

# Secular society warns against 'intelligent design' in Scottish schools

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Edinburgh, 2 November (ENI)--Britain's National Secular Society has warned against undermining the teaching of evolution in Scottish schools after the setting up in Glasgow of a centre on "intelligent design", the idea that the universe is the result of a creative mind.

"The Scottish educational establishment needs to set up safeguards, similar to those which already exist in England and Wales, to ensure that creationism doesn't get into science lessons and create confusion in children's minds," said Terry Sanderson, president of the secular society, which says it promotes the rights of atheists, agnostics and other non-believers.

Sanderson was speaking after the opening in September of Glasgow's Centre for Intelligent Design. Its president is Norman Nevin, emeritus professor of medical genetics at Queen's University in Belfast, and its vice-president is Dr David Galloway, the vice president of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons.

The centre states that intelligent design is the belief that "the natural and living worlds show clear signs of being designed and are not the result of blind, purposeless forces". Opponents of the theory assert that it is really a new version of biblically-based creationism, although the centre rejects this assertion.

Publicly-funded schools in England and Wales were told by the government in 2006 that material distributed to educational establishments advocating "intelligent design" should not be used in the teaching of science.

Sanderson told ENInews that the secular society does not object to creationism being discussed in religious education lessons, while noting, "If you're talking about

what the various religions believe, that's part of their teachings so there's no avoiding it. But as far as science is concerned, we don't need that kind of confusion."

The intelligent design centre's director, Alastair Noble, said the centre had not been established to target schools.

"We don't have specific resources for schools, although there is one text available examining the case for and against neo-Darwinism that we can make available to high schools and colleges, if they wish to have it," said Noble, an education officer with CARE, an agency that campaigns for Christian perspectives across a range of public policy issues.

"We're about giving visibility to an argument that needs to be heard and which is shouted down before anyone gets an opportunity to hear what it is," Noble said in an interview with ENInews.