

STATEMENT BY SOUTH EAST LONDON HUMANIST GROUP (SELHuG) July 2018

## **It is time for BBC to include Humanists on Thought for the Day**

We are calling on the BBC to open their flagship reflective slot *Thought for the Day* to humanists.

Religion doesn't hold a monopoly on ethical worldviews. There is another mainstream tradition as old as religion, called humanism.

Humanism is a positive, everyday philosophy which encourages us to value ourselves and recognise that other people are as valuable as we are. That has deep implications for the way we treat each other and our environment.

The BBC is failing in its legal duty to treat non-religious beliefs equally with religious beliefs, 'belief' being defined as "a collective belief in, or other adherence to, a systemised set of ethical or philosophical principles or of mystical or transcendental doctrines" (Communications Act 2003).

The BBC is also failing its remit to reflect the diversity of beliefs of its audience and the wider population. Over half the British population do not belong to any religion<sup>1</sup> and around half of those have a humanist worldview<sup>2</sup>. In Scotland where Humanist weddings are legal, more people choose them than ceremonies conducted by the Church of Scotland or any other denomination or faith. Amongst under-30 year olds in the UK, 70% have no faith<sup>3</sup>.

To argue, as James Purnell (Director, Radio and Education, BBC) does, that non-religious views are sufficiently represented across 'the whole of the BBC's output' is to miss the point – that humanism is an equal partner in the 'belief' category.

We call on the BBC to address this injustice and include humanists, and holders of other non-religious beliefs, on Thought for the Day.

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<sup>1</sup> 53% describe themselves as having no religion: [British Social Attitudes Survey's 2016 report](#), published 2017

<sup>2</sup> Half of those who do not follow a religion say they hold humanist beliefs: [Humanists UK survey on beliefs and values](#) carried out by YouGov, published in June 2017

<sup>3</sup> 70% of young Britons (16 – 29 year olds) identify as having no religion: ['Europe's Young Adults and Religion: findings from the European Social Survey'](#), a report by St Mary's University, Twickenham and the Institut Catholique de Paris (ICP) published March 2018.