



Welcome to the March 2026 newsletter

Hello there philanthropoids,

I hope you are all well. Or at least as well as can be expected against the ongoing backdrop of political and economic chaos.

Whilst, understandably, philanthropy hasn't exactly been at the front of the news agenda given everything else that is going on in the world right now, there have still been a couple of big stories that cut through this month for us to explore, plus loads of interesting snippets from the further reaches of the philanthro-sphere to report back on.

I also have some big news of my own. As some of you may have already seen, [it was announced this month that in May I will be taking up a new job as Director of Philanthropy Knowledge for Alliance magazine](#). This is going to be a 3-day a week role, so my current plan is very much to continue with Why Philanthropy Matters alongside it, and to keep producing this newsletter and the Philanthropisms podcast. If I prove to be hopelessly naïve in my belief that all these things are feasible at the same time, then I may of course have to recalibrate in future. But for now, let's go with optimism. (Yay! Optimism!)

The new Alliance role is going to involve plenty of me getting out and about and talking about all things philanthropy, and I'm hopeful there

will also be new opportunities to work with some of you – so if you’re reading this and that sounds interesting, then do get in touch!

The other exciting bit of news this month is that we had probably our highest-ever profile guest on the podcast: the philanthropist Craig Newmark. That’s right – an actual giving pledge signatory for you!

Mentioning this in the 5th paragraph might seem slightly like burying the lede, but I can promise that the episode itself is very much worth checking out!

Right, that’s enough preamble. Let’s get stuck into the newsletter.

Rhodri

PHILANTHROPY IN THE NEWS

A Brit Grim: UK Giving down

This month saw the publication of the [2026 edition of the annual UK Giving report from CAF](#), which provides an overview of key trends in charitable giving in the UK. And the picture this year was a rather grim one, [with the total value of donations from individuals down significantly - from £15.4 billion in 2024 to £14 billion in 2025.](#)

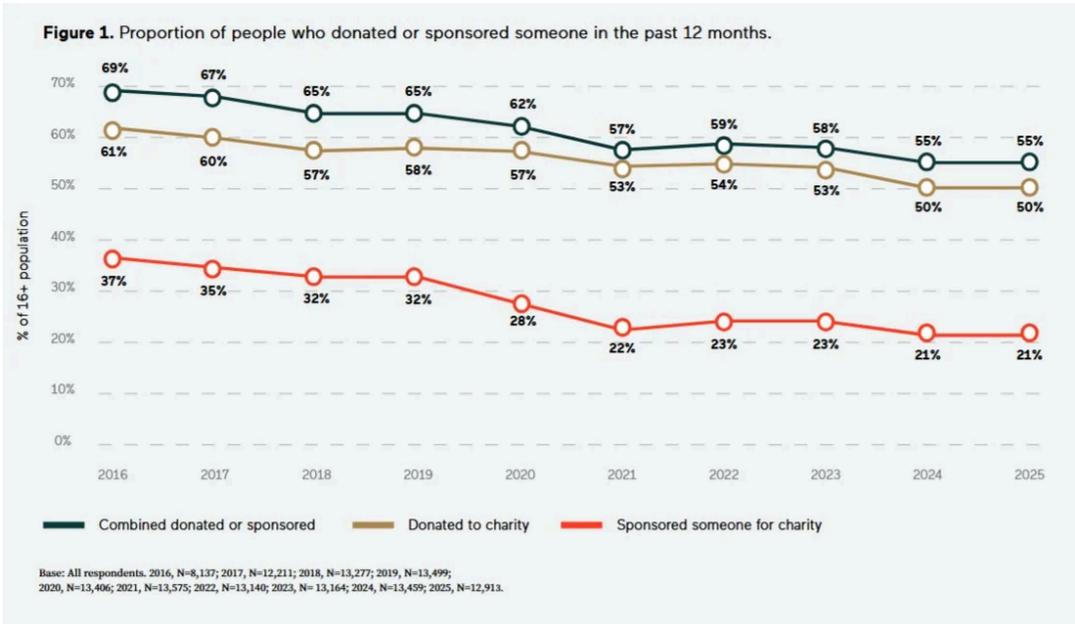


Image credit: CAF

There have been concerns for most of the past decade that the UK is suffering from a long-term decline in giving (as are various other parts of the world). These new figures from CAF appear to confirm this in the starkest possible terms, with the proportion of people giving to charity in 2025 down to 50%, from 61% in 2015. CAF itself has gone as far as to declare that “giving is no longer a deeply embedded cultural norm” and warned that “charities can no longer depend solely on habitual generosity or goodwill from the public”.

A big part of the drop appears to be down to cost of living pressures, with nearly half of those who did not give to charity claiming that the reason was that could not afford to. But the effects of this have been exacerbated by the longer-term process of hollowing out that has been taking place for some time now, in which the charity sector has become increasingly reliant on a dwindling pool of donors. Up til now, these donors have given increasingly large average donations each year, thus keeping the overall amount of giving stable, but if these donors are now feeling the pinch and cutting back on their giving, it is no surprise that the effect on charities is fairly dramatic.

There is currently a fair amount of talk at a policy level about what can be done to encourage philanthropy and charitable giving in the UK. And perhaps the stark nature of these latest CAF figures will help some of that talk turn into action more quickly, which would be no bad thing. However, this is clearly not a matter of quick fixes and easy answers; rather it is about the far more difficult business of culture change, and about addressing cultural and economic factors that are complex and deep-seated. Which is not to say that we shouldn't try, but we should be aware of the scale of the challenge.

The Philanthropy 50

Over in the USA, and at the other end of the spectrum from CAF's research on everyday donors, this month saw the publication of [the Chronicle of Philanthropy's annual “Philanthropy 50” list of the country's donors.](#)



My first thought, as usual, on reading through the list was “wow, that’s a lot of money”, since the amounts involved in the top echelons of US philanthropy still manage to be a surprise. And my second thought, as in previous years, was “who *are* these people?”, as one of the other things that always strikes me about the US is how many big donors there are that even a hardened philanthropy nerd like me has never heard of, yet they are merrily giving away hundreds of millions of dollars. This may be testament to these peoples’ efforts keep a deliberately low profile, or it might just be that in the US you can be extremely rich and philanthropic and still not very well known outside of your own city or state – simply because the country is very big and economically spread out.

This year’s Philanthropy 50 has attracted some criticism from those who feel there are names missing from the list which should be on there, and conversely that there are names on the list which should potentially be excised. Many were surprised, in particular, to find MacKenzie Scott’s name absent, despite the fact that she reportedly gave more than \$7 billion last year. According to the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* this is [because Scott and her representatives did not respond to requests for information to confirm her donations, so by their methodological criteria her giving could not be counted](#). (Which is in some ways fair enough, but also when your methodology leads to a result that is quite so glaringly anomalous, this might also be the time to sense check

whether it is the right methodology...) Others, meanwhile have [raised question marks about why some donors about whom there are serious ethical concerns have been kept on the list](#) (e.g the banker Denny Sandford, who was investigated for possession of child pornography back in 2019 and then removed from the Giving Pledge in 2023).

Frayed at the Pledges? The Giving Pledge in Decline

Sticking with elite philanthropy for a moment, there was also lots of further discussion this month about whether the Giving Pledge is on the wane. This was prompted by a *New York Times* article proclaiming a “Billionaire backlash against a philanthropic dream”, which highlighted the fact that the numbers of new signatories to the pledge have been dropping rapidly in recent years, whilst at the same time a new anti-philanthropy narrative coming out of Silicon Valley ideology has taken aim at the Giving Pledge.



In particular, the billionaire tech investor and [antichrist botherer](#) Peter Thiel has taken it upon himself to undermine the Giving Pledge at every turn – raising questions about its relevance and legitimacy, and [encouraging other billionaires not to sign \(or to unsign if they have already made a pledge\)](#). (NB: for more on Thiel’s worldview and its possible impact on philanthropy, [check out this WPM article](#)).

The challenge for the Giving Pledge is that at the same time it is also [under fire from critics at the progressive end of the spectrum](#), who raise concerns about the lack of mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability in terms of progress against pledges and point out that as a result, the majority of signatories to the Giving Pledge are nowhere near their goal of giving away half of their wealth during their lifetimes. (Although there are honourable exceptions to this, including Craig Newmark, who you can hear as a guest on the latest episode of the Philanthropisms podcast talking about the Giving Pledge and many other things).

Many of the elements of this story about the decline of the Giving Pledge have been around for a few years now, but it definitely feels like this is coalescing into a clearer narrative and gaining traction. Which raises a bunch of questions in my mind:

- For one thing, is this slowing down just an inevitability, given that a pledge like this is likely to attract the low-hanging fruit early on (i.e. those who are already bought into the idea of public giving as a virtue), and once you are passed them you get into the long tail of much more reluctant sign-ups?

-Is it also partly a reflection of a shifting political and cultural climate: if power is now seen as the most important currency, and care for others is viewed as a weakness, does it take more commitment to position yourself as a philanthropist?

-Similarly, if extreme/crass wealth is to now to be celebrated (<ahem> gold plated ballrooms etc...), then does any sense of a moral responsibility to give become weakened?

-Or is this a result of the new gospel of wealth that seems to have emerged in Silicon Valley, where at best the work of philanthropy is claimed to be more effectively done by commercial technologies (which also, conveniently, are creating vast fortunes); and at worst, philanthropy is actively deprecated as a 'scam'? (This is certainly the suggestion in the NY Times article).

-Is there also a certain lack of leadership for the Giving Pledge now, given that the three people originally driving it – Bill Gates, Melinda

French Gates, and Warren Buffett – have stepped away or reduced their public profile for various different reasons? In the early days of the pledge, these three were out and about trying to encourage other wealthy people around the world to sign up (with varying degrees of success, it should be said), but Buffett is now 95; Melinda French Gates seems to be happy focussing on her own philanthropy following her divorce; and Bill Gates continues to face difficult questions about his relationship with the disgraced financier and sex criminal Jeffrey Epstein, and as a result is increasingly trying to keep a low profile.

There is undoubtedly merit, in my mind, in the idea of wealthy people making a public commitment to philanthropy – as long as that is combined with action, and does not become an end in itself. Whether the Giving Pledge will continue to be the best vehicle for that remains to be seen, but if it does come to an end, we should probably start asking what will take its place.

Who's on Board? New UK Civil Society Council appointed

Fans of UK voluntary sector policy may remember that one of the Labour government's big pledges when it came to power in 2024 was that it would introduce a new "Civil Society Covenant" to strengthen the relationship between civil society and government, and this month it was announced that [a new "Civil Society Council" has been appointed](#) to oversee the implementation of the covenant and to "bring civil society into the heart of government decision-making".



This was largely met with enthusiasm from the charity sector, although it should be said that the approval was not unanimous. There [were those who raised concerns that the make-up of the new council was not reflective of the sector as a whole](#), with representatives primarily being chosen from larger, more formalized organisations. Others have also warned that having a single body that is seen as the main point of contact between a diverse sector and government could cut both ways: whilst it may offer a more direct route to engagement and influence for some, it may also mean that it is easier for government to ignore or sideline the voices of others who are speaking out in other ways.

The Chair of the new Civil Society Council, Kate Lee (CEO of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations), is clearly aware of these potential issues and was keen to clarify that whilst the new council had an important role to play, it should not be seen as a replacement for wider civil society efforts. Lee wrote on on LinkedIn that, “No one should be waiting for permission from the council, or anyone else, to use the legitimacy the covenant brings to start driving change”.

To some extent, this mixed reaction to the announcement of the new civil society council seems to me to be reflective of a series of fundamental tensions within civil society. The tension between informal activity and formalised organisations for instance; or between insider influencing and outsider influencing; or between pluralism and

coherence. And these are not new concerns by any means: as voluntary associations and civil society groups have become more organised and structured, there have always been those who raise concerns that something will be lost. In the US, the political scientist Theda Skocpol has written widely on the dangers of voluntary associations become too managerial and thus losing their original strength as vehicles for grassroots civic engagement and participation. (Concerns which have taken on added urgency in light of current challenges around polarization and the weakened bonds of associational life). Or in the UK, consider what the historian R. J. Morris has to say in his chapter on “Clubs, Societies and Associations” in the *Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, where he describes the efforts of the British government in the early 20th century to formalise the voluntary sector, and thus make it easier to control, in part through the creation of the National Council of Social Service (the forerunner of the modern NCVO):

“Incorporation was more than this. The state now deliberately set out to organise society through the backstairs creation of the National Council of Social Service. Formal ‘voluntary organisations’ were now promoted by the government as a means of communicating with the civil population. Organisations had an ability to mediate, both as opposition and as conciliator. The state needed associations to relate to, to mediate with the mosaic of groups that make up civil society. This trend has continued with great power. Recent urban riots were experienced as major break-down of order and structure, with alienation and anomie crashing through every shop window. By morning, government and press were interviewing community spokesmen and beginning to mediate and bargain. Without formal voluntary organisations this would not have been possible. In a corporatist state the first thing a wise volunteer will do is to seek a grant from the local or national state, and a wise state will look for organisations to subsidise.”

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

This is the section where I provide a bit of an update on what WPM has been up to over the last month or so.

Philanthropisms Podcast

This month was a landmark one for the podcast, with the launch of a new partnership mini-series and also our highest-profile guest ever! The mini-series was put together in collaboration with Mandy van Deven and Chiara Cattaneo from Elemental, and took the idea of “Myths of Philanthropy” as the starting point for a series of fascinating conversations with experts from around the world about some of the ways in which philanthropy needs to be reformed. We were joined by:

- Lisa Cowan (Director of The Haven Fund, previously Vice President of the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation) and Dimple Abichandani (author of [*A New Era of Philanthropy: Ten Practices to Transform Wealth Into a More Just and Sustainable Future*](#)) to discuss the notion of legacy.
- élysse marcellin (Whose Knowledge?) and Tesmeralna Atsbeha (philanthropic strategist & advisor, formerly Wellspring Philanthropic Fund) to discuss presumed knowledge.
- Zaineb Mohammed (Kataly Fund) and Devi Leiper O'Malley (Closer Than You Think) to discuss individualism and scarcity.

I was also delighted (and frankly quite surprised!) to have Craig Newmark, the founder of Craigslist and a recent Giving Pledge signatory, on the podcast as a guest to talk about his views on philanthropy and how he goes about giving.



Philanthropisms podcast

Craig Newmark on philanthropy





Philanthropisms Podcast

Myths of Philanthropy: Introduction, with Mandy van Deven & Chiara Cattaneo



Philanthropisms Podcast

Myths of Philanthropy #1: Legacy, with Lisa Cowan and Dimple Abichandani



Philanthropisms Podcast

Myths of Philanthropy #2: Presumed Expertise, with élysse marcellin & Tesmerelna Atsbeha



Philanthropisms Podcast

Myths of Philanthropy #3: Individualism and Scarcity, with Zaineb Mohammed & Devi Leiper O'Malley



Listen to the episode with Craig

Listen to the episode with Mandy & Chiara

Listen to the episode with Lisa & Dimple

Listen to the episode with élysse & Tesmerelna

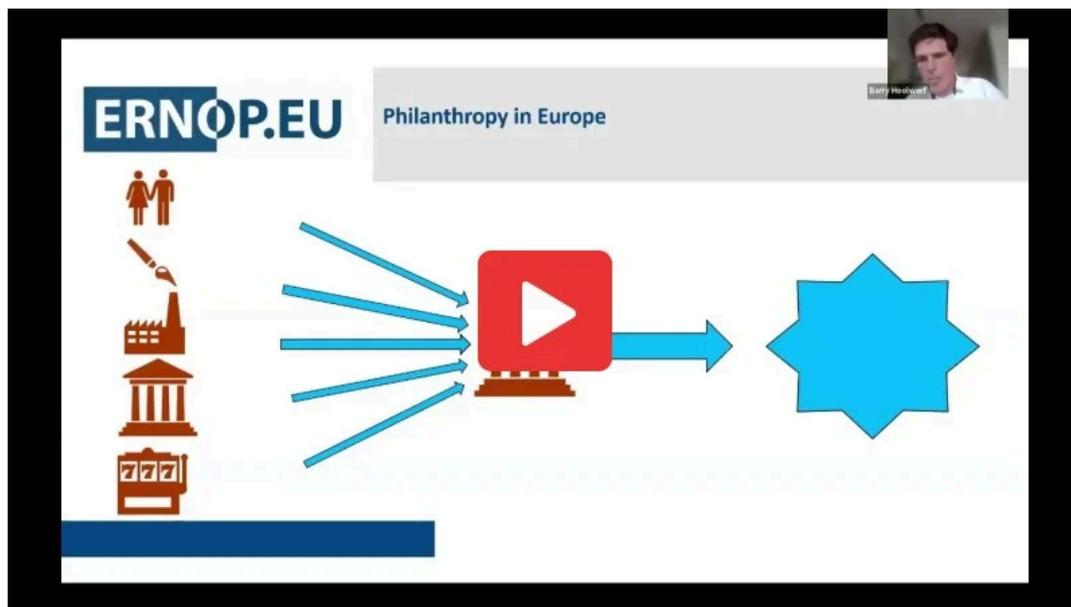
Listen to the episode with Zaineb & Devi

New job!

OK, so I already mentioned this up top, but my big news this month is that I have a new job! From the start of May, I will be [the new Director of Philanthropy Knowledge for Alliance](#). This is going to involve me knowing things about philanthropy, finding out more things about philanthropy, and then sharing them with other people. Which, in all honesty, may not sound like a massive departure from what I already do, except that I very much hope my efforts will go a lot further as a result of working at Alliance, and help the organization to build on all the great work it has already done in fostering knowledge and understanding about global philanthropy. I will also very much be in connecting mode once I am in the new job, so if you are interested in having a chat to find out more or to see how we might be able to work together with my new Alliance hat on, then do get in touch.

Launch of new ERNOP report on Philanthropy in Europe

I helped to moderate the launch event for a major new comparative study on giving in Europe this month, authored by Barry Hoolwerf and Johan Vamstad and published by ERNOP. The report contains detailed snapshots of what we know about giving in individual countries, as well as some really interesting analysis of patterns at a European level and an assessment of the current quality of data that is available. (Which I think it is fair to say is patchy). The report is available now open source, so do check it out.



[Watch the webinar](#)

[Read the report](#)

World Book Day Philanthro-nerdism

As parents of young children will know all too well, this month saw the annual World Book Day – where we all celebrate our shared love of reading through the medium of frantically cobbling together a vaguely literature-adjacent costume from whatever we can find under the bed the night before. To mark the day, and because I own a frankly silly number of books about philanthropy, I decided to share a list of my top “hidden gems” on LinkedIn. In case that sounds of interest, here is that list again in pictorial form, and if you want to read the original post you can do that via the button below.



Read the LinkedIn post

OTHER GOOD STUFF

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

Príncipe environmental protection

There was [a really interesting article in the Guardian this month about a philanthropically-funded environmental project on the African island of Príncipe](#). A South African billionaire named Mark Shuttleworth is offering local people a quarterly dividend payment if they stick to a code of

environmentally positive actions. According to the article, many people on the island have readily embraced the new program; although some are less keen, seeing it as unwelcome outside interference. But whilst there has been plenty for the funder to learn about how to make a program like this work, and the jury remains out for now on the impact of the project, as a dyed-in-the-wool nature lover I find it hard to be anything other than delighted that someone is using their money in this way.

One interesting question that does occur to me is whether there is any exit for the philanthropy? I.e. Does this demonstrate an alternative model of economic value that prioritises nature, which could then be adopted by governments or the private sector? Or does the approach only work when there is philanthropic money available, essentially as a subsidy for lost revenue? It would be really interested to know what the longer-term plans are.

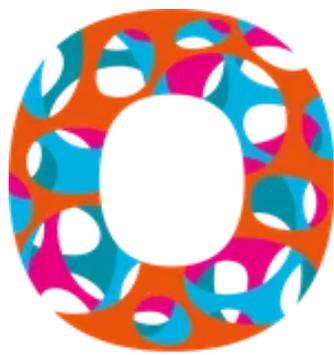


Image credit: [Antoniodabreu, CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

[Read the article](#)

Another landmark gift to a UK charity:

Hot on the heels of his £7.5 million gift to the mental health charity Mind (which we covered in the last newsletter), the venture capitalist Dale W. Wood this month [gave another biggest-ever gift to a UK charity this month: this time £1 million for the Royal Osteoporosis society](#). The money will be used to help the charity strengthen its work on early diagnosis mechanisms for osteoporosis that can help support preventative measures. It is not clear whether there is any blockchain element here (as there reportedly was with the Mind donation) – as far as I can tell it is a straightforward donation. But Wood certainly seems to be making a name for himself as a major UK philanthropist to keep an eye out for.



Royal Osteoporosis Society

Better bone health for everybody

[Read the article](#)

Philanthropy and Global (Dis)Order:

The British Academy and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace launched a new report this month as part of their [ongoing programme on 'global \(dis\)order'](#), this time [looking at the role of philanthropy](#). There may not be anything particularly new for those who are already au fait with critiques of big money philanthropy and foundations, but the main arguments are fairly clearly set out and it is interesting to see them in the context of a mainstream policy paper.



The
British
Academy



CARNEGIE
ENDOWMENT FOR
INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Global (Dis)Order
international policy programme

Philanthropy and global (dis)order

Dan O'Connor, UK National Commission for UNESCO

[Read the report](#)

The impact of US tax changes on charitable giving:

There was an interesting article in *The Conversation* this month by two academics from the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University, highlighting the findings of research they have conducted

into the likely effect of the sweeping package of changes to the tax system signed into effect by Donald Trump last year. Their conclusion is that the changes are likely to result in an increase in the number of donors in the US, but that the overall amounts being given by individuals, families and corporations will fall overall.

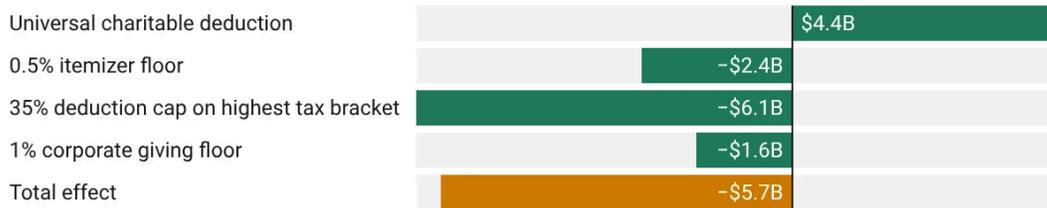
The biggest change is the introduction of a universal charitable deduction, which will allow any taxpayer to deduct up to \$1000 dollars from their taxable income provided they have given at least that much in the year. And they can do this without having to complete an itemized tax return – which was previously necessary in order to claim the charitable deduction, and meant that in practice only around 10% of taxpayers ever actually claimed this. The researchers from the Lilly Family School are clear that this will almost certainly increase the number of people giving.

However, the new bill also introduces other measures that are likely to have a dampening effect on giving elsewhere. Most notably a new floor on eligibility for the charitable deduction, which stipulates that those who itemize their taxes can't deduct any giving below 0.5% of their income; and the lowering of the cap on all tax deductions – from 37% to 35%. Whilst these may seem like relatively small changes, the authors point out that high-value donors tend to be strongly responsive to changes in the tax system (often because they are getting detailed tax advice), so even minor changes can have a big impact. They estimate that the new cap, in particular, is likely to result in a decrease of \$6.1 billion in donations, and that taken all together, the changes in the new package of measures will lead to a drop of \$5.7 billion in the overall amount of annual charitable giving.

This does raise some interesting questions about the purpose of tax policies designed to encourage philanthropy. It is always important to distinguish between the goal of broadening the base of donors (i.e. “getting more people giving”) and the goal of getting existing donors to maximise their giving (i.e. “getting people to give more”), but when those aims appear to run counter to one another, which do you prioritise?

Tax changes starting in 2026 may depress charitable giving

Many provisions in the big tax-and-spending package that President Donald Trump signed into law on July 4, 2025, will affect how much money Americans and U.S. corporations give to charity. Two philanthropy researchers estimate that the reforms will cause giving to be \$5.7 billion lower than it otherwise would have been.



Figures shown are in 2025 dollars.

Chart: The Conversation, CC-BY-ND • Source: Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy • Created with Datawrapper

[Read the article](#)

Brian Eno's reluctant fundraiser:

There was [an interesting piece in *Spear's* magazine this month about the musician Brian Eno's efforts to raise money to support humanitarian aid in Palestine through an auction that is targeting super-rich donors](#). Eno is clearly conflicted about the very notion of wealth (or perhaps not conflicted – he just appears to hate it!) He is also highly critical of the shortcomings of the super-rich when it comes to philanthropy and social responsibility, but grudgingly recognizes the necessity of engaging with this group of potential donors if you want to get important work funded.



[Read the article](#)

Audacious Project raised \$1bn in 2 days to fund nonprofits:

If Brian Eno was looking for reasons to feel more optimistic about the likelihood of the super-rich stepping up to the plate when it comes to philanthropy, he could have found some in another article that came out this month, reporting on the success of the Audacious Project in raising over \$1 billion for nonprofit projects at an event last year.

The Audacious Project is an initiative housed within TED (the organisation that popularised videos of people with Britney Spear-style mics making sweeping claims about How This Thing is Going to Change The Way We Think About These Other Things). It works as a collaborative funding vehicle, bringing together a group of existing major funders and getting them to commit funding to potentially transformative ideas from a range of nonprofits. Last October, the Audacious Project brought together a group of major donor families, including Connie Ballmer and her husband Steve (the former Microsoft CEO), which resulted in \$1.03 billion being committed to more than a dozen nonprofits – ranging from a new research institute in California that is developing a virtual model of a human cell, to an African

nonprofit that provides contraception and sexual health support for teenage girls.

THE AUDACIOUS PROJECT

[Read the article](#)

Encouraging Gen Z civic engagement:

At the other end of the scale from the Audacious Project's mega-philanthropy, another initiative is aiming to boost civic engagement among Gen Z by encouraging them to get involved in small, approachable acts of community outreach as a first step. The project is run by the nonprofit C&S (previously known as the Institute for Citizens & Scholars) and aims to get 20 million people between the ages of 14 and 24 to take some sort of public-spirited action over the next three years. The idea behind this is to offer young people easy opportunities to get involved in social action, since most research shows that the main barrier for this group is not lack of will, but simply not knowing what to do.

[Read the article](#)

Alaska takes giving platforms to court:

Regular readers may remember that in the October edition of this newsletter last year we highlighted a story about GoFundMe getting into hot water for creating fundraising pages for 1.4 million nonprofits without their consent, which it then optimised so that they would appear ahead of the nonprofits' own webpages in searches. This month [it was announced that the state of Alaska has now filed lawsuits against GoFundMe and five other charitable giving and crowdfunding platforms](#) (PayPal Inc., Charity Navigator, JustGiving, PledgeTo and Network for Good), accusing them of creating online donation pages for nonprofits without the organizations' knowledge or consent and then soliciting contributions through those pages. As [US nonprofit law expert Linda Rosenthal explains in a blog about these developments](#), the widening of scope beyond just GoFundMe, and the escalation into full-blown lawsuits, means that this issue is unlikely to go away soon. If it doesn't, then the role of giving platforms may come under closer scrutiny than ever before.



[Read the article](#)

US 'pro-family' group working with anti-LGBT activists in Senegal:

One of the things we have been keeping an eye on in this newsletter over the past year is the impact of the dismantling of USAID, and it is becoming increasingly apparent that one troubling aspect of that impact is the space it has opened up for opportunistic anti-rights groups from the US to export their ideological views. This month, [Reuters carried another worrying story](#) about a 'pro-family' group called MassResistance (which [has been classed as an extremist group by the Southern Poverty Law Center](#)), who have supported Senegalese anti-LGBT activists with campaign strategy and mobilization tactics that may have played a part in the passing of a recent law which saw the maximum prison term for same-sex sexual acts doubled to 10 years.

This is not the first time by any means that MassResistance has worked with organisations in Africa that share its goals, but the organization has clearly been emboldened by the removal of USAID and the regressive approach taken by the Trump Administration towards LGBT groups, which offers a worrying sign of what may be to come.

[Read the article](#)

Family Foundations in Poland:

I am always fascinated to find out about the landscape for philanthropy and the foundation sector in other countries (which is probably a good thing, given the nature of my new Alliance role!), so I was really interested to read [an article this month by Notes From Poland about some of the family foundations that have emerged in the country in recent years](#). The piece highlights the Starak Foundation and the EFC Foundation, both of which were new names to me, and which seem to be funding a range of interesting projects across Poland. It also highlights how import the war in Ukraine has been as a driver for philanthropy in Poland, given the two countries' close proximity and historic links.



[Read the article](#)

Family Offices and Philanthropy:

Sticking with families for minute, there was an intriguing read in *Inside Philanthropy* this month about the role of family offices. These are firms set up to manage the affairs of wealthy families (in some cases just one family, but others operate as ‘multi family offices’), which deal with financial affairs, but also with a wide array of other aspects of the lives of their wealthy clients – including philanthropy. These family offices are often highly secretive and opaque by design, so when donors choose them as vehicles for their giving – which the article suggests a growing number of wealthy people are doing – then it can make it far harder to track where money is coming from and where it is going. As the “great wealth transfer” continues to gather pace, the role of these family offices as gatekeepers to the wealth – and especially to the next generation of wealth holders – is likely to become increasingly important for those who are looking to engage high net worth donors.

Read the article (\$)

Philanthropy undervalues the information ecosystem:

[An article in *Nonprofit Quarterly* this month from Rhett Ayers Butler, founder of the conservation news website *Mongabay*](#), argues that philanthropy still does not fully appreciate the importance and value of a healthy information ecosystem, and is therefore failing to support the kind of infrastructure necessary to maintain this ecosystem. Butlers makes a well-argued case for why supporting journalism and the provision of trustworthy information is in the interest of all funders, and should therefore be seen as something that they all do at least a bit of – rather than a specialist cause area of interest to only a handful of organizations. (For more on the philanthropic funding of journalism, [check out my recent Philanthropisms podcast conversation with Jonathan Heawood from the Public Interest News Foundation](#))



Read the article

Philanthropic funding for 'keystone actors':

While we're on the subject of ecosystems, there was [a good piece in Forbes this month arguing that philanthropic funders should take a lesson from ecology and look to fund the equivalent of "keystone species"](#) if they want to ensure the overall health of systems. The article outlines what this means in practice, including funding catalysts (which may well be individuals) rather than just programs, and also funding infrastructure rather than always focussing on specific outcomes.

I think there is occasionally a slight tendency in modern philanthropy to overuse nature metaphors, but I thought this article made good use of its ecological framing to make some interesting points.



[Read the article](#)

AND FINALLY:

A story from New Zealand caught my eye this month. Two teenagers were arrested after accidentally leaving a backpack containing cannabis and thousands of dollars in cash outside a charity shop, which volunteers picked up, thinking it was a donation. A police spokesperson

told the New Zealand Herald newspaper that "When the shop worker took the bag inside, they noticed that this particular donation had a distinctive pungent aroma".

Presumably the drugs will be taken as evidence in this instance, but imagining for a second that they weren't, I can see a pretty good sitcom or drama premise in the idea of a bunch of well-meaning charity shop volunteers becoming drug dealers in order to raise money for the local animal shelter. (A bit like *Breaking Bad*, but ideally a lot more light-hearted...)



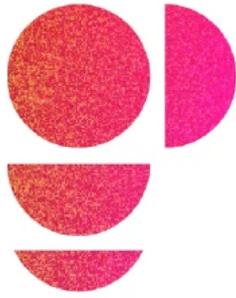
Image created using Google Gemini

[Read the article](#)

Right, that's your lot for another month. I'll be back with another newsletter at the end of March, so until then, adieu.

Best,

Rhodri



Why Philanthropy Matters

Why Philanthropy Matters Haskell
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