

Central London Humanist Group Constitution

(As amended 17th January 2013)

1. Name

The name of **the group** will be '**Central London Humanist Group**' (hereafter called '**the group**').

The group may also be known by the following:

1. '**Central London Humanists**'
2. The acronym '**CLHG**' or '**CLH**'

2. Aims

The aims of **the group** shall be:

1. to promote Humanism by encouraging a greater knowledge of Humanism among our members and the wider community .
2. to provide talks and other events in Central London for humanists.
3. to provide opportunities for humanists to meet like-minded people.
4. to engage with national and international humanist organisations, thereby providing our members with information and access to a wider world of humanist interest and cooperation.

3. Humanism

As a statement of Humanism, **the group** adopts the **International Humanist and Ethical Union's** 'Amsterdam Declaration' of 2002 (see appendix 1)

4. Membership

1. **The group** is open to anyone who supports its aims
2. Anyone who signs up to one of **the group's** online presences (Meetup, Facebook or emailing list) will have the status of "**Supporter**" of the group .
3. Any Supporter who provides their full name and email address to the Secretary shall have the status of "**Non-Voting Member**" of the group. .
4. Any **Non-Voting Member** who is also a member of the **British Humanist Association** shall have the status of "**Voting Member**" of the group
5. The organising committee may refuse to admit as a member, or terminate the membership of any person whose conduct is, in its opinion, inconsistent with the aims of **the group**.

Note 1: Although an email address is preferred a postal address would also be acceptable.

Note 2: If someone does not wish to use their real name publicly in relation to the Group, they may use a pseudonym.

5. Organising Committee

1. The organising committee shall consist of a Chair, a Secretary, a Treasurer and up to ten further members.
2. The general business of **the group** will be administered by the organising committee.
3. Any vacancy arising may be filled by co-option by the committee for a period until the next AGM.
4. Only **voting members of the group** may be members of the organising committee.
5. The minimum membership of the committee is six and the quorum is three.

6. Annual General Meeting ('AGM')

1. An AGM shall be held normally by the end of March each year and at least 28 days notice of the AGM will be given to all members.
2. The AGM will:
 1. receive the financial accounts and reports of the committee for the year ending 31st December of that year;
 2. elect the organising committee for the coming year;
 3. debate and vote on any resolutions proposed by the committee or proposed and seconded by two **voting members of the group** and received by the Secretary at least 14 days before the AGM
 4. Only **voting members** of the group may vote at an AGM.
 5. In any dispute concerning the affairs of **the group** a General Meeting of **voting members** shall be the final authority.

7. Elections

1. Nominations for membership of the organising committee (each duly proposed and seconded by a **voting member**) must be received by the Secretary at least 14 days before the AGM.
2. If no nominations are received by the date of the meeting then nominations may be taken from the floor or, committee members may continue in their post for a further 12 months.
3. Voting at the meeting shall be by show of hands or by any method deemed appropriate by the chair.
4. Incumbent organising committee members who wish to continue will need to be nominated as in 7.1 above.

8. Special General Meeting ('SGM')

1. A Special General Meeting may be called by the committee or, on receipt of a request signed by at least 20% of **voting members of the group** and shall be convened by the Secretary within six weeks of the request.
2. At least 28 days notice of the meeting shall be given to members.
3. Only the business stated on the notice convening the meeting shall be considered at such a Special General Meeting.
4. Only **voting members of the group** may vote at an SGM.
5. The management committee may request the Board of Trustees of the British Humanist Association to mediate in the event of a dispute with or between members or other interested parties.

9. Finance

1. The income and property of the group shall be devoted to the aims of the group.
2. Members of the organising committee or its officers shall not receive any payment unless approved by an Annual General Meeting other than reasonable expenses
3. In the event of **the group** being wound up all funds and assets after payment of liabilities shall be paid to the British Humanist Association.
4. An Honorary Auditor shall be appointed at the Annual General meeting to review the group's financial accounts and report to members at the following AGM. The Honorary Auditor should not be a member of the organising committee.

10. Affiliations

1. **The group** shall be affiliated to the British Humanist Association (see explanatory note below).
2. **The group** has concluded a partnership agreement with the **BHA** [see appendix 2]
3. Subject to the approval of the Annual General Meeting **the group** may affiliate itself to any other organisation in furtherance of the aims of **the group**.

11. Amendments to the constitution

1. This constitution may be amended by a resolution passed by at least two thirds of the **voting members** present and voting at a General Meeting of **the group**.
2. All organisations to which **the group** is affiliated are to be informed of any changes to the constitution within 28 days of such a change.

Explanatory note: Affiliation is here taken in the ordinary sense of the word and does not mean the special category of association that a group may have with the BHA. The Group's affiliation as mandated by the Constitution is in the form of a Partnership Agreement.

Appendix 1

Amsterdam Declaration 2002 (<http://www.iheu.org/amsterdamdeclaration>)

Humanism is the outcome of a long tradition of free thought that has inspired many of the world's great thinkers and creative artists and gave rise to science itself.

The fundamentals of modern Humanism are as follows:

1. **Humanism is ethical.** It affirms the worth, dignity and autonomy of the individual and the right of every human being to the greatest possible freedom compatible with the rights of others. Humanists have a duty of care to all of humanity including future generations. Humanists believe that morality is an intrinsic part of human nature based on understanding and a concern for others, needing no external sanction.
2. **Humanism is rational.** It seeks to use science creatively, not destructively. Humanists believe that the solutions to the world's problems lie in human thought and action rather than divine intervention. Humanism advocates the application of the methods of science and free inquiry to the problems of human welfare. But Humanists also believe that the application of science and technology must be tempered by human values. Science gives us the means but human values must propose the ends.
3. **Humanism supports democracy and human rights.** Humanism aims at the fullest possible development of every human being. It holds that democracy and human development are matters of right. The principles of democracy and human rights can be applied to many human relationships and are not restricted to methods of government.
4. **Humanism insists that personal liberty must be combined with social responsibility.** Humanism ventures to build a world on the idea of the free person responsible to society, and recognises our dependence on and responsibility for the natural world. Humanism is undogmatic, imposing no creed upon its adherents. It is thus committed to education free from indoctrination.
5. **Humanism is a response to the widespread demand for an alternative to dogmatic religion.** The world's major religions claim to be based on revelations fixed for all time, and many seek to impose their world-views on all of humanity. Humanism recognises that reliable knowledge of the world and ourselves arises through a continuing process of observation, evaluation and revision.
6. **Humanism values artistic creativity and imagination and recognises the transforming power of art.** Humanism affirms the importance of literature, music, and the visual and performing arts for personal development and fulfilment.
7. **Humanism is a lifeway aiming at the maximum possible fulfilment through the cultivation of ethical and creative living** and offers an ethical and rational means of addressing the challenges of our times. Humanism can be a way of life for everyone everywhere.

Our primary task is to make human beings aware in the simplest terms of what Humanism can mean to them and what it commits them to. By utilising free inquiry, the power of science and creative imagination for the furtherance of peace and in the service of compassion, we have confidence that we have the means to solve the problems that confront us all. We call upon all who share this conviction to associate themselves with us in this endeavour.

IHEU Congress 2002

Appendix 2 - BHA Partnership Agreement

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Between the British Humanist Association (referred to as “the BHA”)

and

Central London Humanists (referred to as “the group”)

Introduction

- This is a statement of intent not a legally binding document. Either side can advise the other of their withdrawal from the agreement at any time.
- The group remains an independent entity, with its own leadership, membership arrangements, governance and financial accountability.
- The agreement has no impact on the charitable aims and status of the BHA or the group (*if applicable*). In the unlikely event of a conflict between this agreement and the group's or BHA's charitable aims and objectives the relevant charitable aims and objectives will always take precedence.
- It is recognised that the commitments of both sides will be subject to available resources and capabilities.
- By signing this agreement, the group confirms that it has at least:
 - 2 active officers who are also members of the BHA, and
 - 10 group members and/or at least a typical attendance of 6 people at its regular meetings.

Entering into this Partnership Agreement does not mean that everyone in the group will be committed to sharing the BHA's view on all issues. That would be an impossible and undesirable aim for a group of freethinkers who believe in advancing their views through new information and ideas. Nor does it mean that the shared aims, values and policies could not or will not be changed. It simply means that the group and the BHA gain maximum benefit from being members of the wider humanist community, and external bodies - such as Local Authorities, the press, or other players on SACREs or “Inter Faith forums” - receive a reasonably consistent message about humanist aims and values.

What the Partner group can expect from the BHA

Within the BHA's financial and resource constraints, and taking into account the specific situation of the group, the BHA commits to the following:

Members and supporters

Inclusion of group details (along with details of other groups if appropriate) on the BHA website drop-down seen by all new joiners and supporters, with a request for them to allow personal details to be forwarded to the relevant group.
Inclusion of group details (along with those of other groups) in information provided to new BHA members joining by conventional mail.
Forwarding to the group Membership Secretary or equivalent, under appropriate conditions of confidentiality, contact details of BHA members and supporters in the group's area who wish to join or become supporters of the group and who have indicated willingness for their personal details to be forwarded.
Inclusion of group on listing on the BHA website groups pages and the BHA Groups' Google Map.
Inclusion of group in material sent to all new BHA members as well as general promotion of local humanism on BHA forms and publications (including a clear explanation of the difference between BHA membership and local group membership).
<i>One-off promotion to existing BHA members who are not group members and who are accessible by email on similar basis to the offer for new members (and noting local group membership incentives).</i>
<i>One-off promotion to group members and supporters who are not BHA members of 18-for-12 month offer of BHA membership.</i>

BHA Local Representatives

Identify with the group one or more suitable group members, in most cases including the group leader, to be "BHA Local Representatives" (BLRs) authorised to represent the BHA locally, for example in interactions with local and regional authorities and associated bodies.
Recognise that the presence of a BLR in a group does not inhibit other group members from expressing their views. But only BLRs can claim to speak for the BHA.
<i>Impact on Local Development Volunteer scheme (2007): There will be no separate Local Development Volunteers (LDVs) in areas covered by the Partner group. Any LDVs who remain active in the group's area will be offered the opportunity to become BLRs within the local group.</i>

Board access and general meetings

Make available two members of the BHA Board of Trustees nominated by the Chair as focal points to Partner groups with whom they can raise any issues that cannot be resolved through discussion with BHA management and staff (which remains the primary route).
Enable the group to submit motions to BHA General Meetings, including the AGM (with Emergency Motions not requiring a seconder).

Policy consultation and communication

Keep Partners abreast of proposed changes to BHA policies, provide statements of existing BHA policies, and offer opportunities to provide comments on any significant policy developments (<i>not applicable to tactical implementation, where rapid action is frequently necessary, or policies relating to the internal management of the BHA</i>).
Ensure good quality, timely communication to the group (including BLRs) of BHA policies and developments

Networking and interaction

Arrange with the group for a BHA staff member, Trustee or other representative to visit the group at least every 24 months (with the BHA taking a share of the travel costs if they are beyond the group's resources).

Support and encourage constructive working together with other local organisations - humanist, secular, religious and non-religious - where there are common interests.

Where appropriate, work with the head offices of these other organisations to facilitate local groups working together.

Using web and other means, actively stimulate and encourage informal networking between local groups for the sharing of ideas and best practices and, where appropriate, draw on the expertise of the group to help advise other groups.

Invite the group to send representatives to Group Representatives Annual Meeting (GRAM) and regional meetings if appropriate.

Operational services and fees

Review and set group Partnership fees taking into account BHA costs and group capabilities.

Provide expert support and advice for local campaigns in support of BHA policies.

Ensure the efficient administration of the BHA/local group interface, including:

- Timely updating of group information on the BHA website, communications and databases, (on the basis of information provided by the local group).
- Striving to answer queries from groups in a timely manner.
- Advising the group of all BHA-accredited Celebrants working in their area and any relevant changes in the Celebrant Network.
- Providing periodic reminders of the services provided by the BHA to local groups

Positive Humanism

At national level, raise awareness of/publicity about Humanism as a positive identity.

Support and encourage local groups to help members develop the positive aspects of a humanist life-stance, where possible sharing best practices from other humanist and non-humanist groups and organisations.

Resources

Make available to the group:

The right to state Partnership with the BHA on group headed paper and other materials, and use of defined 'Happy Human' group images
Cover for group meetings and events under the BHA Public Liability Insurance (<i>details as per policy</i>)
Bi-monthly pack including information and campaign resources
Groups Network newsletter by email, ten or more free copies of each issue of BHA News
Discounts on bulk orders of publications and other products from the BHA shop
Leaflets and other materials that can be used by the group when communicating externally or with those new to Humanism (perhaps including generic leaflets that can be customised by local groups)
Briefing packs and slide packs on key topics, drawing where appropriate on the experience and expertise of successful local groups*.
Free web hosting if required.
Training on key topics (<i>for example via training days, on-line virtual training, Open Days for new committee members</i>)
Free copy of each new BHA publication
Publicity tools such as pop-up banners and give-aways, at-cost
Free-of-charge ad hoc mailings of the group's materials to BHA members and supporters in the area (by mutual agreement)
On-line listing of potential speakers and topics for meetings (<i>based largely on inputs uploaded directly by local groups</i>); ad hoc support for engagement with tours by "big names" if required
(<i>Potentially - subject to demand</i>) Access to standard letterhead, membership cards, posters and other stationery at bulk prices.

**These could include topics such as:*

- *How to attract and retain active members.*
- *How to cooperate with other local groups with similar interests.*
- *How to campaign against the establishment of a faith school.*
- *How to attract younger/more diverse members*
- *How to get the most out of social media.*
- *How to establish links with SACREs schools, voluntary organisations, "Inter-faith" groups*
- *How to get the most out of local media*
- *How to deal with Councillors and Council Officers*
- *How to interact with local faith groups*
- *How to respond to "Frequently Asked Questions" from the press*

Review

Constructively engage with the group in periodic reviews of how well this agreement is working in practice as seen from both sides, and agree action on any improvements identified.
Own and maintain wording of standard agreements, updating if necessary following consultation with all affected groups.

In the case of competition for limited BHA resources between a Partner and an Affiliate, the Partner would normally be given priority.

What the BHA (and other groups) can expect from the Partner Group

Subject to its available resources and capabilities, the group commits to the following. The agreement recognises that available group resources and expertise may in practice limit its ability of the group to pursue campaigns or other activities.

Humanist community

Make a positive contribution to Humanism locally by providing a local forum for humanists to meet, to develop their knowledge and thinking, and to develop the sense of a local community of humanists within the wider local community.
Ensure a warm welcome for new members, supporters and others with a genuine interest in Humanism regardless of age, sexual orientation, academic attainment, email/Internet connection/skills or disability ¹ .
Provide newcomers with “What is Humanism?” information at the earliest opportunity
Arrange a programme of events and keep all group members informed.

Members and supporters

Offer a significant introductory group membership concession to BHA members/new joiners who wish also to join the group.
Make contact with new BHA members and supporters whose names and contact details have been passed on by the BHA (<i>within a maximum of 2 weeks of receipt if feasible</i>).
Actively encourage group members to join the BHA, and pass on contact details of group members who are willing for their information to be shared to the relevant BHA staff (under appropriate conditions of confidentiality).
Encourage group supporters who are not paid-up members to sign-up for the BHA e-Bulletin and be registered as BHA supporters

Alignment in external activities and dealings with third parties

In external activities and dealings with third parties: support the BHA’s aims, strategy, policies and values, within the group’s resources and capabilities and taking into account local circumstances. The group will not take any action that brings Humanism or the BHA into disrepute.
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BHA Local Representatives and Focal Point

Identify with the BHA one or more suitable group members to be “BHA Local Representatives”.
Identify to the BHA a Focal Point (probably one of the BHA Local Representatives) if required for 1:1 dialogue and information sharing.

Representation of Humanism locally

Engage with local Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs), “Inter-Faith” bodies, local schools and other local bodies where it makes sense, while upholding the BHA’s aims, values, and policies. (<i>If invited to participate in external bodies such as these, the group decides who will be its representatives. It is anticipated that many groups will select members who are also BHA Local Representatives.</i>)
Act locally to increase understanding and promotion of Humanism as a positive world view
Maintain a public Internet presence

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¹ Wheelchair access or other special provision for meetings and events remains a local group decision.

BHA Partnership Agreement

Campaigns

Campaign on local issues in line with BHA policies (for example, on faith schools), taking into account local community needs and circumstances, as well as group capabilities.

Support national campaigns locally, for example by encouraging people to write to their MP

Celebrants

In recognition of the importance of Humanist Celebrants in the promotion of Humanism, respond positively to requests from local BHA-accredited Celebrant to be included in the relevant section of the group's website, making clear on the website that the person is a member of the 'Humanist Ceremonies (tm) network'. (*Applicable whether or not the Celebrant is a member of the group, and whether or not the group's website also lists non-BHA accredited Celebrants*).

Seek to develop and maintain mutually supportive relationships with local members of the 'Humanist Ceremonies (tm) network' where opportunities for reciprocity exist.

Finance

Maintain the financial viability of the group

Decide group membership policy & set fees, taking into account any learning available from others.

Pay the relevant BHA Partnership annual fee on time.

Networking and interaction

Actively support development and maintenance of the Groups Network, contributing group learning and advice where appropriate.

Provide timely input and feedback on any BHA policy consultations

At least annually, provide input to the list of speakers and topics that the BHA maintains for use by other groups.

Where possible, link with any local student societies affiliated to The National Federation of Atheist, Humanist and Secular Student Societies (AHS).

Work constructively with other local organisations - humanist, secular, religious and non-religious - where there are common interests.

Data reporting and confidentiality

Provide to the BHA:

Annually: data on numbers of members and registered supporters and typical meeting attendance.

Annually (and within one month of any change): names and contact details of group Officers, Focal Point/Authorised individuals (to ensure efficient communications)

Annually (and within one month of any change): details of changes to meeting venues and any other information for inclusion on the BHA website

At all times, safeguard the confidentiality of membership information, and any other information communicated in confidence by the BHA.

Constitution

Have in place a written group constitution (which may be short and simple) including provision for:

- Elections for group Officers at least every 2 years, with all group members given adequate notice of the meeting at which they can vote, and

- A means to refuse or withdraw group membership from any member who fails to support the constitution or Partnership Agreement, or who brings the BHA or the group into disrepute.

Other affiliations

The group may choose to be affiliated to the National Secular Society, United Nations Association, local CVS and/or other similar bodies.

The group will not affiliate to, or publicly support, any political party.

In the unlikely event of conflict between activities in support of any other organisations to which the group is affiliated or associated and those in support of the BHA's aims, values and policies, the Partners group will give priority to this agreement.

Review

Constructively engage with the BHA in periodic reviews of how well this agreement is working in practice as seen from both sides, and agree action on any improvements identified.

The agreement may be established either by exchange of emails or by both parties signing below two paper copies of the agreement, one of which should be retained by the BHA and the other by the group.

Signed/dated for the BHA by:

Andrew Copson 12.6.12

Signed/dated for the Partner group by:

Alan Palmer 15.5.12

Issued by: Andrew Copson, BHA Chief Executive, 30 Sep 2011

