my preference – and when I talk with businesses and local people it would have been their preference too. People want to make their mind up. People are sick and tired of this current state of limbo. We know that it's time for change. It's clear that we're facing a deep and worsening cost of living crisis. Our economy is not growing as it ought to. We face a housing crisis and renters cannot get the protections they need. Our climate crisis

2024 Election Hustings event

continues unabated and our NHS is approaching eight million waits. When I talk to people on their doorstep they talk overwhelmingly about the inability to get their foot in the door of the NHS but when they do they get excellent care, fantastic carers who want to support more people, but held back from doing so, and it's time for change. For me, Labour is the party that will bring that change. We're still some months away from a General Election and when that is held, we will know what money is left because we still have one big financial event to go. The Conservatives still have one last throw of the dice and we already know that they're making a £46 billion tax proposal which will leave a big black hole. So Labour has to be very careful about making commitments and proposals until we're fully aware of what money is left. Because when I knock on doors the number one thing that people say to me is "That sounds great – how will you pay for it?" and that gets to the heart of the crisis we face in our democracy. Trust. Trust is disappearing at a pace I've never seen before. I've knocked on doors for twenty years. I've been an ►

elected councillor and won three elections and I've never known a time like now when people feel so hopeless. When they feel their vote may not make a difference because the problems we face are too large and impossible to overcome. And that's why you coming into this hall on a Saturday afternoon matters so much because if I'm elected as your MP I won't have all the solutions. None of us on this panel will have all the solutions. Never trust the politician who says they do. But in this room, in our communities across Bournemouth East, we all have the solutions and we need to find a way that we can all be brought together by an MP to figure out how we do things better, not just in our democracy but how we make things better with the plans that we bring forward. As somebody who runs a domestic abuse and mental health charity I'm on the front line. I'm experiencing those difficulties that the most vulnerable in our society are facing. My charity sits with women fleeing abuse, with people struggling to get off NHS waiting lists, to get the mental health support they need. Enough is enough. It's time for national change.

I've been a councillor for 10 years and I've seen the limits of local government. As your MP I would not try and be a super councillor. My job is to represent the constituency on the national stage and to make sure you get the solutions you need at that national level.

I've also led UK campaigns at Oxfam GB to help resettle Syrian refugees, to tackle inequality in the area of tax havens, to make sure that public services are properly funded and protected. Throughout all of what I've done the ethos of public services runs deep. Through all that I have experienced as somebody who grew up in a council estate caring for two disabled parents, a free-school meals kid who went to a state school that really shouldn't be standing in front of you given the number of challenges put in my way. I know the importance of having somebody with real world experience who's grafted to get on, but who frankly is only able to be here because a community put their arms around

"I've never known a time like now when people feel so hopeless. When they feel their vote may not make a difference because the problems we face are too large and impossible to overcome." Tom Hayes, Labour

me. Teachers who stayed late to make sure I was educated, neighbours who put money into my hand to make sure we had enough food. If I thought things were bad when I was growing up in the 80s then nothing is compared with what people are experiencing today. Let's fix the problems that people are facing, let's tackle that cost of living crisis, let's stop the climate crisis with investment in clean power, let's put our NHS back on its feet, let's build houses and let's finally, finally put an end to 14 years of conservative government.

Martin Holden - Reform UK

I'm a long-term resident of Bournemouth so when I say I understand local issues I really do mean it. I live here, I work here, I've raised kids here and send them to schools in this constituency and I can remember how the town used to be. I remember how it used to be a safe place to walk around at night. I've certainly not just been parachuted into the area and given a shiny rosette [a reference to Tom Hayes, Labour]. I think it's important that your MP has a close, long-term connection with the constituency.

My feeling is that this country has been going along the same path for the last 10 or 20 years, swapping between blue and red parties every few years, but it hasn't made any difference whatsoever and that's because the leadership of all the other parties are still in hock to the banks, their donors, other supranational entities like the World Economic Forum, the WHO. Some of you may already know what Reform UK stands for. The clue's in the name. We get a chance to vote for ►

“I firmly believe that this nation needs wholesale reform: the economy, the tax system, sound money, immigration.” Martin Houlden, Reform

change every few years. Yet things just keep getting worse. I firmly believe that this nation needs wholesale reform: the economy, the tax system, sound money, immigration – a crucial issue. We're not going to fix these things just by tinkering around the edges.

So let me tell you Reform's key pledges. The first thing is to raise the income tax threshold from £12,500 to £20,000. That's for everyone. We want to scrap VAT on fuel bills and lower the energy duty tax to ease the cost of living. We want to abolish business rates for small-to medium-sized businesses on the High Street, not for the multinationals that aren't paying their tax. We want to freeze non-essential immigration. This is something none of the other parties will do. The Conservatives may talk tough about it but they won't do it. Immediate deportation for foreign criminals. Some people may think that's a revolution – I think it makes perfect sense. And we want to prioritise social housing for British people.

For the NHS, for doctors and nurses who spend 10 years working in the NHS we want to write off their student loans, and all front line NHS and social care staff to pay zero basic rate tax for three years and that's for NHS staff not for agency staff. We want to encourage people out of the agencies and to work in the NHS to reduce the costs.

So I'm just going to say to you today let's have some fun. Give us all a damn good grilling and if anyone tries to pass off sound bites such as “24 hours to save the NHS”, “UK inflation is the way it is because of Vladimir Putin”, “GDP is a great example of our wealth and prosperity” it's all nonsense. None of that is accurate. These are normally espoused by people who don't have a clue about economics and I include in that every single member of the House of Commons.

Jon Nicholas – Liberal Democrats

I won't talk too much about policies but with all due respect it's almost diametrically opposed to Martin here. He's close to me on my right here but a little bit further away I think in in political terms and I say that with good humour.

I first moved to Bournemouth in 1985. I went to sixth form college so I crossed the constituency regularly. Since then I've moved away to study and then I lived abroad and I bounced back to have a family in 2006 and have stayed here with the exception of a short break ever since. I think it's a great place to have a family. My kids go to school here. I'm not an elected politician yet. The fortunes of that may alter slightly after this today, who knows. But I did win an election to become a governor of St Katharine's School over in Southbourne and I was a governor there for four years.

My day job is a mix of things. Sometimes I work in community theatre but since the mid-1990s I've been sort of pulled into work in communities that are divided. I started off working in prisons, using creative techniques to challenge behaviour to give men and women a chance to rehearse for a more useful existence for themselves and for people that they encounter and since then I call myself a conflict resolution gun for hire in that I will respond to different requests and I've been very lucky to establish contacts with different places and different organisations. Invariably it's about facilitating opportunities for people to meet each other, to encounter each other. A lot of work with domestic violence.

I've had conversations with Tom, there's a lot of common ground. You won't hear me necessarily disagree or have an argument with Tom. I want to be your next MP because I know the area very well but I'm not going to overplay the local card because I think other people can bring other things in fresh ideas and immigration is always a positive thing to my mind or can be broadly a positive thing. ►

I work with Vita Nova [a community arts charity] in Boscombe and I do a lot of work with them. Every Friday I work with a group of adults with mental health challenges and increasingly the stresses and challenges that this country is facing on the personal, community, and organisational level are extreme. We need a change. We certainly need a change of party. We need a change of direction. The last big project I worked in was the Refugee Nativity play where we have people from asylum seekers, refugees and local people from Boscombe and some of the people recovering from alcohol and addiction and that was proof that once you engage with people you bring them together, people will begin to see beyond the single identity, they will see each other as human beings, they will develop friendships, they will learn about common ground, and they will engage.

I think we need proportional representation, we need a coalition for the next government, one that's void mostly of Conservatives. I also feel paradoxically we need more Reform MPs because if a certain percentage of people vote for them they need to be engaged and part of the argument. We cannot exclude people. So I'm all for engagement, participation. I regard myself as a progressive on the centre left. I've worked in zones of extreme conflict. I've worked in Kosovo, Bosnia, Myanmar, Palestine and Israel. I've got friends on all sides and none in that divide and I am a firm believer in negotiation, dialogue and engagement in order to reduce antagonism. My big fear is that this election will be ugly. Divisive and polarised politics will be used to shore up single positions and it's not healthy. We should have had an election by now. Fixed term elections would be a good idea. It was a Liberal Democrat policy in the coalition. People say "Oh you got into bed with the Tories". We've seen what they've done on their own and I think we need restraint, we need cooperation, I think we definitely need more Green MPs. Look at our rivers they're full, look at climate change, it's a palpable obvious certainty.

"The stresses and challenges this country is facing on the personal, community, and organisational levels are extreme." Jon Nicholas, Liberal Democrats

Joe Salmon – Green Party

I'm your candidate for Bournemouth East. I'm also one of the councillors here. Me and my wife were both successfully elected last year for the Greens. We're also humanists. We had our humanist wedding ceremony a few years ago performed by wonderful Simon Bull who's probably known to a lot of you. I'd love to talk about humanism but we're here to talk about politics and policy and there's loads of topics that we were told about beforehand to cover. I've done a very long form response to the topics in advance on our blog. You'll find details of that that's on our ward newsletter you'll find over there.

There's a massive problem with our public services at the moment. They are financial black holes because they're not run very efficiently and now we are seeing they're not even run very effectively. One of the root causes is the policies of marketisation and privatisation. You know most policies have been carried out for generations now not just by the Tories. We cannot pretend that this started in 2010. These are the legacy policies of the Labour government that came in in 1997 as well things like foundation trusts for NHS hospitals.

There's also a real crisis of leadership and that goes right the way down from the top of government all the way to the bottom to local government at local council level and that's because the way politicians are rewarded is not based on how well they do running the services they're responsible for representing their constituents. It's how well they're perceived to be doing and that perception is very dependent on the goodwill of the people who run a lot of our media empires at the moment. It used to be the Rupert Murdochs

and now it's turning into Elon Musks and the Mark Zuckerbergs or whoever. Now no organization can be run like that. If you run a car dealership and you pay your salesman based on how many cars other people reckon they've sold rather than how many they've sold it's just not going to work. None of us have worked for an organisation like that. It simply doesn't work. We cannot have politicians like that. It's one of the things as a local councillor I'm most passionate about sorting, it's why it makes me really angry that actually the way politics is set up you have politicians who do absolutely naff all. At least Tobias will turn out around election time but, um, not today. We're not close enough to the election it seems to him to make it out.

On the local council we've got councillors who only turn up to meetings they've got to, to get their minimum allowance. You can look at that on the record. It's what makes me I... I remember here today all of the reheated promises that we're hearing from people like Tom, God love ya, these are the same promises he will have made to people up in Oxford prior to being elected as their local councillor. The very minute it was better for his individual career and more politically expedient for him to abandon Oxford and come down here and work on getting elected that is just what he did for the last two years. His attendance as a councillor has been what 50%. My daughter's here in the audience. If she turned up to school for 50% of the time, Children's Services will be at the door. Can anybody put their hands up if they've ever had a job where you would still be being paid let alone employed if you only turned up 50% of the time? We cannot have politicians like this anymore. We just cannot have it.

We are on the verge of disaster after disaster. We are going to be looking at rationing in this country in the next few years. Now you may think I'm being alarmist but you pick up any paper you will read about the crop shortages we are going to experience in the next few months because of heavy rainfall caused by climate change, a problem that's being

"We are on the verge of disaster after disaster. We are going to be looking at rationing in this country in the next few years."
Joe Salmon, Green Party

ignored by career politicians which we see again and again and again and I tell you what, maybe you'll think I'm being dramatic, not far from here there's a massive warehouse that acts as a food distribution centre for our food banks in this country. I mean that is essentially rationing already where we have an economy that cannot put the food on the table of working people.

I've worked in the NHS for eight years now. I've spent four years working for the ambulance service through the height of the pandemic and I tell you all you needed to do as an MP all you needed to do as a politician was follow the clinical advice, make sure those decisions are not politicised, and keep your fingers out of the till. That was all they had to do and we lost billions in fraud to Covid, billions. Hey if anybody else was responsible for losing billions of pounds at work they wouldn't be sat there, they'd be fired.



John Kingston asking a question. Photos by Aaron.



Letters & Emails

It's your column...

From Baluku Shafik Siriwayo

Shafik is a sixteen-year-old student at Isaac Newton High School, a humanist school in near Masaka which is supported by the Uganda Humanist Schools Trust. He is also the Director of the Bahasi Help Orphans Family Foundation in Bundibugyo, Uganda. Advice and support is provided to Shafik by his father Irumba Juma Siriwayo, who is a Board Member of the Coalition for Humanist Schools in Uganda.

I am writing to humbly request your support in my mission to provide quality education to children facing financial difficulties in paying school fees. In my area, a significant number of talented and eager to learn children are denied the opportunity to attend school due to financial constraints.

The funds I am seeking will directly impact the lives of those children by covering their school fees, purchasing essential learning materials and facilitating access to extra-curricular activities.

My aim is not only to alleviate the financial burden on their families but also to foster an environment where every child has the chance to reach their full potential. I have witnessed the transformative effect that education can have on the lives of the children. By investing in their education, you will not just help individuals, you will be contributing to the overall development and prosperity of the community.

Donations could help cover school fees, provide learning materials, and support participation in recreational activities that enhance overall development.

I firmly believe that education is a powerful tool for breaking the cycle of poverty and with your support, we can make a lasting difference in the lives of these deserving children.

I hope to hear from you!

helporphansfamilyfoundation@gmail.com
WhatsApp: +256 7069 42333

You can read more about Shafik in the March 2024 edition of [Humanistically Speaking](#)

From Aaron Darkwood

It is always a joy to read the bulletin, as I know you ALL do. Uplifting, positive, community cohesion and bonding. There are perhaps 100 of us who regularly attend the various meetings and talks throughout the year, those who discuss and debate, chat and chortle, express and empathise – people building friendships, connections, memories and opportunities.

There are many hundreds of humanists-in-waiting who follow on social media, are on Meetup or the mailing list, and could be adding their wisdom to our ever-growing pie. We would love to see you.

As is coming up in next month's *Humanistically Speaking*, the topic of "community" is of value. More so to us here who have grown up in the Christian-dominated UK, and now non-believers being an ever-growing presence on our England's landscape. But here in Dorset we have presence, we have influence, we come together and learn and we bring about change. The 600 of you on the sidelines are warmly welcome to attend our events, walks, socials and meals. Time to add your bit?



View from the Chair

David Warden

Chairman of Dorset Humanists

On a recent trip to northern Spain we visited a church of architectural interest. Just inside the main door a life-size crucifix bore down on us. An old woman was looking up at the suffering figure, fervently and silently praying. Maybe she had lost a husband or a son and found comfort in the Son of God who shared her sorrows. I wonder what humanism would have to offer this old woman in the absence of belief. We can't compete directly because crucifixes and statues of Mary are ubiquitous in Catholic churches. We even visited a chapel full of saints' bones. The fact that humans can find comfort from lifeless statues and relics is, perhaps, unsurprising when we recall how easy it is for us as children to imbue teddy bears and other cuddly toys with consciousness. I still feel guilty about disposing of my childhood panda and monkey. They had been faithful friends for so many years and I have never been able to quite get rid of the feeling that, although inert and lifeless, they were sentient at some level. Disposing of them was a rational act but it still feels as though I committed a crime against cuddly toys. Humanists say that, instead of relying on God (or teddy bears) for help and comfort, we should cultivate relationships with real people, including ourselves, and perhaps with animals. That's all very sensible of course, but I can understand at an emotional level how billions of people can develop relationships with religious icons. Framed photos of my deceased parents serve a similar function.

We've been able to give more space to the deliberations of Dorset Humanists' Practical Progressives Group in this month's edition of *Humanistically Speaking*. In his article about democracy and equality, John Kingston writes that democracy has been captured by the rich, or "the elite", such as members of the Cabinet, MPs, top civil servants, judges, senior journalists and so on. I agree with John that democracy has been captured but I would place this capture at the global level. Extremely wealthy people, multinational firms, media empires, big tech, big pharma, investment banks, bond markets, and transnational organisations such as the IMF, OECD, EU, UN, WEF, ECHR etc., etc., constrain what national governments can do. They are run by unelected officials and are effectively beyond the reach of national democratic processes. Furthermore, politicians tend to cede their powers to unelected bodies and quangos at the national level, such as the Bank of England and the OBR. Although "capture" has happened at the level of the nation-state as well as transnationally, we do have some agency in restoring democracy at the local and national levels because regions and nations, at best, are communities of shared values, trust, and social solidarity. One of the ways we can reinvigorate democracy is by reimagining ourselves as active democratic citizens – not just passive consumers of the Westminster soap opera. Everyone should vote and everyone should, in my view, join a political party. I'm pleased that we've had three events recently to think about politics. We can change the world if we empower ourselves to think and act like citizens.