



Welcome to the May 2025 newsletter

Hey there philanthropoids,

I hope all is well. I'm just back from a week's holiday for half term, which meant that I could quite get this newsletter out at the end of May (as I really, REALLY didn't want to take my laptop with me on holiday) – and thus this month's newsletter is coming to you a few days into June.

I have also gone straight into a case of massive FOMO, as I realise that lots of my philanthropy friends and colleagues are in Lisbon for this year's Philea conference. (Which I sadly couldn't make, but if you are there and reading this, then please do think of my sad little face and raise a glass of Vinho Verde in my honour at some point).

This has definitely been a month with an interesting spread of philanthropy stories from around the globe, including some that have spilled out into the mainstream – so let's quit prevaricating and get to newslettering business.

Rhodri

PHILANTHROPY IN THE NEWS

He Just Gates On With It

For a change, the biggest piece of philanthropy news this month was actually *good* news: namely [the announcement by Bill Gates that he is accelerating his plans to give away the vast majority of his vast fortune over the next 20 years.](#)



[Image by European Union, CC BY 4.0](#)

Somewhat improbably, I managed to sneak a comment into the initial reporting on this story by the Associated Press – arguing that Gates’s

announcement represents a welcome bit of optimism at a time when that has been in short supply. I'm aware that not everyone will share that view, and that there are still valid questions to be answered (as we shall see in a moment) – however, given that there have been plenty of times this year when reading news about philanthropy has felt like choking through the thick smoke of a bin fire, I'm still broadly of the opinion that “somewhat positive with caveats” counts as pretty damn good.

In terms of questions we should be asking, there are a number that spring to mind. If you want the detailed version of my thoughts, you can hear them in [a slightly stream-of-consciousness fashion on the latest episode of the Philanthropisms podcast](#), but here is the potted version.

- Is this actually news? As plenty of people have pointed out, the Gates Foundation was always intended to have a limited lifespan, so this isn't the same as a perpetually-endowed foundation making the decision to spend out. Yes, it is true that the original time horizon was substantially longer (when Bill and Melinda Gates set up the foundation, the plan was that it would close 25 years after they both died), but Bill Gates has been suggesting for a number of years now that this timeline could be shortened – so whilst this might be the first time we have a fixed schedule, that isn't perhaps as much of a surprise as some of the reporting might suggest.
- Does the maths stack up? As [Michael Kavate highlighted in an article for Inside Philanthropy](#), the Gates Foundation's promise to disappear by 2045 seems somewhat incompatible with the specific ambitions they have so far set out in terms of their future spending. The foundation has suggested that it will increase its annual grantmaking to 9 or \$10 billion per year – but even on the basis of some fairly conservative estimates about investment returns, it could do this without actually touching any of the principal in the endowment (let alone spending it all out). So do the Gates Foundation simply have their maths wrong? Or is there potentially something else going on here – are they, for instance, thinking about transferring some of their endowment to other organisations? Or are there plans to shift towards investing endowment capital in mission aligned ways (potentially accepting

lower financial returns in exchange for social returns?) I have no idea, but it will be very interesting to see!

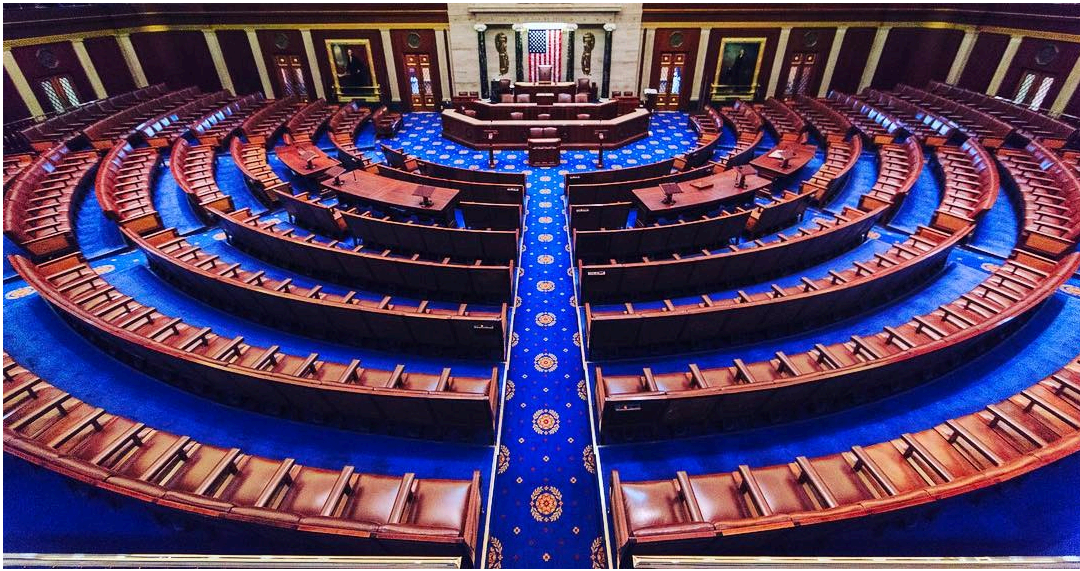
- Why this decision, and why now? In [his blog to accompany the announcement](#), Bill Gates frames it largely in terms of personal factors (his 70th birthday, what would have been his late father's 100th birthday etc). however, it is hard not to see it at least in part as a response to the recent actions of the Trump administration and the impact they have had on civil society. If this is right, then should we interpret it as a defensive move, designed to preclude or minimise future attacks; or a proactive move, designed to reaffirm the foundation's commitments and position it in clear contrast to the direction of US government policy?
- Bill Gates obviously believes in setting an example and trying to encourage other wealthy people to give – hence his involvement in setting up the Giving Pledge back in 2010. But that initiative has come in for some criticism in recent years for failing to hold signatories accountable for their pledges or to measure the impact of pledges - so does this spending down announcement represent a new front in Gates's efforts to encourage other billionaires to be more generous, or does he feel as though he has exhausted his ability to do that? If he does have any remaining interest in promoting philanthropy more widely, will this go beyond simply "hoping" that other wealthy people follow suit (as he suggests in his blog post) and include more active efforts to encourage generosity?
- Is there any risk that the increased pace of Gates' giving could amplify concerns about the distorting effect that his philanthropy can have on public spending and policy decisions in some of the countries where the foundation operates? (Even when it is well-intentioned and well directed, the sheer scale of this kind of giving means that this is always a potential risk, and that seems likely to be even more the case if the amounts of money being given out increase significantly). Furthermore, if the pace of spending down dictates using approaches beyond grant-giving i.e. investing in businesses, will this exacerbate a tendency to emphasis

technological/commercial solutions in areas such as education, healthcare and climate (which some people are already critical of)?

As I say, you can hear my thoughts on these questions and others in the latest episode of the podcast. If you want more straight from the horse's mouth you should check out [Bill Gates's own blog about his decision to spend down](#), and also his [really interesting interview with the New York Times](#) where he explained some more of the thinking behind his decision and addressed some of the critical questions I have outlined. If you want some pessimism to counterbalance Gates's natural optimism, then it is worth checking out [this piece in the Financial Times](#) which highlight some of the barriers that might make it hard for Gates to achieve his ambitious goals in the current political context. And if you want a critical view, try [this article in Monocle magazine](#) which argues that Gates's plans to spend down are foolish and that he would be better off building long-lasting institutions. (This piece isn't IMHO that compellingly argued, but there is an interesting point here about the positive case for longer time scales – especially given that Gates himself cites Andrew Carnegie as an inspiration, since whilst Carnegie did famously declare that “the man who dies rich dies thus disgraced” and gave away most of his fortune, he did so by setting up a wide range of long-lasting institutions rather than by spending down).

Serial Killer? Renewed efforts to undermine civil society freedom in US

Alarm bells were set ringing throughout the US nonprofit sector this month (or perhaps “louder alarm bells than the ones that were already ringing” would be more apt), when it emerged [that Republicans in the House of Representatives were trying to sneak provisions that would give the Trump Administration sweeping new powers to strip nonprofits of their tax-exempt status if they were deemed to be “terrorist-supporting organisations” into a budget bill from the House Ways and Means Committee](#). This was essentially a straight rehash of language in the “Non-Profit Killer Bill”, HR9495, which [we reported on in this newsletter back in Nov 2024](#), when it was passed by Congress before stalling in the Senate.



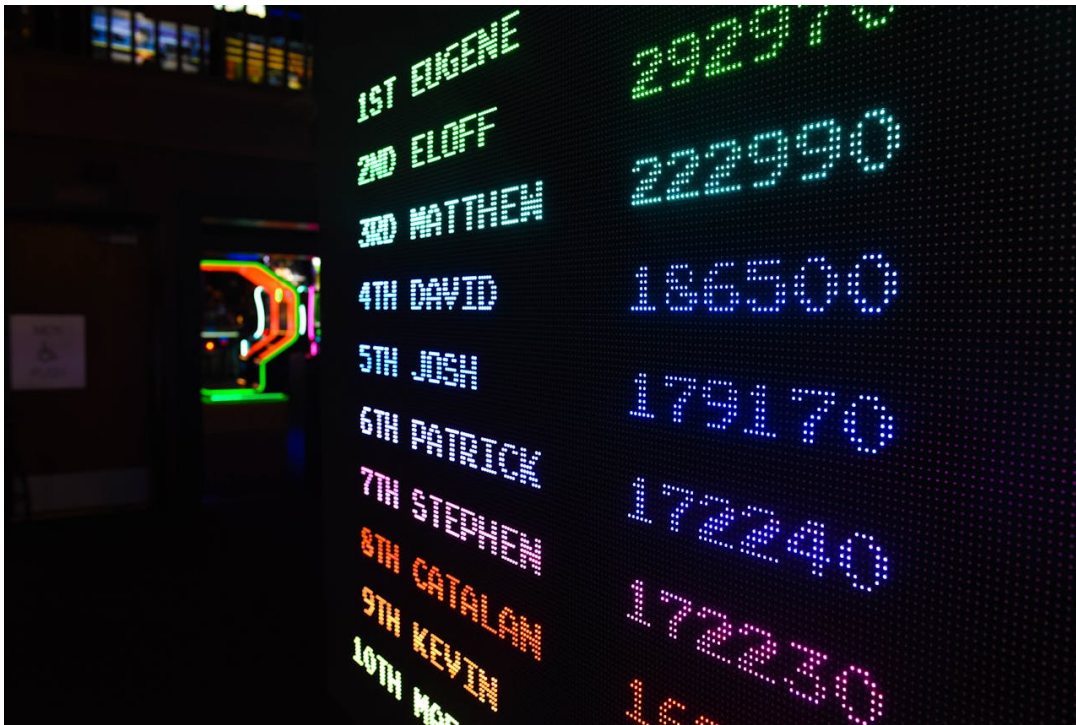
[Many commentators warned](#) that whilst the provisions are ostensibly about preventing support for terrorism, the interpretation in the proposed Bill is so deliberately vague and gives such a large degree of power to the Treasury Secretary (and by extension the President) that it would effectively give them carte blanche to start delegitimising any nonprofit groups that were critical of government policy or that the administration simply doesn't like.

Thankfully, following a massive mobilisation effort across the US nonprofit sector, the [provisions were later dropped from the version of the Bill that was eventually passed](#) in Congress. However, many experts cautioned that this is likely to be only a temporary respite, and that these measures will almost certainly re-emerge in another guise before too long, so nonprofits need to be poised to react as and when they do. The concern now is whether the nonprofit sector can continue to weather this storm, and even if it can, what the cost of doing so might be (in financial and operational terms, but also in terms of the toll it takes on those who have to do the fighting).

Giving Orders: New Philanthropy Rankings

Everyone loves a list, and this month saw the publication of two big philanthropy rankings. In the UK we had [the annual Sunday Times Giving List](#) – the ranking of who is most generous amongst the upper echelons

of the country's wealthiest people (as identified by the accompanying [Sunday Times Rich List](#)).



In my experience this prompts two immediate responses without fail every year: one is annoyance from wealthy individuals who feel that the methodology behind the list has led to their wealth or their giving (or that of other people) being over-valued or under-valued (I have certainly heard complaints about both over the years). The other guaranteed response is weary resignation from fundraisers, who just *know* that come Monday morning their CEO will come into the office brandishing a copy of the Giving List and suggest that “we should try and get in touch with some of these people” as a new major donor strategy. Guys; I feel for you.

As a list of giving by individuals, based on publicly available information, it is quite hard to draw any firm conclusions about trends in UK elite philanthropy from the ST Giving List, but it is always interesting to take a look. The [headline from this year's report seemed to be that total giving is up by £0.5 billion](#) (although I would perhaps take that figure with a pinch of salt), and hedge fund managers seem to be back in fashion – with a decent few of them clogging up the top spots on the Giving List like it's 2007 all over again.

This month also saw the publication of the first ever [Time magazine list of “100 Most Influential People in Philanthropy”](#). I was initially sceptical about this list, since my absence from it suggested that there were some serious flaws in the methodology, but once I had accepted this crushing oversight it made for interesting reading... (For the avoidance of doubt, I am joking here). It was particularly interesting to see a list that ranks people working in the philanthropy and non-profit sphere alongside donors, in acknowledgment of the role that the former play and the power that some of them wield as a result. (And congratulations to everyone who made the list – including, by my calculations, at least a few people who read this newsletter. You know who you are...)

As ever with a subjective list of this kind, there were some names that made me raise my eyebrows to varying degrees (as I’m sure others did too). And putting to one side my joke about the methodology a minute ago, I genuinely would quite like to know more about how the people on the list were selected. There is an accompanying article headlined “[How We Chose the TIME100 Most Influential People in Philanthropy 2025](#)”, but as far as I could tell it doesn’t really do anything of the kind; it just offers some suitably stirring words about the role philanthropy can play, plus a few case studies of inspiring individuals from the list. Which is fine, but doesn’t really offer any insight into the methodology or decision process. And that is obviously annoying, as it makes it harder for me to know what I’ve got to do to get on next year’s list... (Again, joking).

Banned Aid: Labour doubles down on cuts to aid commitments

There was more depressing news about UK aid spending this month. Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced back in February that the country’s aid commitment would be cut to 0.3% of GDP by 2027 (down from 0.5%, which was already a reduction of the original 0.7% commitment thanks to cuts imposed by Tory PM Boris Johnson in 2021), and defended this as a political necessity dictated by the need for increased defence spending. The government has clearly decided since then that it not only doesn’t feel the need to apologise for the policy, it

wants to double down on it, so [new Development Minister Jenny Chapman was reported this month as stating that “the days of seeing government as a global aid charity are over”.](#)



[Image by Roger Harris, CC BY 3.0](#)

Aside from being depressing for anyone who believes in the importance of international aid, and the moral responsibility that wealthy countries (and their inhabitants) bear to less wealthy ones, this statement also comes across (IMHO at least) as either a bit stupid or quite cynical.

Stupid, if it implies that the government genuinely believes that aid spending is form of altruistic gift-giving, rather than what it is in reality: a vital component of the UK's soft power and a cost-effective element of a hard-nosed and self-interested foreign policy. Or cynical, if (as I suspect is the case) Jenny Chapman (and all of the other Labour politicians currently talking tough about aid) are in fact perfectly aware of this, so the choice to frame aid spending as charity is a deliberate one that both misrepresents aid and at the same time does a disservice to charity by turning it into a pejorative term.

It seems likely that this bullishly negative attitude towards international aid is in large part a reflection of Labour's morbid fear about the rise in popularity in the UK of the Reform party, which is currently surfing a wave of right-wing populism that has recently seen it win parliamentary seats and take control of local councils. And this fear isn't entirely irrational: Reform do pose a major threat to Labour – one they will have to figure out over the next few years how to combat. But personally, I don't think that trying to "out-Reform Reform" by being tougher than them on immigration or more critical of international development is the way to go. As far as I can see, all that it will achieve in most cases is to validate the views of those who already agree with Reform (and will thus vote for them, rather than for a Labour Party trying to imitate them); whilst at the same time alienating (or downright infuriating) many existing Labour voters who *do* think governmental aid spending is a good and important thing.

And from a more philanthropy-specific perspective, I find the framing of these latest comments and what they suggest about the Labour government's views about charities and NGOs fairly worrying.

Testing the Instruments: UK anti-protest legislation successfully challenged

While we're on the subject of bad UK governmental attitudes towards civil society, there was some better news this month with the announcement that the [Court of Appeal has upheld a ruling that new](#)

[anti-protest legislation introduced by former Tory Home Secretary Suella Braverman was unlawful.](#)



Braverman had used a Statutory Instrument (a kind of legislative device that is generally used to pass uncontroversial minor measures with reduced Parliamentary scrutiny) to redefine “serious protest” as “more than minor”, in order to allow her to use significantly stronger policing powers to clamp down on legal protests. A legal challenge to this legislation was launched by the human rights organisation Liberty, and the fiercely contested case made it all the way up to the UK Supreme Court, which ruled against the government. The government then appealed this decision, but the new ruling from the court of appeal reaffirms the Supreme Court’s assessment of the situation, so the legislation will have to be scrapped. (Unless they manage to find some other workaround, which seems to be the general MO these days).

As [Liberty’s Director Akiko Hart wrote in a comment piece for the Guardian](#), this represents an important step in guaranteeing the ongoing right for people in the UK to take part in peaceful protests, and a victory that provides some welcome (if potentially only temporary) respite from

the wider onslaught on civil society freedoms going on in many places around the world.

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

This is the section where I update you on what we have been doing at Why Philanthropy Matters over the last month or so.

AP Quote on Bill Gates:

As mentioned up top, I managed to get a quote into the *Associated Press's* coverage of Bill Gates's announcement about spending down. Which I was chuffed about – not just because I think very highly of AP's philanthropy coverage in general, so it was flattering to be asked, but because it meant that – thanks to the magic of press syndication – my name then appeared in all kinds of weird and wonderful places around the world, so my media monitoring this month has been a delight.

[Read the article](#)

NZZ am Sonntag Interview:

This month also saw the publication of an interview I did with the Swiss Sunday magazine *NZZ Am Sonntag*, all about wealth, big money philanthropy, Donald Trump, Elon Musk etc. SO if you speak German, do give it a read. (And if you want to tell me what I actually said, that would also be great....)

[Read the article](#)

Comment on CAF local giving report:

My other bit of media work this month was offering up some comment for *Civil Society* on a new report by the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) on local giving in the UK. The report confirmed the fact that people in less affluent areas tend to give more as a percentage of average income than those in more affluent areas (so generosity is not just about how much money you have). It also highlighted the fact that there is a potentially problematic mismatch between where the supply of local charitable giving is greatest and where need is most acute – which presents a challenge for policymakers, who might need to consider how this imbalance can be addressed at a national level.

[Read the article](#)

On the Philanthropisms Podcast:

This was one of those unusual months where we ended up squeezing in three episodes of the podcast (in this case because I was away for half term, so I pulled the publication date of the 3rd one forward by a week). At the start of the month we had a really interesting interview with Sara Jeffrey, Victoria Tayler and Lonnie Hackett about risk and failure in philanthropy and international development. We then had a great chat with Allison Fine about how AI could potentially be used to improve fundraising. And finally I took the opportunity for a solo deep dive into Bill Gates's announcement about his speeded-up spending down plans, and some of the historical and theoretical background for debates about timescales in philanthropy.



Philanthropisms

Sarah Jeffrey, Victoria Tayler & Lonnie Hackett: Risk, Success & Failure in Philanthropy & International Development





Philanthropisms

Allison Fine: Using AI to make fundraising better



Philanthropisms

The Gates Foundation and timescales for philanthropy



[Listen to the episode with Sarah, Victoria & Lonnie](#)

[Listen to the episode with Allison](#)

[Listen to the episode on the Gates Foundation & timescales](#)

Events

I managed to get out and about for a couple of IRL events this month. This included heading up to Dunfermline to help curate a business meeting for the various Carnegie Institutions from around the world (organised to coincide with the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy awards ceremony later the same week). I offered up some thoughts on current key challenges and opportunities for philanthropy – a role that I am usually pretty relaxed about, although in this case the fact that my slot was billed as the second keynote and the first keynote was a bravura, notes-free speech from former PM Gordon Brown (complete with anecdotes about various world leaders and celebrities) did make me slightly more nervous than usual!

I did, however, get to go on the former Royal Yacht Britannia for an evening reception event in Edinburgh, which included an opportunity to

try on a Captain's hat and look poignantly out of the window (see photo evidence below).

Later on in the month I also headed to London for a great discussion about future-proofing emergency appeals hosted by Torchbox (alongside Simon Beresford from the Disasters Emergency Committee and Amina Iqbal from Torchbox, both of whom had some really interesting things to say, so I felt like I learned a lot from this one!) You can also read [a write up of the event by Torchbox's Lisa Ballam if you are interested](#).





OTHER GOOD STUFF

This is the bit where I share other philanthropy-related things I have come across this month that might not quite count as news but are definitely worth checking out.

The Old Model of Billionaire Philanthropy Is Ending:

There was [an interesting article in Bloomberg this month](#), musing on whether Bill Gates's announcement that he is to spend down marks the end of an era, because the new generation of tech donors that have emerged in his wake do not share his views about the nature and role of philanthropy. In particular, the piece suggests:

"A new model is bubbling up, driven by a subset of the Silicon Valley elite. It goes something like this: Why donate your money when you've already given so much to society through the technology you've created? Gates and Buffett felt they were returning something to a system that had allowed them to amass such wealth; the new guard believes it's already contributed more to the system than it will ever get back in return."

It is true that one can certainly determine among some of the elite of Silicon Valley a sense that the ways in which they have made their money are as beneficial to society (if not more beneficial) than any form of traditional philanthropy. Hence [Elon Musk's claim in 2022 that the companies he runs \(Tesla, SpaceX, Neuralink etc\) "are philanthropy"](#) ;or further back, Larry Page's assertion in 2014 that he would ["rather give](#)

[his billions to Elon Musk than to charity](#)". So this isn't exactly a new idea, but if it becomes more widely dominant among elite donors this could be a cause for concern.



[Read the article](#)

Jacqueline Novogratz on Silicon Valley philanthropy:

On a related note, I spotted some interesting comments this month from Acumen Founder and CEO Jacqueline Novogratz about the dangers of overly simplistic tech solutionism in philanthropy. Novogratz said that in her view [“entrepreneurs who think they can cure poverty with the Silicon Valley model are a red flag”](#).

[Read the Fortune piece](#)

The “Wokelash” in tech philanthropy?:

To complete the triumvirate of tech philanthropy stories, we have [an interesting article in Jacobin magazine](#) offering an analysis from a Leftist perspective of the recent realignment of many tech billionaires with Donald Trump and the impact this has had on social justice-focused programs and organisations they were previously funding. The article is fairly unsympathetic to those organisations that have found themselves on the wrong side of this realignment; offering the classic critical argument that in accepting funding from big money donors in the first place, they made themselves complicit in attempts to replace properly-funded state provision with services based on the largesse of rich individual. I personally think this line of argument is a bit simplistic, and ignores the pragmatic realities that most nonprofits have to work with, so I am more sympathetic to their plight - however, I do think the article gives a useful analysis of how and why the mood music in Silicon Valley has changed so dramatically in recent years.



[Image by TechCrunch, CC BY 2.0](#)

[Read the article](#)

Philanthropy filling gaps in government provision:

The question of whether philanthropy can or should replace government is obviously a fairly hot topic right now, in the wake of huge US government spending cuts that have left many nonprofits and NGOs desperately looking for new sources of funding. It was interesting, therefore, to read in an article in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* [that an increasing number of foundations are increasing their payout rates](#) in order to offer more support to grantees that have been hit by the loss of government funding. It is also worth checking out an [extract of an interview on NPR](#) with New York Times journalist (and [former Philanthropisms podcast guest](#)) Teddy Schleifer, exploring whether philanthropy could fill the gaps left by government withdrawal (and what kinds of issues this might raise).

On a very practical level, it was heartening to see the news that the [volunteer management platform Golden is donating \\$500m worth of in-kind support](#) to nonprofits, government agencies, and other organisations affected by the loss of AmeriCorps and USAID funding. And it was also interesting to read another piece in the *Chronicle* arguing that there might be [an opportunity for philanthropy to fund the development of a new "Democracy Corps"](#) which could tap the expertise and experience of the vast army of former USAID employees now out there. It's possible this is a slight overreach in an effort to identify some kind of longer-term silver lining to the current situation in the US, but here's hoping that the authors are right.



[Read the COP article on payouts](#)

[Read the NPR article](#)

Read the piece about Golden

Read the COP comment piece on Democracy corps

OpenAI sticking with nonprofit structure:

We have covered the saga of OpenAI's internal rift and subsequent attempts to abandon its nonprofit structure at some length in this newsletter (and in WPM articles like this one), so it was interesting to see reports this month that the company and its CEO Sam Altman are now [rowing back on those plans and will remain under the control of a parent nonprofit organisation](#) (whilst also morphing into a Public Benefit Corporation).

It doesn't sound like this was Altman's preferred choice by any means, and was almost certainly more of a reflection of legal and practical realities that would have made it difficult for OpenAI to abandon its nonprofit parent entirely. It can, however, be chalked up as something of a win for civil society groups and campaigners who had objected to the company's plans – although there are plenty of questions still to be answered about who will decide OpenAI's approach in the future and what the ownership status of the technologies it develops might be.



[Read the BBC article](#)

Opening the Gates in Singapore:

Moving away from the US now, I spotted a report in *Tatler Asia* that [the Gates Foundation is planning to opening an office in Singapore](#). This seems like further evidence of South East Asia's emergence as a new philanthropy powerhouse, and in particular of Singapore's success in positioning itself as the gateway to the region for foundations and donors interested in tapping into what is going on. (And just to be absolutely clear - if anyone wants me to come out to Singapore, or indeed anywhere else in SE Asia, and express similar views, that is definitely a thing I would do...)



[Read the article](#)

Canada's first University Chair in Philanthropy:

Exciting news this month in the world of Canadian philanthropy, with the announcement that Carleton University in Ottawa is to establish the [country's first Chair in Philanthropy](#), as part of wider plans to develop a "world class Centre for Philanthropy and Civil Society".



[Read the article](#)

NPC/Beacon Merger:

Here in the UK, it was announced this month that the Beacon Collaborative – an initiative that has over recent years tried to promote the growth of philanthropy through research and network building – is [to merge into the nonprofit sector consultancy NPC](#). I was very pleased to hear this, as it has felt over the last year or so as if the infrastructure for UK philanthropy is creaking at the seams a bit, so the fact that the institutional knowledge and expertise of Beacon is going to be retained rather than just lost (as has been the case with some other orgs) is great news IMHO. And perhaps a bit of consolidation might even open up new opportunities to drive philanthropy in the UK further forward?

[Read the article](#)

UK Grantmaking:

In other UK news, UKGrantmaking – the initiative set up last year by 360Giving to publish data on (you guessed it) UK Grantmaking – has just introduced [a new blog section on its website](#), offering analysis and insight of some of the trends that can be found in its data. I was really pleased to see this, as I think in the past there have been a number of instances where organisations that provide research on philanthropy and the charity sector just publish the data and stats, and then leave the interpretation up to others, which always seems like a missed opportunity to me.

[Read the blogs](#)

French charities turn to UK philanthropists

There was [a fascinating article in the Financial Times this month](#), reporting on the launch of a UK chapter of Fondation de France (France's main philanthropy infrastructure organisation) and suggesting that this may be a reflection of wider interest among nonprofits in France in tapping into a perceived healthier culture of philanthropic giving in the UK. Given that in the UK, we spend a lot of time looking somewhat enviously at the culture of giving in the US, it feels a bit odd to receive the same attention from elsewhere tbh. But, as the article explains, some in France feel that their historical and political context has not really lent itself to the development of philanthropy, and as a result they believe it might be better to look elsewhere (either for inspiration or for money).



[Read the article](#)

Next Gen believe in business, not philanthropy:

The Geneva-headquartered wealth management firm Pictet released [the results of a survey conducted with some of their next gen clients this month](#). They found that participants were somewhat sceptical about traditional philanthropy, and more inclined to see investments and business operations as ways to drive change:

When asked about the most powerful means they had for exerting influence, 44 per cent of participants felt that the best way of implementing change was through their businesses, 41 per cent through investments, and only 25 per cent by philanthropy.

This is not necessarily the same as the Silicon Valley view outlined at the start of this section, which asserts that doing business in the way that you are already doing it is better than philanthropy. Many of these next gen wealth holders might feel that *changing* the way they do business - particularly if they are the inheritors of existing family companies - is the most effective thing they could do; on the basis that ensuring that the ways in which they make money are not harmful (or are even

beneficial to society) is an important first step before thinking about doing good through giving money away.

[Read the FastCompany article](#)

The King of the Pokies:

If you are looking for an example of the kind of problematic view of the relationship between philanthropy and business that the participants in the Pictet survey seem to be rejecting, then you would need look no further this month than [a fascinating piece from Australia's ABC News profiling the "King of Pokies" Len Ainsworth](#).

Ainsworth, as the article explains, made his money by pioneering the development of poker machines (or "pokies"), and used the wealth he amassed to influence local and national politics in Australia (and beyond) to introduce rules that were more amenable to gambling, thus allowing his empire to grow further. Following a health scare in the early 1990s, Ainsworth got involved in philanthropy in a big way, becoming a major donor to many hospitals, museums and other institutions. In 2017 he became the third Australian to sign up to the Giving Pledge, promising to give away at least 50% of his wealth by the time he dies.

The article contrasts this story with that of Nelson Nghe, an artist from Western Sydney whose childhood was heavily affected by family gambling addictions that were strongly linked to poker machines, and who is now trying to shed further light on the relationship between Ainsworth's philanthropy and how he made his money in the first place.

This is a really interesting example of the phenomenon of tainted donations, where concerns about the impact of certain modes of wealth creation pose deep ethical questions about whether efforts to do good through philanthropy based on that wealth should be seen as legitimate or not. Gambling is obviously still legal in many places, including Australia, but it is also widely recognised that it causes great harm to some individuals and their families by driving addiction. Len Ainsworth himself seems to have been pretty resistant to admitting any culpability, arguing that gambling is a matter of individual responsibility, but

intriguingly the article suggests that at least one younger member of the Ainsworth family feels quite differently - and that they have anonymously supported organisations working on reducing harms from gambling addiction because they feel a measure of guilt about where their wealth has come from.

Anyway, I would really recommend this article. Not only is it well-written, and telling a story that I wasn't familiar with, but the web formatting is particularly well done (which is not something I would normally notice, but is very apparent here!)



[Read the article](#)

AND FINALLY: The history of arts philanthropy

I really struggled this month to find a suitable "and finally" story (you know - 'makes you laugh, makes you cry, but also makes you think' - that sort of thing). So instead I thought I would round things off with a not-especially-amusing-but-definitely-interesting article instead. The piece in question was by Leslie Ramos for ArtReview, and [traced the history of the relationship between art and philanthropy](#) - from its roots in individual patronage through to today's support for major art

institutions and projects that use art as a means to achieve other social outcomes.

It even has a couple of original cartoons about philanthropy in it, which sealed the deal for me!

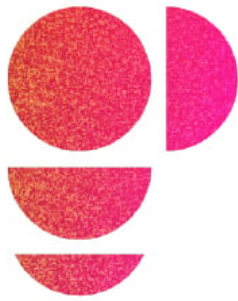


[Read the article](#)

OK, that about does it for the May round-up. I will make it my mission next month to find a suitable "And Finally" story for the next newsletter at the end of June, but until then stay well.

Best,

Rhodri



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