

A QUIET REVOLUTION Trustees' Annual Report 1 July 2019 - 30 June 2020









CHANGING THE WORLD ONE CEREMONY AT A TIME

ABOUT US

A Quiet Revolution was launched in 2016. Since then, the team has worked across Scotland and beyond to support individuals, couples and families with rites of passage.

Our purpose

- 1) The advancement of the philosophical belief and the promotion of the values of Humanism.
- 2) The relief of those in need by reason of age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage.

We aim to achieve the first purpose by composing and conducting rites of passage to support individuals, couples, families and their extended family – significant others, friends, neighbours, professional and volunteer supporters and communities of interest – at key life stages. We promote positive attitudes, encourage open conversations and carry out legal ceremonies and rites of passage for major life events from birth to death and everything in between. We have built a small fund and offer funding to support individuals, couples and families in need to cover the costs of rites of passage for key moments in life.

Our values

- Think for ourselves about what is right and wrong, based on reason, fairness and respect for others
- Recognise the dignity of individuals
- Respect and promote freedom, democracy and human rights
- Work together for the common good
- Celebrate human achievement, progress and potential
- Find meaning, beauty, and joy in the one life we have, without the need for an afterlife
- Use empathy and compassion to make the world a better place for everyone.

How we apply our values

- We embrace broad spiritual thinking in our work recognising our innate human spiritual selves.
- We are curious and open-minded.
- We are honest with ourselves and others in a considered way.
- We are thoughtful, reflective and aim to embody integrity in our work.
- We promote diversity and not just tolerance but understanding and celebration of otherness.
- We aim to treat others with courtesy, dignity and respect.
- We treat information shared in the context of our work with appropriate confidentiality.
- We pay regard to the law and where we're not clear about boundaries, take professional advice.
- We work within the bounds of our skills and abilities, always stretching ourselves but never at the expense or risk of others and seek guidance where we feel we're out of our depth.
- We will offer and accept feedback, learning as we go.

Our principles and standards

These principles and standards aim to help guide celebrants who carry out legal ceremonies under the Marriage Scotland Act 1977 with permission from the National Records of Scotland.

- The principles of Humanism should be reflected throughout the ceremony.
- Celebrants should be dignified, legal and decent, acting with respect and decorum.
- Equality, diversity and inclusion should be at the heart of every ceremony, with proper regard to gender, identity, race and other personal characteristics covered by EDI.
- Celebrants should take care to balance solemnity and humour and carefully ensure that their style, tone and language are deemed appropriate by those they support by checking in on scripts.
- Celebrants are entering into a contract for services and they must deliver in line with our packages and fees. They should never charge more than the agreed rate.
- The celebrant should not offer any additional services that are in conflict with the role of a Humanist celebrant.
- The celebrant should be careful not to undermine their important role or the reputation of the charity by their behaviour before, during or after the ceremony.
- If in doubt, it is the responsibility of the celebrant to sound out other celebrants or Trustees on the appropriateness of actions, settings, interactions and scripts.

Any celebrant who behaves in a way that is considered counter to the Code of Conduct may lose their right to practice as a Humanist celebrant affiliated to A Quiet Revolution.

Structure, governance and management

Governing document

Our charity is governed by a Constitution. This is available on request.

Trustee recruitment and appointments

All Trustees share A Quiet Revolution's Humanist approach to the promotion of equality and diversity and the compassionate support of people who wish to shape and create their own rites of passage and life experiences. Our Trustees are:

Jane Alcorn, Chair



Jane has been Chair of *A Quiet Revolution* since its launch in 2017. She has worked across local authorities and the independent sector for 30 years in social work, education and health services for children, young people and their families. In 2015 she transitioned into self-employment, working across child and adult care with a particular interest in learning and development. She continues to do this work at present. In 2018, Jane decided to embark on a new venture when she moved to the far north of Scotland to run a small Bed and Breakfast with her husband.

Maggie O'Hara Watt, Trustee and Treasurer



Maggie joined the charity in 2018 and in 2020, Maggie took on the role as Treasurer of the charity.

Maggie is a retired health professional with 40 years' experience of providing care to people unable to access routine services due to health, behavioural, communication and other difficulties. Maggie contributed to the development of Forth Valley Dignity and Respect at work policy.

Erinclare Scrutton, Trustee



Erin has been a Trustee since 2017. She has taught women samba for almost 30 years. She started Scotland's longest running women's samba bands: SheBoom from Glasgow and Beat That from Stirling. She has performed with Jools Holland, Horse, the Pet Shop Boys. Erin has had a therapeutic practice, holding qualifications in body work and kinesiology. She has studied Graphic Design and is currently studying for and building her own Contemporary Art Practice.

Jacquie Winning, Trustee



Jacquie joined AQR in 2018. She is a third sector leader with extensive experience of supporting disadvantaged people and communities with vision and hearing loss, homelessness and welfare. She is Manager of the Sensory Centre in Forth Valley. She works with diverse clients, improving the quality of life. She is skilled in coaching, management, leadership, project management and customer service. She has a Master of Arts (MA) in English Language and Literature from the University of Glasgow.

Achievements and performance

2019-20 was A Quiet Revolution's third full year of activity. The charity continues to promote Humanism, deliver ceremonies and rites of passage and generate funds from member donations to support people in need.

Covid-19/20

At the start of this reporting year, July 2019, none of us could have foreseen how the year would play out. We experienced 8 months of normal activity then a final quarter flurry of busy-ness from March 2020 when *Covid Lockdown* came into our lexicon and ceremony restrictions came into play. We became au fait with checking government restrictions every 3 weeks and adjusting to social distancing, mask-wearing, sanitising, Zoom meetings and PPE. Travel and social restrictions came into play. Celebrants were busy not delivering ceremonies but cancelling and rearranging them. For some couples, the desire to marry trumped the need for a crowd. For others, best-laid plans were rescheduled several times as hopes of 'normal' faded time after time. For some, a final hurrah which would have seen a hundred or so gather at a funeral to pay tribute to a life became a small and sorry affair of limited numbers and quiet stories. Technology came into its own and even the technophobes adapted to watch and toast ceremonies webcast from crematoria and woodlands.

Glorious gatherings of fascinator flaunting,
confetti-throwing wedding guests and
black-packed crowded crematoria gave way to
sparsely populated, socially distanced murmurs of
events

All celebrants readied to deliver funerals and we decided to recruit additional funeral celebrants to build capacity. Our invitation met with no response (till later in the year, outwith this reporting cycle.)

Celebrants and Trustees moved their own meetings online. Barbara attended Zoom funeral training and the Charity agreed to fund further training for all celebrants. By the close of the 19/20 year, in June 2020, training was booked for July and we extended the offer to participate to celebrants outside our network.

Charity development

We set up a website, team email and social media accounts for the charity:

Website: <u>A Quiet Revolution.</u> Email: <u>team@aquietrevolution.org</u> Twitter: twitter.com/teamAQR

Instagram: instagram.com/quietrevolutionaries Facebook: facebook.com/aquietrevolution

Disbursing funds

Living Well Dying Well

In February 2020, we funded a workshop for end of life planning hosted by Living Well Dying Well. This charity is developing a network of death doulas across the UK and promotes active engagement in end of life. This was their first visit to Scotland. Our funding enabled people to attend who would not otherwise be able to afford it. We also offered to cover doulas costs for supporting individuals at the end of life.

Supporting ceremonies for families in need

As in the previous year, we made contact with organisations to offer to cover the costs of a celebrant for those in need. We still await applications:

- Fuze Foundation Fuze work across Scotland and some of our celebrants trained with them originally. A large group of celebrants, they carry out more funerals than AQR. We offered to help pay the costs of celebrants to provide a funeral for families in need. This gesture was also about building relations within the Humanist community; supporting each other.
- Improving the Cancer Journey Glasgow they were interested in our offer to support the cost of celebrants for funerals for advance planning. We suggested a process for administering this but did not hear back.
- Accord Hospice Paisley one of the celebrants spoke to the Hospice social worker who was delighted to accept. She took the offer to the nurses who go out into the community to work with terminally ill patients. We await their requests for help.
- Beatson one of the celebrants used connections and made an offer of support.
 No response yet.
- Simon Community one of our celebrants made an offer of support. No response yet.
- Maggie's Centre another celebrant connection and offer of help. No response.
- Rough Sleepers Project another celebrant connection to offer support to workers who connect with rough sleepers and others who are vulnerable and often die with no support.
- Gift of a Wedding we linked with the charity that helps organise weddings for people who are terminally ill.

C19 support for funerals/memorials

We reached out to two companies to support Covid funerals:

- Fosters Scotland's biggest independent with branches across Scotland)
- Caledonia Cremations the government funded not-for profit, serving Govanhill, one of Scotland's areas of multiple deprivation.

The celebrant role and the NRS

In August 2019, the NRS introduced new guidance affecting celebrants. As part of the change management process, they contacted our charity asking for information about our approach and philosophy.

Celebrants apply for permission to act as a Marriage Officer (legally solemnising a wedding ceremony). Celebrants apply to the National Records of Scotland (NRS) on an event-by-event basis, with the Charity's support. Permissions are given to 'faith groups' under section 26 of the 1977 Act and section 135 of the 2004 Act. The definition of a "religious or belief body" is "an organised group of people..." "...the principal object (or one of the principal objects) of which is to uphold or promote philosophical beliefs and which meets regularly for that purpose".

The notes below formed the core of the response.

Philosophy

The Trustees and celebrants who form A Quiet Revolution and its membership, share a core philosophy that we recognise and refer to as 'Humanism'. We're all on the same page in terms of Humanism being about honouring and respecting each other as human beings, taking responsibility for our own actions and not ascribing any actions or outcomes of our actions to a 'higher being'. (Individuals may identify more or less strongly with some of the values on the spectrum of Humanism. We invite visitors to our website to do a <u>quiz</u> to help them assess how they align with our values.)

We are interested in emotional and spiritual wellbeing being achieved by care and mutual respect. We aim not to discriminate against any individual. We aim to craft ceremonies that create safe, meaningful and respectful spaces for marking important rites of passage that don't exclude anyone. We explore these issues whenever we talk, connect and meet.

Conversations about philosophy

Here's how we, the AQR family, connect:

- AQR Trustees: our Trustees link on topics by email. We meet for the AGM in person or online. We discuss governance, finance, policy and administration – in terms of reporting to OSCR, the charities regulator – as well as any philosophical 'matters arising'.
- AQR celebrants meet quarterly as a minimum. We're all based around Glasgow and tend to connect informally too to discuss issues of interest connected to rites of passage and the celebrant's role... sharing ideas, issues, asking each other questions to improve our practice, supporting one another. These can be practical as well as philosophical issues.
- AQR family: the individuals, couples and families we support are considered 'part
 of the family'. We might marry a couple then carry out a family funeral for them,
 then marry another member of the family. We have been asked by couples we've
 married to carry out baby-naming ceremonies further on in their life's journey.

When we meet with couples, individuals and families we support, we have rich and deep conversations about personal meaning, philosophies and why they've sought Humanist support. We ask questions to understand and explore values and beliefs in the process of creating scripts to conduct ceremonies.

As celebrants, we are all unique and each brings a signature style. However our Code of Conduct, Principles and Standards form the baseline for our approach to ceremonies and reflect our shared philosophy. We will share core scripts and approaches to creating rites of passage and support each other's CPD.

We all have our own way of expressing ourselves and importantly we'll use the words of the people we are supporting to help ensure our ceremonies express their essence, *their* unique and authentic voice, to create a genuine, relatable experience for them. We have many exchanges with those we support to achieve that authentic voice.

Philosophy vs faith

Humanism is not a religion. It's a growing movement of people with a shared philosophy. We're not trying to unite our small families into one 'united church' and we're not trying to build a congregation or convert others' beliefs. Our aim is to offer quiet, intimate, authentic, bespoke, spiritual/emotional support for important life milestones. We specifically *don't* behave like churches and have no desire to replace their ways of being and doing. We're not about crusading, missionary approaches to building membership and cathedrals.

Our questions for NRS

In submitting information to respond to the questions posed by the NRS, we had our own questions. We were not clear what the purpose of their enquiry was. We got in touch to suggest we would be very happy to work together with the NRS to help develop meaningful KPIs or performance measures.

We were intrigued by the questions the NRS raised around Humanist practices and membership. As stated in the final paragraph of the previous section, A Quiet Revolution is not trying to build membership. We remain unclear what the NRS thinks 'good' looks like. More celebrants? Fewer? More ceremonies? Fewer? Humanism is the relative newcomer, up against Christianity and ancient religions. We wondered if the law-makers intention was to influence how Humanists operate and self-define. We also wondered - and asked the question - whether religious bodies are subject to the same level of scrutiny and question. We were interested in exploring these issues in discussion with the NRS and other Humanist and faith groups and have made that offer.

We are keen to know what's driving the NRS' line of enquiry. Their guidance states 'There is provision, not yet in force, in the 1977 and 2004 Acts that bodies must meet "qualifying requirements" which may be laid down by the Scottish Ministers in Regulations, before being prescribed. No qualifying requirements are yet in place: the Scottish Ministers will need to consult with religious and belief bodies and other interested parties before laying any down. As a result, the decision on whether to prescribe a religious or belief body which has made a request is entirely at the discretion of the Scottish Ministers."

This feels like a potentially significant issue currently resolved.

Celebrant activities

In 2019-20 our celebrants were Barbara Chalmers, Irene Edgar, James Oakley, Kenny Gray, Jess McEnaney and Jude Williams. Irene indicated her intention to retire in the Autumn of 2020. As Covid unravelled our world, Irene agreed to continue with her commitments now rescheduled into 2021. (Upon her notice of retirement, the Trustees took the opportunity to invite Irene to join as a Trustee to retain her valuable experience within the charity.)

At the request of Trustees, this year celebrants share a couple case studies in this report:

BARBARA CHALMERS

Barbara usually delivers 6-12 ceremonies a year. Beyond the three summer weddings, she delivered only two funerals. Covid restrictions meant rescheduling other ceremonies into 2021. Ceremonies took place in Perth, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

TYING THE KNOT - AGAIN!



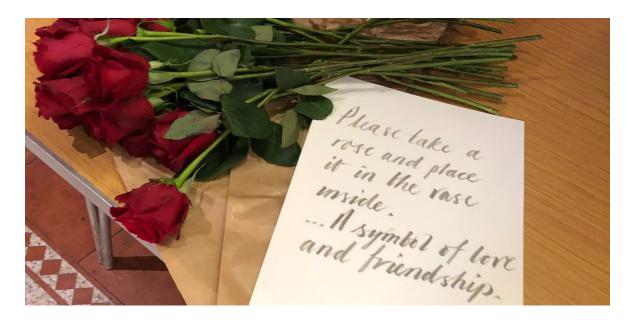


"What is most bizarre about this story is that it is NOT unique. I married Jane and Simon in their beautiful garden at their lovely home. We 'tied the knot' with two tartan ribbons. Incredibly, at some point during the reception, someone untied the knot! When Jane and Simon discovered the strips of fabric, both felt so upset. They invited me to return to their garden a few weeks later in our 'civvies' to reform the knot. We stood in the same spot and together, we recreated the knot. All was right again in the world.

"Bizarrely, it wasn't the first time I'd come across this. Last year I did a Renewal of Vows ceremony for an American and Scottish couple who had had a small wedding in the US and wanted to relive the day with a crowd back in Scotland. They had tied a knot at their US ceremony and wanted it on the signing table for their renewal of vows. Unbelievably, once again, venue staff had untied it for their arrival. Fortunately, once again, I was there to offer comfort in a symbolic gesture of re-tying to right the wrong." BARBARA

"We can't thank you enough. I cannot believe how much detail you had captured and how well you grasped and relayed our story. It was so entirely 'us'. A perfect day." Simon & Jane - my first couple who have elected NOT to check the script in advance!

FINAL FLING FUNERAL



"90 year old Doreen's funeral in the local hall was entirely what Doreen and her girls wanted it to be. That's a major benefit of facing mortality, accepting the inevitable and planning end-of-life. I had sat around the kitchen table with Doreen and her daughters around 4 years ago and taken notes. We'd had a lovely time, hearing her stories, showing her how easy it was to find Charles Aznavour singing *She* on YouTube, reliving her past. She'd picked her tunes... like *Give Me the Moonlight*, her high-kicking finale, celebrating one of her life's highlights, meeting Frankie Vaughn. The family didn't want to go to a crematorium, so we hired the local hall. They wanted to carry their mum, in a beautiful 'hand-knitted' bamboo coffin (celebrating all Doreen's hand-knits). So they did. They wanted to sit in a semi-circle and see each other, not sit in rows facing the front unseeing. They wanted old friends to recount their stories live, snottery, wobbly voiced. (Even close-family-friend, Sandy, a famous author, quite the seasoned presenter and much-travelled storyteller couldn't get through his tribute to Doreen - a great leveller.) I just had to hold the space. Make it safe for people to be raw. That was the kind of day it was. Real." BARBARA

[&]quot;What an orator!" Carol, Care Home owner

[&]quot;Without doubt, the best funeral I have ever been to" Anne, neighbour

[&]quot;All the options you offered helped us create a really unique send-off . We can't thank you enough. It was so mum."

Doreen's daughters

JAMES OAKLEY





"I have been absolutely honoured to conduct a total of ten ceremonies this year. Nine weddings in locations as individual as my couples, all beautiful and all unique... in a Brewery, Castle, Hotel, Seaside, and outside on the family Farm. And one funeral at Paisley Woodside Crematorium." JAMES





"We would both like to thank you for delivering a wonderful ceremony for our wedding. It was perfect. We had lots of guests tell us that." Katie & Cammy

"We just want to say a massive thank you for everything yesterday. We will be definitely recommending you to anyone that will be getting married in the future." Alison & Ryan

"Thank you again for yesterday, and everything you did in the run up. We had so many compliments on the ceremony with our guests telling us it was the best ceremony they've been to. Your support, guidance and attention to detail have been fantastic in the planning and it was just exactly how we wanted it." Sophie & Mark

"The first funeral service I had written and conducted, I had married Karen to her husband David just over a year previously and it was one of her dying wishes to ask if could also conduct her funeral service and so it was a great honour to be asked. I offered to meet her in hospital, but her condition deteriorated too rapidly to make that possible." JAMES

"I would like to express my thanks for all your kind words at the funeral. Many friends have commented how it was moving and they felt that it was delivered personally and very fitting for Karen." David Black

IRENE EDGAR







During this period Irene performed five weddings - four in Glasgow and one in Falkirk - and two funerals.

"Because of Covid I had six cancelled weddings which are rescheduled for 2021. The cancelling of weddings was extremely traumatic for couples and one in particular. This couple booked me two years before the wedding as they wanted to be married exactly five years after the day that they met. Every detail was managed until it was perfect including the hiring of vintage cars that had been important to the groom's father – just to sit at the door of the venue. They should have been married on the Saturday after the first lockdown which was of course cancelled.

"My last wedding on the eve of 'Lockdown' was in Airth Castle and immediately after the wedding the hotel closed. On a personal note, my children were horrified that I was doing a wedding and were still trying to talk me out of it while I was driving to Airth Castle." IRENE

"What a pleasure it was to have Irene as part of our wedding, both in the lead up and on the day itself. We were both struck by how warm and fun she was, making sure we felt at ease and enjoyed ourselves, as well as all of our guests! Lots of people commented on how lovely she was and how it seemed Greig and I had known her for a long time! Thank you so much for bringing sheer joy and happiness to what was truly the best day of our lives." Fiona & Greig

"I just wanted to thank you for marrying us and making the day so special. It went really well Even with the kids there! The poems went down well and you did a sterling job reading them. We were so happy how it all went." Chris and Michelle

JUDE WILLIAMS







Over the year, Jude conducted three weddings, three funerals and one honouring ceremony. Seven weddings have been postponed due to Covid. Ceremonies took place in Comrie Croft, Perthshire, a family garden, under an oak tree, by the graveside and in two crematoriums.

"Thank you so much for such a wonderful send off for our friend today."

"I cannot express to you the comfort and joy your words brought. It was such a beautiful service and everyone who attended commented on how amazing you were."

"Thank you for the time you spent putting together everything and somehow managing to speak as if you had known her yourself."

"You have really helped me this week more than you can know." Pauline

"Thanks Jude, a great piece of writing by you. We have much happiness. I love what you did with the Louis Armstrong words. Thank you very much indeed. Love D"

"Thank you so much for all your hard work on Betty's service. I love the finished work. It sounds just like Mum. We couldn't have found a more perfect person for the job. Take care, lovely, and a big thank you again. Love T&R"

"Wow. Just wow. What a lot of work you've put in, Jude. I think it's totally perfect. It does her so proud. You've incorporated everything that we told you and I LOVE the quotes from 'It's a Wonderful Life', what a brilliant idea. You are a genius as far as I'm concerned! My favourite bit? 'Scattering Yuletide expletives in her quest for specs.' "J

KENNY GRAY







Kenny conducted one wedding in 2019/20. His May wedding was rescheduled to March 2021 and his October wedding has been postponed until 2022.

"This images above are taken from the marriage I conducted in November on the beautiful banks of Loch Lomond. This was my cousin Margaret's wedding. It was the third time the wedding had been planned due to Covid. The guest list had to be reduced to 20 and the bridal party went from nine bridesmaids to one. Nevertheless, a lovely day was had by all." KENNY

"A magical day."

JESS THOMPSON







Jess delivered her first ceremony in Keady, County Armagh, Northern Ireland in 2019.

"This lovely line up is from my first ceremony, honouring the marriage of my friends. This image perfectly captures that tense and exciting moment, just waiting for the bride to arrive. What a privilege to be part of that." JESS

"Thanks for being our celebrant... an all round beautiful ceremony to make us husband and wife. We wouldn't have wanted anyone else." Shel & Chris

Financial review

The charity's funds have been growing organically from donations collected by celebrants from individuals, couples and families for the ceremonies we create.

Generating donations

At the start of the year, from ceremonies 'on the books', the charity was on track to raise around £1,500 from donations as we have done in the previous 2 years. When Covid hit, that final quarter generated no donations. (This would spur us into action setting up a donations platform on Givey that will be reported on in the next year's review.) In the event, we raised £800 from donations and with expenses for the first time, only generated a surplus of £129. At the start of the year, there was £3,037 for disbursing to those in need, in line with our charitable objectives. With the lack of donations from ceremonies this year, this only increased to £3,166 by the close of the year.

Grant-giving

We made our first grant to the charity Living Well Dying Well to support end of life training in Scotland. Otherwise, once again, despite best efforts mentioned in the report, we struggled to give away funds. To improve on our grant-giving potential, we have set up a new website and social media accounts and into the next financial year would launch a campaign planned to push donations. We hope these efforts will resolve the puzzling lack of uptake for our offer of funding.

Expenses

Until this year, the charity had incurred no expenses. The Administrator has donated her time and celebrants shared a website that they manage. Trustees recognised it would be better for transparency if the charity and celebrants each had their own site. The Administrator bought a domain and mailbox and created a website.

The charity paid for CPD for celebrants to equip them to deliver Zoom funerals should there be demand due to Covid restrictions on the numbers attending funerals

Statement of the charity's policy on reserves

There are no restricted funds. Recurring costs are only £250 (website) at the moment so funds are more than adequate to cover running costs in the coming year with the remainder of funds available to make donations to support the charity's purposes.

Donated facilities and services

In 2019/20, while the charity is developing, Barbara Chalmers, Administrator, volunteers her services, coordinating meetings of the Trustees and Celebrants.

Chair's report

A year in the rear view mirror

2019/20 - the year of Covid - has spurred on the Charity to develop digitally. We have a great new website and new team email address. We have social media accounts. We have developed our shared online resources. We have made the most of digital to meet more often, the celebrants in particular checking in regularly on how ceremonies were adapting and evolving in a Covid world. The charity supported celebrants to develop their digital skills to deliver Zoom funerals.

The Trustees are grateful to the celebrants for showing great resilience in supporting couples and families in the most challenging of times. They have worked through the ever-changing government guidance and turned up to steady and support families by leading crucial ceremonies. Rites of passage have never been more important.

Future-casting

It's impossible to know what 2020/21 will hold. Hopefully, all the 2019/20 marriages that have been postponed will take place. Hopefully the number of funerals will not be affected by Covid. We will continue to keep an eye on government guidance and flex to meet the needs of individuals, couples and families who look to our celebrants for help.

At the end of the current reporting year, we set up a digital fundraising platform to both raise funds and attract attention to the funding we have available. We have done the same on our website. We commissioned PR support to push our message out to the media that we can cover the costs of a funeral celebrant. As with other offers of funding, we remain at a loss as to why those organisations that welcome the offer so far have not taken us up on it. We continue to try to donate funding to good causes that align with our values and activities. We will encourage individuals to apply direct for funding.

Our Trustees and celebrants will continue to meet regularly and connect constantly to discuss our shared philosophy, ideas and find creative ways to offer support to people through major life milestones. I look forward to seeing the Charity continue to grow.

Declaration

Signed on behalf of the charity trustees:

Jane Alcorn, Chair, 14 December 2020

Charity contact information



A QUIET REVOLUTION Scottish Charity Number: SCO46655 www.aquietrevolution.org

07789 564 775
team@aquietrevolution.org
www.humanistcelebrantscotland.org
www.facebook.com/aquietrevolution
instagram.com/quietrevolutionaries
twitter.com/TeamAQR