



Faith and the Environment

- a spiritual approach to sustainability, climate change and peak oil?

6pm Thursday 28 October

“ Could we together develop a way of life that embodies a spiritual response to climate change and enables individuals, communities, and the natural world to flourish? ...Wellbeing is mostly about connection—to ourselves, to other people and to nature...Perhaps the greatest challenge posed by climate change is to develop the personal and collective will for a new way of life” (L Michaelis)

Speakers:

Dr Muzammal Hussain Founder of ‘Wisdom in Nature’

Dr Laurie Michaelis Co-ordinator of Living Witness: Quakers for Sustainability

Hosted by **Councillor Derek Osbourne** Leader of the Council
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.’ (Margaret Mead)

Guildhall Council Chamber, Kingston KT1 1EU
from 6pm - 8.30pm



Programme

- 6.00pm Refreshments, film and displays
- 6.15pm Welcome
by Councillor Derek Osbourne, Leader of the Council
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
- 6.20pm Dr Muzammal Hussain
'Engaged spirituality and diversity in an Age of
Transition: with an Islamic perspective'

followed by a few questions and answers
- 6.45pm Dr Laurie Michaelis
'Climate Change: Catalyst for a Collective
Awakening?'

followed by a few questions and answers, if time allows
- 7.15pm Break for refreshments*, films and displays
- 7.30pm Discussion groups: lifestyle changes and
inspirational texts
- 8.10pm Plenary
chaired by Councillor Derek Osbourne

**vegetarian snack buffet to be provided by Exotic Tagine*

Welcome to the seminar. We hope you will find it enjoyable and worthwhile.

Kingston Inter Faith Forum, Transition Town Kingston and the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames are partners in this seminar - some information about each is included in the background pack. What connections there might be between us will be one thing to explore at the seminar.

One aim of this event is simply to provide an opportunity for people with different perspectives to meet and to talk about a subject of fundamental importance to us all - our environment. Another aim is to discuss what might motivate us to make more sustainable choices in life - such as ways to reduce our carbon footprint. A theme running through the seminar could be taken from Laurie's quotation on the front cover - "connection" - in this case — connecting people in our local community and connecting beliefs to action.

In the words of one Inter Faith Forum member, the focus of the seminar will be on:

- how our various beliefs can help us to achieve a way of sustainable living and
- how in our congregations/ groups we can be given mutual support and encouragement to act on these beliefs.

Many of the major faiths internationally have already pledged themselves to environmental action plans and there is a wealth of information and comment available about various environmental issues which will be discussed at the seminar. We can't set out all the information and arguments in this booklet but there is a list of a selection of websites from a variety of perspectives included in the background papers emailed to you. Please also take the opportunity to browse the display material provided by Kingston University Sustainability Hub team, Transition Town Kingston, the RBK Climate Change and Sustainable Travel team and from faith communities.

As well as thinking globally, we'll be thinking locally. One perspective which is a focus for local authorities across the country is that of "sustainable communities". "Sustainable development aims to ensure a strong, healthy and just society while living within environmental limits. It also takes into account a sustainable economy, good governance and sound science." The Sustainable Development Commission publication *Health, place and nature* argues that 'to improve health and reduce health inequalities it is vital to ensure that the natural environment is protected and enhanced and that communities are built and maintained to be truly sustainable.' This report refers to research evidence that shows that exposure to natural spaces – everything from parks and open countryside to gardens and other green space – is good for health and wellbeing and, in particular, that access to outdoor environments is important for children's development.

The report gives a definition of wellbeing which includes "a positive mental state in which individuals have a sense of purpose, that they feel able to achieve important personal goals and participate in society enhanced by conditions that include supportive personal relationships, strong and inclusive communities and a healthy and attractive environment". This definition of 'wellbeing' has similarities to a definition of spirituality from the Royal College of Psychiatrists "Spirituality is identified with experiencing a deep-seated sense of meaning and purpose in life, together with a sense of belonging. It is about acceptance, integration and wholeness." "The spiritual dimension tries to be in harmony with the universe, strives for answers about the infinite, and comes especially into focus in times of emotional stress, physical and mental illness, loss, bereavement and death."

At a time of crisis for our environment, it is not untimely (in the setting of the local authority's Council Chamber) to explore the connections between our natural world, our dependence on and responsibility for our environment, sustainable communities, faith communities, wellbeing and, for those who feel comfortable with the term, our spirituality.

Martin Birley - Transition Town Kingston
 Revd Bruce Stuart - Kingston Inter Faith Forum
 Councillor Derek Osbourne - Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

Speakers:

Dr Muzammal Hussain

Muzammal is the founder of 'Wisdom In Nature', a process-oriented, Islamic ecological activist group. He is passionate about engaged spirituality, social organising, and creating meaningful relationships between diverse communities. In the past, he has been a volunteer for the local World Development Movement (WDM) Brighton group, and he has also completed a full Permaculture Design Course as part of Earth Activist Training (EAT) in an eco-community in Devon. Muzammal is also a medical doctor, has a background in mind-body healing, and an MA in Environment, Development and Policy, writing his final dissertation on 'Islam and climate change'.

Dr Laurie Michaelis

Since 2002 Laurie has been the co-ordinator of the Living Witness Project, supporting a network of Quaker meetings developing their corporate witness to sustainable living. From 1999-2002 Laurie was Director of Research for the Oxford-based Commission on Sustainable Consumption. Laurie has a PhD in energy studies, on wood use and the potential for alternative fuels in Kenya. From 1992 to 1999 Laurie worked for the OECD, initially focusing on energy, transport and climate change but most recently leading programmes on eco-efficiency and resource efficiency. He has published several books including *Eco-efficiency* (1998), *Reforming Energy and Transport Subsidies* (1997), *Biofuels* (1994) and *Cars and Climate Change* (1993). Laurie was a Convening Lead Author in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report *Second Assessment*, and a Lead Author in the *Third Assessment*, the *Special Report on Emission Scenarios* and the *Special Report on Methodological and Technological Issues in Technology Transfer*.

Discussion group facilitators:

Dr Nor Aziz

Nor is a member of the Kingston University Sustainability Hub team.

Dr Martin Birley

Martin is on the Transition Town Kingston Steering Group and a Green Champion award winner

Revd Stan Brown

Stan is the Ecumenical Chaplain at Kingston University.

Preeti Chatwal

Preeti is an Architect working with RBK Environment and Sustainability Green Spaces team.

Marilyn Mason

Marilyn is a member of (inter alia) Transition Town Kingston, the SW London Humanist Group, and the Philosophy Café

Rabbi Michael Rosenfeld

Michael is the Rabbi of the Kingston, Surbiton and District Synagogue

Revd Bruce Stuart

Bruce is Chair of the Kingston Inter Faith Forum and minister of New Malden and Thames Ditton United Reformed Churches

Host and Plenary Chair: Councillor Derek Osbourne

Leader of the Council of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames (along with responsibilities for the overall strategic direction of the Council, Cllr Osbourne also holds RBK executive responsibility for the Environment and Climate Change including the Waste Strategy, Recycling, the Energy Strategy, and the Biodiversity and Open Spaces Strategy).

INSPIRATIONAL TEXTS FOR DISCUSSION GROUPS

This collation of guidance has been extracted from a number of sources, but mainly from statements of beliefs and values made by those faith communities who are members of the 'Alliance of Religions and Conservation' (website: [www.arcworld.org/.](http://www.arcworld.org/)) An initial collation of extracts was considered by the Kingston Inter Faith Forum who requested a shortened summary collation for working groups to refer to at the seminar.

This collation includes belief statements relating to the 8 faith/belief communities represented on the Kingston Inter Faith Forum (Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish, neo Pagan and Sikh) compiled in consultation with Forum representatives. Humanist quotations have been added which have been provided by the SWL Humanists.

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BAHA'I

(ref. <http://www.arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=65>)

The principles of interconnectedness and reciprocity underlie the Bahá'í understanding of both the operations of the universe and the responsibilities of humankind.

“For every part of the universe is connected with every other part by ties that are very powerful and admit of no imbalance, nor any slackening whatever” (from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, section 137, page 157) “Co-operation and reciprocity are essential properties which are inherent in the unified system of the world of existence, and without which the entire creation would be reduced to nothingness.” (Abdu'l-Bahá)

“Were one to observe with an eye that discovereth the realities of all things, it would become clear that the greatest relationship that bindeth the world of being together lieth in the range of created things themselves, and that cooperation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly. “ (Abdu'l-Baha)

“Diversity is the essence of perfection and the cause of the appearance of the bestowals of the Most glorious Lord... This diversity, this difference is like the naturally created dissimilarity and variety of the limbs and organs of the human body, for each one contributeth to the beauty, efficiency and perfection of the whole... How unpleasing to the eye if all the flowers and plants, the leaves and blossoms, the fruits, the branches and the trees of that garden were all of the same shape and color! Diversity of hues, form and shape, enricheth and adorneth the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof.” (from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, section 225, page 291)

“It is not only their fellow human beings that the beloved of God must treat with mercy and compassion, rather must they show forth the utmost loving-kindness to every living creature” (from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá s 138 pages 158-60)

“We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life molds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other ..the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions.” (Secretary of Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 17/2/33)

BUDDHISM

http://www.ecobuddhism.org/index.php/350_target/350_target/buddhist_declaration_on_climate_change_read_an/

‘The Time to Act is Now’ composed as a pan-Buddhist statement by Zen teacher Dr David Tetsuun Loy and senior Theravadin teacher Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi with scientific input from Dr John Stanley. The Dalai Lama was the first to sign this Declaration.

“Today we live in a time of great crisis, confronted by the gravest challenge that humanity has ever faced: the ecological consequences of our own collective karma.

There has never been a more important time in history to bring the resources of Buddhism to bear on behalf of all living beings. The four noble truths provide a framework for diagnosing our current situation and formulating appropriate guidelines - because the threats and disasters we face ultimately stem from the human mind, and therefore require profound changes within our minds. If personal suffering stems from craving and ignorance—from the three poisons of greed, ill will, and delusion - the same applies to the suffering that afflicts us on a collective scale. Our ecological emergency is a larger version of the perennial human predicament.

Both as individuals and as a species, we suffer from a sense of self that feels disconnected not only from other people but from the Earth itself. As Thich Nhat Hanh has said, “We are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness. ” We need to wake up and realize that the Earth is our mother as well as our home—and in this case the umbilical cord binding us to her cannot be severed. When the Earth becomes sick, we become sick, because we are part of her.’

From a Buddhist perspective, a sane and sustainable economy would be governed by the principle of sufficiency instead of an economy that emphasizes profit and requires perpetual growth : the key to happiness is contentment rather than an ever-increasing abundance of goods. The compulsion to consume more and more is an expression of craving, the very thing the Buddha pinpointed as the root cause of suffering.

For human civilization to be sustainable, the safe level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is no more than 350 parts per million (ppm) ..Our present ..level is already 387 ppm, ..We join with the Dalai Lama in endorsing the 350 ppm target.”

CHRISTIANITY

(<http://www.arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=69>)

“We affirm the creation as beloved of God. We affirm that the world, as God’s handiwork, has its own inherent integrity; that land, waters, air, forests, mountains and all creatures, including humanity, are “good” in God’s sight. The integrity of creation has a social aspect which we recognize as peace with justice, and an ecological aspect which we recognize in the self-renewing, sustainable character of natural ecosystems.

We will resist the claim that anything in creation is merely a resource for human exploitation. We will resist species extinction for human benefit; consumerism and harmful mass production; pollution of land, air and waters; all human activities which are now leading to probable rapid climate change; and the policies and plans which contribute to the disintegration of creation. Therefore we commit ourselves to ...respect the rights of future generations; and to conserve and work for the integrity of creation both for its inherent value to God and in order that justice may be achieved and sustained.” (*The World Council of Churches, 1990 Affirmation VII*)

“There exists within Christianity a tension between God’s creative, loving powers and humanity’s capacity and tendency to rebel against God. Christianity, drawing upon the biblical imagery of Genesis 1 and 2 and Genesis 9, is unambiguous about the special role of humanity within creation. But this special role has sometimes been interpreted as giving free rein to mastership. As the World Council of Churches said in a document from a meeting in Granvollen, Norway in 1988:

‘The drive to have “mastery” over creation has resulted in the senseless exploitation of natural resources, the alienation of the land from people and the destruction of indigenous cultures ...’.” (*statement endorsed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the World Council of Churches, and the Vatican Franciscan Centre of Environmental Studies*).

"A way of life that disregards and damages God's creation, forces the poor into greater poverty, and threatens the right of future generations to a healthy environment and to their fair share of the earth's wealth and resources, is contrary to the vision of the Gospel." (*From the Catholic Bishops Conference of England & Wales 'The Call of Creation' 2002*)

“The gravity of the ecological situation reveals how deep is the human moral crisis.”
Pope John Paul II 1990

HINDUISM

(ref <http://www.arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=77>)

“Hinduism is a religion that is very near to nature. It asks its followers to see God in every object in the Universe. Worship of God in air, water, fire, Sun, Moon, Stars, and Earth is specially recommended. Earth is worshipped as the spouse of God, hence very dear and near to God. All lives on Earth are considered as children of God and Earth. ‘I pervade the Universe. All objects in the Universe rest on me as pearls on the thread of a garland.’

(Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita)

The Upanishads narrate that after creating the Universe, the Creator entered into each and every object to help them maintain their interrelationship. (“tat sristva ta devanu pravisat”: “after creating the universe He entered into every object created”). Therefore to contribute toward the maintenance of this interrelationship becomes worship of God.” (*Swami Vibudhesha Teertha, Acharya of Madhvacarya Vaishnavas, Udupi, Central Advisory Committee Member of the Visva Hindu Parishad*)

“God’s creation is sacred. Humanity does not have the right to destroy what it cannot create. Humans have to realize the interconnectedness of living entities and emphasize the idea of moral responsibility to oneself, one’s society, and the world as a whole. In our cosmic journey, we are involved in countless cycles of births and deaths. Life progresses into higher forms or regresses into lower forms of life based upon our good or bad karma. Kinship exists between all forms of life. Reincarnation warns us against treating lower forms of life with cruelty.” (*Dr. Sheshagiri Rao, Chief Editor of The Encyclopaedia of Hinduism*)

“All living beings are sacred because they are parts of God, and should be treated with respect and compassion. This is because the soul can be reincarnated into any form of life. Hinduism is full of stories that treat animals as divine, such as how Krishna used to herd cows, or how the monkey Hanuman was a faithful servant of the Rama. Most Hindus are vegetarian because of this belief in the sanctity of life. Even trees, rivers and mountains are believed to have souls, and should be honoured and cared for.

The virtue of a simple life has always been prized in Hindu society. Sadhus take pride in living simply and consuming as little as possible. Hinduism stresses that true happiness comes from within not from outer possessions...the search for material possessions, and the consumption of materials and energy it brings, should not be allowed to dominate life.” (<http://www.arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=5>)

ISLAM

ref <http://www.arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=75> & http://www.wisdominnature.org.uk/Resources/Resources_documents/Islam_and_Ecologism.pdf

There are several Qur'anic principles [Tawheed – One God of the Universe; Man as Khalifa – God's vice-regent on earth; Mizaan – man has reason to understand and live in accordance with the natural order of creation] that, taken separately, do not have an obvious connection with conservation. But taken in their totality, they state in clear terms the belief that Allah, the One True God, is the Creator of the Universe and indeed, the Owner of the Universe. "To Him belongs what is in the heavens and on earth and all between them and all beneath the soil." 020.006.

Tawheed is the primordial testimony of the unity of all creation and the interlocking grid of the natural order of which man is intrinsically a part.

"[Allah] Most Gracious! It is He Who has taught the Qur'an. He has created man: He has taught him speech [and Intelligence] The sun and the moon follow courses [exactly] computed; And the herbs and the trees—both [alike] bow in adoration. And the firmament has He raised high and He has set up the balance [of Justice] In order that ye may not transgress [due] balance. So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance.

It is He Who has spread out the earth for [His] creatures: Therein is fruit and date-palms producing spathes [enclosing dates]: Also corn with [its] leaves and stalk for fodder and sweet-smelling plants. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?" (055.001-013)

"It is He who produceth gardens with trellises and without and dates and tilth with produce of all kinds and olives and pomegranates similar [in kind] and different [in variety]: eat of their fruit in their season but render the dues that are proper on the day that the harvest is gathered. But waste not by excess: for Allah loveth not the wasters." 006.141.

"O children of Adam!...eat and drink: but waste not by excess for Allah loveth not the wasters." 007.031.

"Corruption has appeared in the land and sea, because of what the hands of men have earned, that God may give them a taste of some of their deeds, in order that they may find their way back." (30:41).

"The Divine Law (al shariah) is explicit in extending the religious duties of man to the natural order and the environment." *Seyyed Hossein Nasr*

JUDAISM

(ref <http://www.arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=158>)

“And the Lord took man and put him in the Garden of Eden, to tend it and guard it” (Genesis 2:15). “When God created the first human beings, God led them around the Garden of Eden and said: “Look at my works! See how beautiful they are—how excellent! or your sake I created them all. See to it that you do not spoil and destroy My world; for if you do, there will be no one else to repair it.” *Kohelet Rabbah 7:13*

“The classic Jewish attitude to nature is a direct consequence of the belief that the entire universe is the work of the Creator. Love of God was taken in the broadest sense to include love of all His creations: the inanimate, plants, animals, and man. Nature in all its beauty is understood as having been created for man, and it is, therefore, wrong for man to spoil it”. *from a Statement by Professor Nahum Rakover, an Orthodox legalist and Torah/Talmud scholar appointed by the World Jewish Congress.*

“God said to Israel: 'Even if you find the land full of all good things, you should not say, 'We will sit and not plant'; rather, be diligent in planting! Just as you came and found trees planted by others, you must plant for your children; a person must not say, 'I am old, how many years will I live? You must not excuse yourself from planting. As you found trees, plant more, even if you are old.'” *Midrash Tanchuma, Ch 8.*

The Sabbatical Year”(Leviticus 25:1-5)is a core conservation principle in the Bible. According to Maimonides, one of the goals of ceasing all agricultural activity in the 7th year is to improve and strengthen the land. Sabbath is a return to nature - “man returns to the freshness of his nature, to the point where there is no need to heal his illnesses, most of which result from destruction of the balance of life as it departs ever further from the purity of spiritual and material nature.” (*Rav A Isaac Kook Introduction to Shabbat haAretz, 8–9*)

Rabbis told the story of two men who were out on the water in a rowingboat. Suddenly, one of them started to saw under his feet. He maintained that it was his right to do whatever he wished with the place which belonged to him. The other answered him that they were in the rowboat together; the hole that he was making would sink both of them. (*Vayikra Rabbah 4:6*).

NEO-PAGANISM

From the [Pagan Federation website](#) ‘

The first principle of the Pagan Federation is: Love for and Kinship with Nature. Reverence for the life force and its ever-renewing cycles of life and death. This principle recognises that human beings are part of nature and that our lives are intimately interwoven with the web of life and death.’

Neo-druidism from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-druidism> : ‘Beliefs vary widely, and there is no set dogma or belief system which all adherents follow. Indeed, it is a central tenet of many druidic groups that there should not be strict dogmas. There is no central authority over the entire movement, nor any central religious text or religious leader. Core ideas shared by many Druids..include honouring of the ancestors and honouring of the land. Druidry connects with other Earth-ancestor traditions around the globe, such as the Native American, the Maori and Huna, the Aboriginal, the Romany and the indigenous spiritualities of Africa and Asia. Nature-Centred Spirituality:

Druidry largely revolves around the veneration of nature. Nature is considered to be unconditionally sacred and an expression or manifestation of deity and divinity. Many Druids follow eight festivals a year, which are collectively known as the Wheel of the Year. Four of these are solar festivals, being positioned at the solstices and equinoxes” all are associated with nature: “Samhain (death & ancestors); Winter Solstice and the rebirth of the sun; Imbolc (First signs of spring); Spring Equinox ; Beltaine (The full flowering of spring); Summer Solstice; Lughnasadh (The harvest of grain) and Autumn Equinox (harvest of fruit).”

Pantheism from the [World Pantheism Movement website](#) : “In the WPM we revere and care for Nature, we accept this life as our only life, and this earth as our only paradise, if we look after it. We revel in the beauty of Nature and the night sky, and are full of wonder at their mystery and power.

By spirituality and spiritual we don't mean any kind of supernatural or non-physical activity - we use the terms in a wider sense. We mean that part of our lives that relates to our deeper emotions and aesthetic responses towards Nature and the wider Universe - to our sense of our place in these, and to the ethics that these feelings imply. We take the real Universe and Nature as our starting and finishing point, not some preconceived idea of God.

We feel a profound wonder and awe for these, similar to the reverence that believers in more conventional gods feel towards their deity, but without anthropomorphic worship or belief that Nature has a mind or personality that we can influence through prayer or ritual. Our ethics are humanistic and green, our metaphysics naturalist and scientific. To these we add the emotional and aesthetic dimensions which humans need to cope with life's challenges and to embrace life's joys, and to motivate their concern for Nature and human welfare.”

SIKHISM

Ref: www.sikhphilosophy.net/essays-on-sikhism/25971-environmental-concerns-sri-guru-granth-sahib.html

Guru Nanak Dev stresses inter-dependence in the relationship between humanity and the environment: '*Pavan guru paani pita, Maata dharat mahat, Divas raat do-e daaee daa-ia, Khelai sagal jagat*' : Japu ji Sahib (i.e. Air is vital force, Water the progenitor, the vast Earth is the mother of all, Days and Nights are nurses, fondling all creation in their lap).

Pavan paani dharati aakas ghar mandar har bani : Sri Guru Granth Sahib 723 (i.e. Air, water earth and sky are God's home and temple - sacred places which need to be protected and looked after). The entire creation is inter-related mutually supporting one another: "All creation on one thread has He strung." (Sri Guru Granth Sahib 110)

Nature is a great spiritual teacher because it enables the spiritual seeker to be in touch with the Ultimate Reality: "Earth teaches us patience and love. Air teaches us mobility, Fire teaches us warmth and courage; Sky teaches us equality and broadmindedness, Water teaches us purity and cleanliness." (Sri Guru Granth Sahib 101)

The objective of human life is to live in harmony with Nature, with the eternal (God) which implies a life of harmony with all existence: "The Creator created himself .. And created all creation in which He is manifest. You Yourself the bumble-bee, flower, fruit and the tree. You Yourself the water, desert, ocean and the pond. You Yourself are the big fish, tortoise and the Cause of causes. Your form cannot be known." (Guru Granth Sahib 1016)

"Sarbat da bhalla is the daily affirmation in Sikh tradition and means caring for all existence - earth, animals, humans, solar systems and more. Everything and everyone is sacred, equal and integral to the one diverse family of life.. Sikh believe all creation is bound together through the love, benevolence, care and protection of the one creator, who has infused creation with those very same qualities. When humans depart from those qualities, and proceed to create and accumulate to satisfy their own greed, they destabilise and disrupt the cycle of love and benevolence that unifies all creation." www.sarbat-da-bhall.blogspot.com

Sikhs keep a simple vegetarian diet, free from tobacco, alcohol or drugs to avoid harm to mind, health, others around them or cruelty to animals.

HUMANISM

(www.humanism.org.uk)

"Humanists care about nature and the environment because we care about human happiness, welfare and survival. Many humanists find the "spiritual" in nature, and we all understand how dependent we and future generations are on a healthy eco-system. Although humanists rely on science for knowledge about environmental problems and how to overcome them, and on philosophy for ethical theories, there is no humanist authority or orthodoxy; other humanists might well choose different extracts." *M Mason SWL Humanists*

"...Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our...obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves. It has been said that astronomy is a humbling and character-building experience. There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known." *Astronomer and astrophysicist Carl Sagan on "the pale blue dot Earth"*

There are "features of nature which contribute to the meaning the world has for us essential features of the sense we make of our experience. In that way they enrich our lives, not necessarily because they are beautiful, but because they are.....emotionally evocative." *Philosopher Richard Norman in Is Nothing Sacred? ed Ben Rogers (Routledge, 2004)*

"The human mind is big enough and imaginative enough to be poetically moved by the whole sweep of geographical ages represented by the rocks that you are standing among [in the Grand Canyon]... That's why you feel as though you are undergoing a religious experience when you are looking at the fossils in the Kenya National Museum..." *Richard Dawkins in Is Nothing Sacred?*

"I want my grandchildren to see elephants." *Sir Hermann Bondi, on why he cared about conservation.*

"If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it." *Philosopher Peter Singer*

"I have not had, in any museum, experiences that have filled my aesthetic senses in the way that they are filled when I walk in a natural setting... I do not think I am alone in this; for many people, wilderness is the source of the greatest feelings of aesthetic appreciation, rising to an almost mystical intensity." *Philosopher Peter Singer*

If you would like a **larger print version** of this booklet, please telephone 020 8547 5023 or email: jean.cousens@rbk.kingston.gov.uk before 22/10

Directions to the Guildhall can be found below and at http://www.kingston.gov.uk/mykingston/contact_us/maptotowncentreoffices.htm

The Council encourages cycling and the use of public transport.
Plenty of cycle stands are available at the Guildhall or in the Market Square.

The bus stops (going in the Surbiton /Esher direction or the Ham /Kingston Hospital direction) for the following buses are just outside the Guildhall: 85, 371, 458, 459, 465, 514, 515, K1, K4.

Parking on the Guildhall site is likely to be limited and will not be available before 6pm.
The Rose Car Park (formerly Drapers) is the nearest car park.

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