



The Scottish Secular Society

Past, present and future.

Charlie Lynch

The Historical Context

- The changing nature of secular organisations.
- The 'heroic age' – the late nineteenth century.
- C.20th – National Secular Society and Leicester Secular Society are the only survivors. Glasgow Secular Society finally defunct c.1966.
- Early 21st century- the revival. NSS reformed under the leadership of Terry Sanderson. Change of emphasis.
- Formation and gradual appearance of new secular societies. Scottish Secular Society, Edinburgh Secular Society, Atheist Ireland, Western Isles Secular Society...

The Scottish Secular Society

- Founded in 2014 by Caroline Lynch.
- Emerged from a more informal group of activists, chiefly parents concerned about Christian activities in schools.
- Indicative of the changing political and religious climate of Scotland.
- 2014- Opt in petition presented to Scottish Parliament.
- 2016 onwards: Organisation building. Professionalisation drive led by Douglas McLellan and Megan Crawford.



Board members in 2016 with guest speaker, Prof William Naphy

Core values

national secular society

THE SECULAR CHARTER

The National Secular Society campaigns for a secular democracy, where:

The National Secular Society campaigns for the separation of religion and state and promotes secularism as the best means to create a society in which people of all religions or none can live together fairly and cohesively. The NSS sees secularism — the position that the state should be separate from religion — as an essential element in promoting equality between all citizens. Our campaigning and policy objectives are guided by our Secular Charter.

- 1** There is no established state religion.
- 2** Everyone is equal before the law, regardless of religion, belief or non-belief.
- 3** Freedom of expression is not restricted by religious considerations.
- 4** The judicial process is not hindered or replaced by religious codes or processes.
- 5** Religion plays no role in state-funded education, whether through religious affiliation of schools, curriculum setting, organised worship, religious instruction, pupil selection or employment practices.
- 6** The state does not express religious beliefs or preferences and does not intervene in the setting of religious doctrine.
- 7** The state does not engage in, fund or promote religious activities or practices.
- 8** There is freedom of belief, non-belief and to renounce or change religion.
- 9** Public and publicly-funded service provision does not discriminate on grounds of religion, belief or non-belief.
- 10** Individuals and groups are neither accorded privilege nor disadvantaged because of their religion, belief or non-belief.

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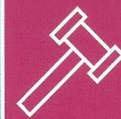
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What does the SSS do?

- Campaigning.



Prof Brateman and Spencer Fildes at the Scottish Parliament in 2016 – SSS block at Glasgow Pride 2016

Supporting



Opting out of Religious Observance



Lewis swimming pool controversy

Think Tank



Human Rights and Brexit discussion in Glasgow, 2016

Education and Outreach



Speaker Meetings at Annie Besant Lodge

Our core problems

- The Human Resources problem. We do not at present have the level of voluntary participation needed to maintain our level of activity.
- The funding problem. The SSS currently has no external funding and this adversely affects our functioning as an organisation.
- The gender problem: Like many secular groups women are under-represented on board and in the membership. We need to work to address this issue.

The Future

- Secularism and the Common Good. Some keywords: Citizenship, Collective Action, Participation.
- Scottish secularism needs to be 'outward looking'...
- The need to attract funding and what this entails.
- Charity status.
- Sustainability. How can we plan for a long journey?