

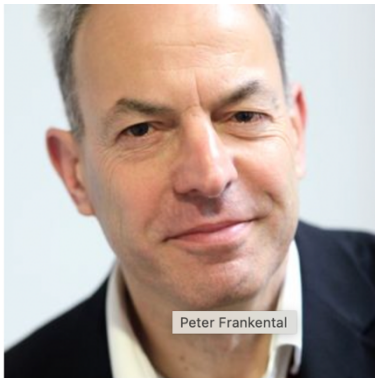


# North East Humanists

## Monthly Bulletin — May 2022

### RECAP OF RECENT NEH EVENTS

#### The Premier League in the Eye of the Sportswashing Storm



Peter Frankental

##### About me

I am the Economic Affairs Programme Director at Amnesty International UK. My expertise includes business impacts on human rights, international standards applicable to companies, and the civil and criminal liability of corporations. I have written of a number of business and human rights publications and I am a frequent media commentator.

On Thursday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, [Peter Frankental](#) joined us via Zoom to give a talk on Sportswashing and how that general phenomenon describes the recent takeover of Newcastle United by a team of investors who are backed by the Saudi government's wealth fund. Peter is the Economic Affairs Programme Director at Amnesty International and was extremely knowledgeable about the situation.

Peter started his talk by noting that the NUFC situation is basically at its end for now. The club has been purchased and that's not likely to change any time soon. So, he thought it would be best to trace the journey up to this point since Amnesty International has been involved in this from the beginning.

First, Peter offered a quick definition of the term we are talking about, which accords well with the one currently on Wikipedia:

*[Sportswashing](#) is “the practice of an individual, group, corporation, or nation-state using sport to improve their tarnished reputation, through hosting a sporting event, the purchase or sponsorship of sporting teams, or by participation in the sport itself. At nation-state level, sportswashing has been used to direct attention away from a poor human rights record and corruption scandals within government.”*

Peter noted three classic examples of this. The 1934 World Cup held in Italy as a boost to Mussolini. The 1936 Olympic Games held in Berlin as propaganda for Nazi Germany. And the 1974 World Cup held in Argentina while its military dictatorship was throwing people into the sea.

Amnesty International's primary reason for existing is to help expose violations of Human Rights, so when the Newcastle takeover was proposed, the group knew this was an opportunity they could not miss. Fortunately for their cause, this was an issue that journalists also wanted to talk about because of the [Assassination of Jamal Khashoggi](#) who was a fellow journalist.

The publicity raised by Amnesty put Newcastle United and local politicians in the eye of the storm. As a result, Newcastle MP Chi Onwurah hosted a public event on

4 May 2020 that included the fiancé of Khashoggi as well as representatives from Amnesty. Thousands of people attended online. The vast majority of them were in favour of the takeover because they have been desperate to see the club do well.

The government ordered a fan-led review of the issues, while the media and Amnesty kept the situation in the news. The focus was switched, however, from Newcastle United, to the Premier League. This takeover raised serious questions about the [Owners' and Directors' Test](#), which is meant to outline requirements that would prohibit an individual from becoming an owner or director of a club. Amnesty asked the PL to incorporate Human Rights into their ODT, which generated a lot of media attention. Eventually, the PL met with Amnesty to discuss what Human Rights compliance test standards could be considered.

That is basically where we are now. But since a majority of clubs must vote to approve whatever rules gets proposed, Peter thought that it was unlikely to actually happen. He noted that Turkey don't vote for Christmas! And other club owners have issues they don't want to be examined, such as when Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich [funded illegal Jewish settlers](#) in what has been considered a war crime.

All of this has knocked the idea on the head that sports can be considered as separate from politics. Sports is far too dominated by business and money, which are both inextricably linked with politics. One big question was on everyone's mind at the end of Peter's talk. What can fans do about this?

Peter noted that fans can exert pressure. See, for example, how Mike Ashley was pushed out of Newcastle, and how the [European Super League](#) was squashed.

Since fans can have some effect on things, this means they have some responsibility. The purchase of any commodity has consequences. However, Peter was quick to point out that the Government and the football institutions are the ones who bear far more responsibility. The players are not the ones at fault. They are often told to pipe down. So, fans ought to direct their efforts towards the right groups. For example, the home end at a Crystal Palace game recently put up a big display about Saudi Human Rights abuses. NUFC could do the same through fan sites to keep reminding the world of what is happening. Every example is a blow against Human Rights abuses. For updated information on this, you can always see Amnesty's website for [their report on Saudi Arabia](#) or other countries.



## UPCOMING NEH ACTIVITIES


### The Secret of Life and Where Type 2 Diabetes Fits In Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup> with Professor Roy Taylor

Do you ever wonder what happens to your food after you eat it? Did you know that your body sees little of this food? There is so much chat about nutrition and so little


understanding of what is really going on.


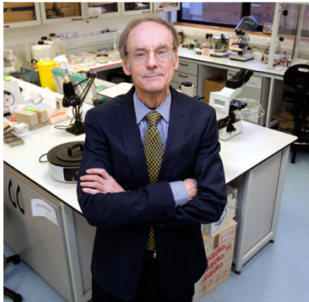
And then there is the scourge of our age — type 2 diabetes. Newcastle research over the last 20 years has pieced together the puzzle of why people get this condition and how it is possible to escape from it. They have used special MRI scanning to see what is happening inside you. All of this has led to the current NHS programme being rolled out aiming for remission of type 2 diabetes.

Roy Taylor is Professor of Medicine and Metabolism at Newcastle University and Consultant at Newcastle Hospitals NHS Trust. He founded the Newcastle Magnetic Resonance Centre in 2006 to develop innovative research techniques, and by 2011 he was able to show that excess fat within liver and pancreas caused type 2 diabetes. The low-calorie liquid diet was developed as a research tool to show what was causing high sugar levels, but it proved so successful that he then tested it as a treatment for type 2 diabetes. He has written many scientific papers as well as an easy-read book about life without diabetes. Professor Taylor also developed the system now used throughout the United Kingdom for screening for diabetic eye disease, with major reduction in blindness due to diabetes across the UK.



## The Secret of Life and Where Type 2 Diabetes Fits In





**A Public Lecture by Professor Roy Taylor  
7 to 9 PM, Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup>**

**Who:** Professor Roy Taylor, Newcastle University

**When:** Thursday May 19th at 7:00 PM

**What:** A 45-minute talk followed by Q&A

**In-Person:** Tyneside Irish Centre, NE1 4SG. Doors open at 6:30. £1 for NEH members. £2 for non-members. This includes tea, coffee, and light refreshments.

**Online:** Zoom opens at 6:45 PM. Register using the Eventbrite link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-secret-of-life-and-where-type-2-diabetes-fits-in-tickets-327172229947>

If you prefer not to use Eventbrite, you can send an email to Susan Walker at [northeasthumanist@gmail.com](mailto:northeasthumanist@gmail.com) and she will send you a Zoom link directly.

Anyone is welcome to our online events. Whilst we do not charge for joining these, we are a registered charity that you may donate a few pounds to by using [the button at the bottom of our homepage](#). We suggest £3 for these donations but all amounts are greatly appreciated.

## OTHER NEH NEWS

### Update from Microgrant Recipient Ninebanks

Regular readers of the bulletin will know that from July 2021 until the end of January 2022, North East Humanists offered a [Community Fund](#) where microgrants of up to £500 were offered to local charities. We donated more than £5000 through this fund and work on the projects is still being completed. Recently, we received an update from one of our awardees — the Ninebanks Church and Community Hall Group.

Ninebanks operates a public building for the rural community of West Allen Parish in the North Pennines (2011 population of 279). Their hall plays an important part in village life because they have no shop, school, pub, or public transport. The hall is now the only place where the local people can come together. It is where all local events happen, including bingo nights, ceilidhs, keep fit classes, and the monthly “pop up pub” social evenings. It is the venue for birthday parties and wakes, the polling station, and a public meeting place. Unfortunately, their existing kitchen was aging and in need of refurbishment to be brought up to modern standards. Our grant of a few hundred pounds was given to help them install a new oven and hob.

Recently, Helen Manson wrote to us on behalf of the Ninebanks Church and Community Hall Group to report that all of the building work has been completed and the kitchen equipment covered by our grant has been installed. Helen sent us the following photos of their lovely new kitchen and asked us to please pass on thanks to all of our members for their kind donation to this refurbishment project.



## OTHER HUMANIST NEWS

### New Strategy for Humanists UK

Recently, Humanists UK released their new [2025 Strategy document](#). Having carefully reviewed their aims and ambitions, taken stock of all their activities, their resources, a changing world, and the best routes to success in their campaigns, the Board arrived at a new strategic framework for championing rational thinking and kindness in the years to come. This strategy is organised around three main goals:

- Strategic Aim 1 — More people knowing what humanism is and more non-religious people with humanist beliefs and values recognising themselves as humanists.
- Strategic Aim 2 — More non-religious people living happier, more confident, and more ethical lives.
- Strategic Aim 3 — More people enjoying greater freedom of thought, of expression, and of choice over their own lives.



As a local Humanist branch, we have developed [our own strategic plan](#), which we are happy to see is well aligned with Humanists UK. For more on how HUK developed their goals and how they intend to implement their plan, be sure to see [their full document](#). It's a quick read, and it will likely give you lots of ideas on things we can all do to make this world a better and more humane one.

### Faith Under Fire on BBC Africa Eye

Steve Hurd, Chairperson of the Uganda Humanist Schools Trust, alerted us to this 20-minute BBC documentary about the damaging effects of some religious cult groups in Uganda and the growth of secular views among young people. In the show, Robert Magara gives a good account of the religious cult massacre at Kanungu and his motivation to start Kanungu Humanist Primary School, which does not discriminate among children according to the beliefs of their parents. Kanungu, like other Humanist Schools in Uganda, offers all children an education based on reason, compassion, and tolerance.



[<<< Click here to watch the entire show >>>](#)

## Latest Issue of Humanistically Speaking



North East Humanists are affiliated with *Humanistically Speaking*, which is a monthly magazine published since 2019 by members of the South Central England Humanist Network. You can subscribe to this free magazine and view all previous issues at [their website](#). Their latest [April](#) issue focuses on the drugs debate, with lots of passionate disagreement in the different features. The issue also includes items on UFO stories in Nevada, a famous prologue by Bertrand Russell, a reflection on doing the right thing, a book review on truth, and a profile of the humanistic social reformer Robert Owen.

As a reminder, the editors and support people of *Humanistically Speaking* are dedicated volunteers and they offer their services for free, but they still have expenses to pay, services to cover, leaflets to print, events to attend, website fees to pay, and travel expenses to meet. Please help them continue the work they are doing by donating to *Humanistically Speaking*. Whatever you can afford is just fine.

Account name: Humanistically Speaking  
Account number: 3344 4562  
Sort Code: 30-98-97

## CONTACT US FOR MORE

### North East Humanists

All of the latest information about North East Humanists is available on our [website](#). You can also follow us on social media via [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#). Interacting with us there is a great way to help spread the news about Humanism.

Please consider a membership with us if you do not already have one. You can [join NEH](#) for as little as £6 per year. Our fees are very low, but they really do support so much local grassroots work, as we hope you see in these bulletins. This month, we are excited to welcome new member Ann Pyle to NEH!

The monthly bulletin is free for members and supporters of North East Humanists. If that's more of a commitment than you can make, just [sign up to our email list](#). For NEH members without email, the bulletin is printed by Mike and Moira Turner and sent by post. Contact them at 0191 272 8376 to arrange this if you need it.

### Durham Humanist Group

This local house group is run by Susan Walker. Contact her at 0191 384 1432 or [susan.humanist@gmail.com](mailto:susan.humanist@gmail.com) if you would like to attend events here.

### Teesside Humanist Group

If you would like to join this group, please [contact us](#) for more details. You can also follow them on Twitter [@Teeshumanists](#) or like the [Teesside Humanists Facebook Group](#) run by Terry Waites and Ben Collier.

### Humanist Funerals, Baby Naming Ceremonies, and Weddings

Anyone who wants advice on how to organise these should contact Les Milne at 0795 267 1533 or go to [www.northeast-humanists.org.uk/ceremonies.html](http://www.northeast-humanists.org.uk/ceremonies.html).