

Heriot-Watt University Student Union
Annual General Meeting – Tuesday 15 February 2022
Online, Zoom

In attendance

Emily Lucy King (President), Hannah Copeland (VP Education), Shana Faraghat (VP Community), Cameron Maxwell (Chair of Parliament, non voting), Chloe Chandler (School Officer), Connel Greenhorn (MP), Srivathsan Karunanithi (MP), Blair Smyth (Societies Council MP)*, Akshaya Chidhambaram (Trustee, student), Carlos Fitzpatrick (School MP), Ibrahim Malik (School MP), Benedict Aduomahor (PGR MP), Mario Fuente**, Dominic Taylor**, Adam Loxley**, Finley Barrett**, Ethan Smyth**, Jonathan Crocker**, Mark Proudfoot, Carmen Rosas, Pat Bulski*, Fadi Alwadan, Jevin Thomas George, Sophie Watson, Sanobar Khan**, Harshita Chhabra, Hisi Kasaa, Joanna Lee, TK Sanchez, Joe Barnes, Jenni Ballingall, Libby Barber, Aine Thomas**, Osabhie Esangbedo, Liam Cahill, Lucy Cruickshank, Will Cox, Laurie-Ross Fenty, Jack Mavor**, Bruce Wilson, Ryan Farish, Cameron Fields, Katarzyna Zmudzinska**, Declan Murphy**

*Left before meeting close, ** Arrived late

Observers

Darrin Nightingale (CEO), Linda Johnston (External Trustee), Jamie Nutter (Deputy CEO), Genna Nesbitt (Student Engagement Manager), Polly Glynn (Activities Coordinator), Bjorn Spain (Academic Coordinator), Dominika Cichal (Marketing Coordinator)

The meeting opened at 17:45pm

1. WELCOME AND QUORUM COUNT

- 1.1. The Chair, Emily King (President) welcomed everyone to the AGM 2022. EK introduced herself to the meeting and introduced Hannah Copeland (VP Education), Shana Faraghat (VP Community), Darrin Nightingale (CEO).
- 1.2. The Student President handed the Chair to Cameron Maxwell (Chair of Parliament, now referred to as Chair).
- 1.3. The Chair informed the meeting that copies of the agenda were available online and explained that the rules attendees could use to influence how the meeting runs were on the agenda. If students needed any help with this process they were encouraged to direct message the Student Engagement Manager.
- 1.4. Opportunities to ask questions directly would be offered later in the meeting.
- 1.5. The Chair noted that because this meeting was being held in exceptional circumstances, the vote would be done by a virtual show of hands, and invited questions or comments.
- 1.6. The Chair asked the Student Engagement Manager if there were enough students present for the meeting to be quorate.
- 1.7. There were not enough students present so the meeting was not quorate. A vote was taken whether to continue the meeting. The majority voted to **continue** the meeting.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

- 2.1. Copies of the previous Minutes are available online.
- 2.2. There were no matters arising.

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

3.1. A vote was taken to pass the Minutes as an accurate record. The majority voted to **pass** the Minutes.

4. NOTICE OF ADDITION OF Any Other Competent Business (AOCB)

4.1. The Chair opened the floor to AOCB. Members were asked to raise their hands should they have any request.

4.2. Pat Bulski raised that Starbucks is now charging for alternative milks and as there is a Starbucks franchise on campus requested for it to be discussed.

4.2.1. The Chair recommended discussing with a Full Time Officer for it to be discussed at Parliament.

5. CHALLENGES TO THE ORDER PAPER

5.1 No changes were requested to the Order Paper.

6. RESIGNATIONS AND ELECTIONS

6.1. The Chair informed the meeting that in January 2022 the Vice President Wellbeing (Frankie Hulme) resigned from her role. The President, Vice President Community and Vice President Education have been supporting the wellbeing remit.

7. AFFILIATIONS TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

7.1. The Chair informed the meeting that part of our Articles require us to inform the AGM of the organisations we affiliate to.

7.2. The Chair informed the meeting The Student Union was currently affiliated to the National Union of Students (NUS) with an annual fee, last year, of £15,295, and a fee this year of £14,753. The Chair explained why we affiliate to NUS and the benefits we gain from doing so. The floor was opened to any questions from the meeting. No one raised their hands to speak.

8. DATES TO NOTE

8.1. Nominations for elections close tomorrow at midnight (16th February 2022).

8.2. Voting will take place from 7pm, Monday 7th March to 3pm, Friday 11th March with results on 11th March 2022.

9. REPORTS

9.1. **Audited Accounts 2020-21:** The Chair informed the meeting that the Union has their annual accounts audited by external auditors. This is a requirement of the Student Union as a Charity under the rules of the charity governing body OSCR. A copy of the accounts was available online. The Chair asked the Student President to comment on the accounts.

The Student President noted:

- Clean bill of health from the Auditors on an ongoing basis – no issues requiring disclosure
- Loss on normal activities which considering the impact of the pandemic was better than originally anticipated – this was as a result of tight financial management, ongoing financial support of the University and use of available financial grants & support

- In the current year things continue to be challenging but in managing our finances we continue to ensure supporting students and their experience forms part of the financial decision making process.

- 9.2. The Chair asked the meeting if everyone was happy to accept these accounts as showing the correct management of the Student Union. The meeting voted as a majority to **accept** the accounts.
- 9.3. **Officer Reports:** The President and Vice Presidents gave a verbal report on the work they had done this year
- 9.4. The Chair opened the floor for a Q & A Session.
- 9.5. **SRIVATHSAN KARUNANITHI – Is it possible to hand-write exam essays and scan it for submission rather than type on the computer**
VPE suggested it was best to speak to lecturers as this would be course dependant. VPE also suggested using the dictation features of Word rather than typing.

HANNAH COPELAND – Regarding question earlier about milk alternatives

Hannah explained that Libertys offers milk alternatives for no extra charge.

- 9.6. The Chair asked if there were any other questions. There were none.
- 9.7. The meeting voted as a majority to **accept** the officer reports.

10. MOTIONS AND POLICY

Fossil free Heriot-Watt: Cameron Fields spoke for 1.5 minutes on the motion.

10.1.1. Q: **CARLOS FITZPATRICK** – Has the University outlined what they have invested in?

Answer: The University has made it difficult to find out. CF has reached out to various contacts to find out but has not managed to find anything apart from on People and Planet.

10.1.2. Q: **RYAN FARISH** – How do we ensure that this motion is planned for the longer term to convince the University Executive to act on it?

Answer: Edinburgh University had £15m invested, whereas HW has £680k. Edinburgh were able to divest with a much larger amount so Heriot-Watt should be able to as well. Due to the finite amount of fossil fuels, investing in these is not a long-term investment solution. The motion asks for the University's policy to be more accessible, including where and by how much the University has agreed to invest. Other University's have already provided timelines of how they will divest.

10.1.3. Q: **PAT BULSKI** – If the motion was passed and the University agreed, what would you recommend the University invest in instead?

Answer: People and Planet are able to provide a list of alternative investments that are more ethical, however it is believed the University use an external organisation to invest. VPC added that the University is already working towards divestment, this motion is to ensure the Student Union is involved when it happens.

10.1.4. Q: **LAURIE ROSS-FENTY** – Would it be possible for the Student Union to provide alternative options to invest in as an alternative

Answer: The Chair asked to keep questions to the motion at hand and it's actions, and that this question would be better being raised separately.

10.1.5. Q: **IBRAHIM MALIK** – Is this not preventing the University from making money?

Answer: Fossil fuel shares are unstable, so it is not a suitable long-term investment opportunity regardless.

10.1.6. Speech Against: **Laurie Ross-Fenty** spoke against the motion.

I like the idea, and I think it is in the right direction, I just think it is the wrong time to put pressure on the uni.

10.1.7. Speech For: **Shana Faraghat** spoke for the motion.

SF emphasised that the University is already looking to divest, they are taking their time to reinvest in options that would benefit the University and Students. The motion proposed is to include the Student Union (and therefore Students' views) are included in these meetings. The decision over alternatives are not under discussion at this stage.

10.1.8. Speech Against: **Carlos Fitzpatrick** spoke against the motion.

Oil and Gas is still expected to be 40% of the energy mix in 2050. Many students at Heriot-Watt are training to work in the oil and gas industry and divesting from oil and gas won't have an effect as the profit will still remain for these companies.

10.1.9. Speech For: **Lucy Cruikshank** spoke for the motion.

LC believes it is financially beneficial to divest from fossil fuels due to the financial costs of climate change. Passing this motion shows the University that this is something that students are interested in, and there is no need to vote against this motion.

10.1.10. Speech Against: **Ryan Farish** spoke against the motion.

RF agreed climate change is a large issue. However, due to the economic situation at the moment it would be better financially to prioritise income for the long-term future of the University. It would be prudent to invest in renewable energy whilst also keeping a foothold in fossil fuels.

10.1.11. The meeting voted as a majority to **pass** the motion.

Support the upcoming UCU strike action: Cameron Fields spoke for 1.5 minutes on the motion

10.1.12. **Q: JENNI BALLINGALL –Several strikes have happened – how do we actual assist change to support our lecturers?**

Answer: Support can be shown by students through supporting the strikes, such as by joining the picket line.

10.1.13. **Q: SRIVATHSAN KARUNANITHI – Do Student Officers need to attend strike action if the motion passes?**

Answer: This cannot be forced, however some Officers wish to support the strike, but due to the Student Union's current stance of neutrality it's not possible.

10.1.14. **Q: LAURIE ROSS-FENTY – If this is supported by UK students, would this financially impact global campus students who are not able to take a stance?**

Answer: It is believed this is limited to UK campuses so should not impact global campuses. However it is believed Heriot-Watt is profitable so can afford to give lecturers what they deserve.

10.1.15. Speech Against: **Ibrahim Malik** spoke against the motion.

Most Universities are funded by the Government especially staff costs, so to fund these changes then funding would need to be sought. The Government bases this on inflation which is affected by various factors. The real problem is a global economic situation.

10.1.16. The meeting voted as a majority to **pass** the motion.

1.1. Policy Lapse

1.1.1. The Chair explained to the meeting that the two policies noted in the agenda would lapse unless the meeting voted to keep them. The Chair asked that if anyone has read and wants to keep any of the policies they should raise their hand and be prepared to speak in support of the policy.

1.1.2. Nestle Boycott

1.1.2.1. **LUCY CRUICKSHANK** spoke for 1.5 minutes to continue the policy.

Formula milk in areas with dirty water, and in drought ridden areas which worsens the situation. It is important to stand against this situation.

1.1.2.2. **IBRAHIM MALIK** spoke for 1.5 minutes to let the policy lapse.

These countries need the jobs provided by these companies. If higher wages were paid, the companies would move to other countries. This about ethics – there are other countries with poor ethics, and they aren't boycotted.

1.1.2.3. **CAMERON FIELDS** spoke to continue the policy.

Nestle is currently facing child slavery lawsuit in US. Nestle have a history of exploitation by exploiting wages that lead to starvation.

1.1.2.4. **EMILY KING** spoke to let the policy lapse.

Express the view that this motion was submitted in 2014 and the links are no longer available. It is recommended that a new policy is submitted to Parliament so an up to date policy can be discussed.

1.1.2.5. The meeting voted as a majority to **pass** the motion.

1.1.3. The Chair confirmed the remaining policies were now lapsed.

2. AOCB

2.1. There was none.

3. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

3.1. It was agreed the next AGM would take place in February 2023.

The Meeting closed at 7:30PM