**Heriot-Watt University Student Union**

**Annual General Meeting – Tuesday 13 February 2018**

**Zeros, The Union, Edinburgh**

**In attendance**

Diarmuid Cowan (DC) – President (Chair)

Jay Clifford (JC) – Vice President Community

Lucy Graham (LG) – Vice President SBC

Aashna Bakshi (AB) – Vice President Wellbeing

Ellie Dick (ED) – Executive Officer (Welfare)

Hugh Barker (HB) – Executive Officer (Academic)

Aoife Clarke (AC) – Executive Officer (Activities)

Xander McDonald (XMcD) – Executive Officer (Events)

Toby Nadal (TN) – Executive Officer (E&D)

Quan Liang (QL) – International Officer

Ari Finnie (AF) – LGBT+ Officer

Leila Collie (LC) – Women’s Officer

Martyn Shaw (MS) – Disabled Students Officer

Yusuf Ashraf (YA) – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Officer

Vijetha Mohan (VM) – Postgraduate Officer

**Observers**

Gail Edwards – Chief Executive Officer

Jamie Nutter – Head of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO

Denise McCaig – Student Engagement Manager

Gillian Fortune – Executive Assistant (Minute Taker)

**ACTION**

**9.12 Organise Demonstration to show support for UCU Picket Line President**

**13.2.4 Investigate Better Communications and Signage during Library Refurbishment President**

**MOTIONS**

**10.2.4 Lobby University for Restrooms or Everyone President**

**12.4 Continue Nestle Boycott in Student Union CEO**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR CONSIDERATION**

**13.1.2 Transition Funding / Sustainability on Campus President**

**13.2.4 Investigate Unconscious Bias on Campus President**

**The meeting opened at 6.15pm**

1. **WELCOME** 
   1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the AGM 2018. The Chair introduced himself to the meeting and introduced all the Officers who were present at the meeting.
   2. The Chair informed the meeting that copies of the Agenda had been handed out and that the main rules those present could use to influence how the meeting runs were on the reverse of that paper. Any help needed with this process the students were asked to approach the CEO.
   3. Students were also invited to ask any Officer any question during the meeting anonymously by writing the question and “posting” it in the post box on the tables beside the CEO. Opportunities to ask questions directly would be offered later in the meeting.
2. **QUORUM COUNT**
   1. The Chair explained why the count took place and asked every ordinary member present to hold up their hands to be counted. The meeting was in quorate.
3. **MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**
   1. Copies of the previous Minutes are attached to the Agenda. There were no matters arising from the previous Minutes.
   2. A vote was taken to pass the Minutes as an accurate record. The majority voted to pass the Minutes with 8 Abstaining from the vote.
4. **NOTICE OF ADDITION OF AOCB**
   1. The Chair opened the floor to AOCB. Members were asked to raise their hands should they have any request.
   2. One member asked that loss of funding for Transition be discussed as this will stop any sustainability projects on campus. This item would be added to the Agenda.
   3. One member asked that the consequences of the refurbishment of the Library at this time be discussed. This item was added to the Agenda.
5. **CHALLENGES TO THE ORDER PAPER**
   1. No changes were requested to the Order Paper.
6. **RESIGNATIONS AND ELECTIONS**
   1. There were no resignations to note. The Election would be opened up right after the AGM. Nominations would be opened then until 12 noon 28 February. Any questions about the Elections process, members were requested to ask the Deputy Returning Officer, Denise McCaig.
7. **AFFILIATIONS TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

7.1 The Chair informed the meeting that we were currently affiliated to the National Union of Student (NUS) with an annual fee of £23,184. The Chair explained why we affiliate to NUS and the benefits we gain from doing so.

7.2 The floor was opened to any questions from the meeting. No one raised their hands to speak.

1. **REPORTS**

8.1 **Audited Accounts 2015-16**: Copies of the accounts were distributed to the meeting. The chair informed the meeting that the Student Union has their annual accounts audited by external auditors. This is a requirement of us as a charity.

8.1.1 The key bits of information given to the meeting were:

* This year was a solid year where we have continued to operate profitably and build on our resources as required by OSCR, the Scottish Charities Regulator.
* Last year’s comparative figures were for the year the Union incorporated and were affected by the transfer of assets and liabilities from the old “Association” and the introduction of new accounting requirements, this year’s accounts are a more consistent reflection of the ongoing work of the Union.
* Figures have been subject to an independent and robust audit which found no major issues or management control weaknesses.
* The commercial areas of business continue to contribute to the charitable aims of the Union, whilst delivering value to customers. The shop being more successful, the union bar and catering profitability continues to prove challenging.
* Annual contribution continues to grow and was approximately £580k in the current year and has risen again in 2017/18.
* The Alumni Fund continues to support specific projects and societies annually by over £25k per annum.

8.1.2 The Chair asked the meeting if all were happy to accept these accounts as showing the correct management of the Student Union. The meeting voted as a majority to accept the accounts with 1 abstention.

8.2 **Officers’ Reports**: Each Sabbatical Officer narrated a presentation which was projected to the large screen in the venue. Each Sabbatical informed the meeting of what they and their Officers had done and what they proposed to do in the rest of their year of office.

8.2.1 The floor was opened to questions from the meeting about any of the presentation or any questions they wished to put to the Sabbaticals and Office Bearers of the Union.

8.2.2 One student suggested that the Transition Office/sustainability for the University going forward, this would need further consideration from the Student Union. No other questions or comments arose.

8.2.3 A vote was taken and a unanimous vote accepted the Officers Reports.

1. **STAFF STRIKE ACTION**

9.1 The Chair had invited representatives from both sides to come along to the AGM and put forward their views to the students attending the meeting. The HWU President of the UCU, James Richards, was in attendance. However, the Principal of the University was unable to attend and had failed to send along a representative for the University.

9.2 The UCU President was given the floor to address the meeting and he subsequently gave a brief background on the history of this issue and how changes to pensions had affected staff and lecturers over the years. He also added how proposed new changes would affect staff and how the UCU and University had got to the current state of affairs. Over 30 meetings had been held so far and the UCU would like to get back to the table and negotiate, but the University seemed reluctant to do so. The first day of strike would be Thursday 22 February, he reiterated that the UCU don’t want to take strike action or cause disruptions, they wanted the negotiations to reopen.

9.3 The floor was opened to a Q & A session. The mains questions were:

* + More details of the pension offered.
  + Did the UCU feel the politics of the strike was coming from “Oxbridge”.
  + Understood the change to pensions demoralised staff, but did they understand how this demoralised students. Were deadlines going to be changed to take account of the disruptions taking place?
  + The students would email the Principal of the University to show support but was there anything else they could do.
  + How would the UCU feel about students demonstrating at their picket line to show their support?
  + Chemistry students were worried as this would affect their lab work and their exams as they needed so many hours of lab work to qualify. What would happen if the disruptions affected these students?

9.4 The Chair at this point informed the meeting of Mitigating Circumstances which the students could use if needed. The Student Union were currently calling for this to be made available.

* Another student spoke of accredited degrees being affected as the hours for these degrees were very tight and any disruption was detrimental. How could students make up this time if affected?

9.5 The Chair informed the meeting that the Student Union were aware this issue affected other universities, so the Student Union think this issue will be addressed by the University when needed.

* A student stated that there seemed to be a difference in what the Principal was saying to students and what he was saying to UCU members. The student stated that groups of students would be looking to show their support through student media and would make sure people knew that students supported UCU and would be working with them towards preventing strikes happening. 100 students have emailed the university already and have each received a reply.
* There were questions as to what would be happening to the monies deducted from staff for striking. The Vice Chancellor had not said it would go to the Hardship Fund for students, although this would hopefully be the outcome. St Andrews University has made the decision to do this, this issued should be addressed as soon as possible by the University.
* A student stated that there was a lot more involved than money. The student had been unable to access the library facilities and had already missed four weeks, how was the Student Union going to support the strike and how were student going to get the support they needed to study.

9.6 The Chair stated that the Student Union would ask students what action they wanted the Union to take.

9.7 The UCU President stated that students should show support in a way that would not affect their studies and would be in keeping with what they felt appropriate to them to do.

9.8 The Chair closed the Q & A session. He stated that the Executive Committee had discussed the issues and now wanted the students attending the AGM to show if they were happy with the statement given out by the Student Union. The Chair read out the statement for those students who had not previously seen it.

9.9 A vote was taken and the majority voted to continue support as per statement of intention. 4 were against the motion and 10 abstained from voting.

9.10 The Chair then asked the floor if the students at the AGM wished to set up a demonstration as previously mentioned in support of the UCU.

9.11 The floor was opened to students who wished to speak in favour of a demonstration and to students who wish to speak against a demonstration being organised.

* Elizabeth Birch and James Clark spoke in favour.
* Alexander Hedlund spoke against the proposal.

9.12 A vote was taken on the proposal that the Student Union should organise a student demonstration and show support on social media for the UCU. The proposal was agreed by a majority vote. There were 10 votes against the proposal.

1. **MOTIONS**

**10.1 Motion Title: Articles of Association**

A copy of the Articles of Association had been circulated with proposed changes noted. The changes are generally issues that need tidied up. The Chair drew attention to some key changes which were:

**Pages 11/12 Article 21**: Removal of Register of Members. This is an irrelevant clause from the incorporation process and an error as we do not need to hold this under our legal framework.

**Page 12 Article 33.4**: The AGM does not normally elect or appoint Trustees (sabbaticals must be elected by cross campus ballot and we have a trustee appointment committee). There are other Articles that allow the AGM to hold Trustees to account or remove Trustees should here be a need.

**Page 17 Article 73:** Changing term of Student Trustee from 32 terms of 1 year to 2 terms of 2 years. Student Trustee still must be matriculated so likelihood of full 4 year term is low.

**Page 18 Articles 81-83**: This is taken directly from the Bye laws. We think these regulations should be enshrined in our Articles as it is a core governance matter.

**Pages 18/19 Articles 85-87**: Tightening up on Trustee accountability.

**Pages 21/22 Articles 102 & 103**: Bringing quorum requirement from Bye Laws into Articles and tightening up on definition to allow greater flexibility.

**Page 24 Articles 124-131**: There is currently no guidance on the process for making alterations to the Articles other than a general meeting must pass them. Therefore the CEO has inserted the requirements that used to exist in our old Constitution.

10.1.1 A vote was taken to pass the changes to the Articles of Association. The changes were passed by a majority.

**10.2 Motion Title: Provide restrooms suitable for everyone – able bodied or otherwise**

**Proposer: Martyn Dewar, Disabled Students Officer**

**Seconder: Ellie Dick, Executive Officer (Welfare)**

**The Student Union Notes:**

1. The current University campus layout provides an accessible toilet in most buildings - typically, this is a "gender neutral" bathroom, however, in some buildings (such as Earl Mountbatten), it is gender specific, meaning students who do not identify with a binary gender are unable to use them.
2. The University, however, does not provide any "Changing Places" facility (defined in BS8300:2009), meaning, students who have disabilities that prevent them from using an 'ordinary' accessible bathroom are effectively locked out of a University education as there is no suitable facility for them.

**The Student Union Believes:**

1. The provision of an accessible bathroom is a right, and, by failing to provide a suitable facility for students (who, as a result of their disability, require assistance with these functions), the University is locking out potential students, and therefore, failing to widen access to groups who would otherwise be able to take part in academic life and gain a Heriot-Watt degree.
2. Furthermore, the current policy of designating the accessible bathrooms as the "gender neutral" bathroom is not serving any part of the community as it limits access for all. The Student Union believes that this would be better solved by providing gender neutral bathrooms as part of on-going Campus refurbishment programmes, rather than continuing with the status quo, which is to provide bathrooms which are assigned to a binary gender (e.g. Male / Female).

**The Student Union Resolves:**

1. To lobby the University to ensure that a "Changing Places" facility is provided in the new academic buildings which are being built on Campus in Riccarton, therefore enabling those students who would otherwise be unable to attend Heriot-Watt to attend and participate.
2. Further, the SU resolves to lobby the University to ensure that during new build (and refurbishment programmes) the University provides an acceptable number of gender neutral bathrooms that are in suitable locations and built to a standard which allows persons of all genders to feel safe while using the facility.

10.2.1 Martyn Dewar gave a brief report to the meeting on why the Motion was needed. No one spoke against the Motion.

10.2.3 Several questions were asked on various points. Emily Attwater stood and informed the meeting of personal experiences and belief why the bathrooms were needed. Ellie Dick stood and gave a brief summation on the Motion debate.

10.2.4 A vote was taken and the Motion was passed by a majority. There was one vote against and one abstention.

1. **CONTINUANCE OF MEETING**
   1. Because the meeting was going to overrun the Chair asked for a vote from the floor. Did the meeting continue past 8pm until all business on the Agenda was discussed, resolved and voted on, if needed?
   2. Did the meeting finish now and another meeting be called to cover remaining items on the Agenda? A vote was taken, with the result of 9 abstentions and 16 for and 16 against the proposal - a draw. The Chair tossed a coin and the decision was made to continue the meeting.
2. **POLICY RELAPSE**

12.1 **Nestle Boycott: This policy was agreed at the AGM held on 18 February 2014 after it had been agreed at an NUS Conference that same year. Because this is a policy relapse it is current policy of the Union**.

Motion title

Say no to Nestle Corporation within Heriot-Watt University Student Union.

Conference Notes

1. Nestle products are used within Heriot-Watt University Student Union.
2. There has been a boycott of Nestle since the 1970s. This began in the United States and expanded t

Europe. It was prompted by concern about Nestlé's "aggressive marketing" of [breast milk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breast_milk) substitutes, particularly in [less economically developed countries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developing_country), which campaigners claim contributes to the unnecessary suffering and deaths of babies, largely among the poor.

1. The boycott continues today and as of 2013 is coordinated by the International Nestlé Boycott Committee.(INBC)
2. Some universities, colleges, and schools have banned the sale of Nestlé products from their shops and vending machines in the period since the revelations. In the United Kingdom, 73 student unions, 102 businesses, 30 faith groups, 20 health groups, 33 consumer groups, 18 local authorities, 12 trade unions, education groups, 31 MPs, and many celebrities support the Nestlé boycott.
3. Nestle corporation are widely known for their immoral and unethical practises across the globe. Issues including:
4. Workers’ Rights
5. Exploiting Farmers
6. Union busting
7. Human rights
8. Extremely unethical business practice
9. Unethical marketing of Artificial Baby Milk

vii Fraudulent Labelling

viii Promoting unhealthy food

ix. The Ethiopia Scandal

x Perpetuating sexism

xi Severe Environmental concerns

xii Promotion of Genetically Modified food

xiii Illegal extraction of groundwater

xiv Pollution

xv Promoting untested nano-technology

xvi Violations of Fair Trade

xvii Influence/Lobbying Groups

* Research and Education
* Links with Government

Conference Believes

By boycotting Nestle products Heriot Watt University Student Union are:

1. Supporting the INBC
2. Showing awareness of political, environmental and ethical issues.
3. Inspiring other universities and institutions to act responsibly on global issues.
4. Attracting environmentally conscious students to the institution.
5. Creating a more politically aware and conscientious environment for the students.

Conference Resolves

* + - 1. A full boycott of all Nestle products within Heriot-Watt University Student Union.

12.2 There is no proposer so the Chair opened the floor for speeches for and against the Motion.

Leila Collie and Emily Attwater spoke for the Motion and Xander McDonald spoke against the Motion.

No one else wanted to speak for or against the Motion.

12.3 The Chair proposed a vote to continue the current policy of boycotting Nestle products within HWU Student Union.

12.4 A vote was taken and the majority voted to continue the current policy. There were two abstentions.

1. **AOCB**

13.1 **Transition Funding**: Sam Van den Bogaerde had asked for Transition Funding to be noted and considered by the AGM. Sam spoke further on the subject reporting to the meeting that Transition, which had been set up by the University to organise sustainability projects on the campus, was now without funding and was being closed down. Would the Student Union be able to consider helping out the current projects to enable them to continue. He felt strongly that HWU had no policy that covered sustainability.

13.1.1 The floor was opened and discussion took place with several points of view being put forward. How to get further, future funding for Transition which had been project based before. How to get students interested in sustainability to encourage further projects.

13.1.2 A vote was taken for the Student Union to have their Executive Committee decide on / create sustainability policy. This was agreed with a vote of 20 with 6 abstentions.

13.2 **Library Refurbishment**: Elizabeth Birch had asked for Library Refurbishment and its effects on students to be noted and considered by the AGM. Currently the refurbishment of the Library was causing much disruption. They were doing the work floor by floor which meant students were unsure which rooms were open and when. No communication had been made by the University to the students about his disruption and why was the work being done during semester when vacation time would have been better.

13.2.1 The Chair informed the AGM that the refurbishment had been planned to start in the summer vacation and the University wanted it to be done floor by floor so the work would not interfere with the students using the facilities. However, problems with the Contractors had put the start date back resulting in the current situation. The Chair agreed better communications were needed and better signage.

13.2.2 The Disabled Students Officer stated that certain exits created problems and wheelchair access was limited, the DS Officer would try and find out if due consideration was being given to disabled access.

13.2.3 The Chair stated that the current plans were to keep the library functioning as much as possible. Books could be requested through library staff and online resources could be accessed. Printers were available in the Postgraduate Centre and in study spaces. School Officers would monitor the situation. Several students asked about alternative spaces available for study space.

13.2.4 The Chair agreed to investigate better communications and signage and will try and get better update information from the University.

13.3 **Unconscious Bias**: Ralitsa Dimitrova spoke on this subject. She said the University were not doing enough to address this bias and they needed to do more as unconscious bias was pervasive throughout the University. The Physics Department was particularly bad. Ralitsa felt that an in-depth discussion on what is wrong throughout the University needs to take place.

It was stated that there is lots of training available which includes this subject so it is difficult to see why it is so endemic.

13.3.1 A vote was taken to pass this subject for consideration to the Student Union Executive Committee. The vote was passed with a majority. One vote against and 10 abstentions.

13.4 **Sustainability Question**: James Clark, member of the Sustainability Society stood and asked that the subject of a Sustainability Officer be given proper discussion and proper consideration.

13.4.1 The Chair gave the background to this question stating that the question of a Sustainability Officer was raised at the AGM 2017. At that time it was voted on and then passed to the Executive Committee to discuss whether such an Officer was needed. The outcome was that sustainability was added to each Officer’s remit.

13.4.2 The Chair stated that the subject was discussed at the AGM and given full democratic rights at the Executive.

13.4.3 James continued to try and influence the meeting to discuss the topic and gave his views that the subject needed further discussion. He felt strongly that such an Officer was needed.

13.4.4 Several students gave their views, among them that the closure of Transition would not be replaced by having such an Officer as it would be a voluntary role taking on the work that was covered by at least four full time members of staff, it wouldn’t work.

13.4.5 The Chair declared that the topic had already been discussed and voted on.

1. **The Chair closed the floor.**
   1. The Chair reminded everyone at the meeting that there were lots of ways for students to engage and get involved.
   2. The Big Elections nominations would open immediately after the AGM.
2. **The meeting closed at 8.30pm.**