



the DURHAM UNION

STANDING COMMITTEE: MONDAY 8TH JULY 2024

In Attendance:

Jerry Li – President

Oliver Dawson – Treasurer

Oliver Lycett – Secretary

Ben Daunter – Custodian

Reece Short – Social Secretary

Anna Beskhmel'nitskaya – Publicity Officer

Charles Aldous – President-elect

Severino Bonvini – Debating Treasurer

Apologies:

Miles Weekes – Equalities Officer

The meeting began at 19:04. The Secretary is taking the minutes.



Item One: University Investigation and the SU Vote

The committee discussed the SU's decision not to end the boycott of the Union. The President noted the disappointment of the result, and efforts to find out more about how the SU meeting was conducted, along with voting figures. The Custodian was in attendance of the meeting in question, but did not know the voting margin. He noted that no-one asked any questions of us, suggesting that the SU has continued to boycott the Union for the sake of doing so.

The committee discussed the view of the Trustees on our public statements. The committee concluded that our statements should not be overly apologetic – in light of the fact that we have very little reason to be so. The committee discussed whether or not the Union would be allowed into the Freshers' Fair, with clarity over the matter to follow in due course.

The committee discussed the potential benefits of partnering with the Free Speech Union in the future. The committee supported this as a helpful funding opportunity, and as a positive point of counsel going forwards. Equally, the President noted the support offered by Nick Hillman towards the Union. The committee concluded that speaking to Iain Mansfield on the matter of the Freedom of Speech (Higher Education) Act could be helpful – considering his role in writing it.

The President-elect joined the meeting at 19:17.

The Debating Treasurer joined the meeting at 19:19.

Item Two: Update from the President-elect

The President-elect noted the addition of Jonathan Wilks (former Ambassador to Iraq) to the Alumni Advisory Board (AAB). The President-elect commented on the potential to build the AAB into a helpful networking tool for members. Similarly, the committee discussed the need to start making plans for the Alumni Christmas Reception in London. The President-elect summarised the members of the AAB. The committee further discussed the function of the AAB as a means of bridging the gap between current members, and graduates; particularly concerning the organisation of alumni events.



The President-elect commented on beginning plans for organising Epiphany Term 2025. He noted ambitions to capture a wide range of different speakers for both addresses and debates. The Custodian noted the importance of bringing in speakers that have wider appeal beyond core Union members whose interests are chiefly politics, finance and law.

Item Three: Michaelmas Ball – 23rd November

The deposit for the Michaelmas Ball has been paid at £500. The second instalment will be in September at 40% of the total balance – meaning the price of 80 people. The President has been in touch with the Social Secretary and Publicity Officer regarding graphics for the Ball, and the Ball Instagram Account will be advertised on the Freshers' Instagram. Tickets will be put on UpMind as early as late August. The Ball Page will be ready in time for Freshers' Week, when there will be a launch.

The President noted talks with potential sponsors for the Ball; he has been in touch with a Black Tie company (sponsorship worth £300). Ticket price has not yet been decided, but will be targeted under £80. The Social Secretary noted that the price of the coach, dinner and food will total £70 of the ticket price. The committee discussed the high price of the Ball, and potential difficulties down the line concerning ticket sales. The committee discussed the potential to cut costs by paying a reduced fee for the Publicity Officer to act as photographer for the Ball. Transportation totals £1300 for the Michaelmas Ball.

Item Four: Publicity Schedule

The committee agreed that an action plan for the Freshers' Instagram page should commence very soon. The first post will be scheduled to go out on A-Level results day on August 15th, with 26 core posts to follow (A-Z). Term Card templates have been made by Chris Straughan, and work on the Term Card will commence very soon. A meeting will be held with those seeking to help with the Instagram content – date TBC.



Item Five: Update on Welfare Officer Application Email

The Secretary updated the committee on plans for the Welfare Officer email. Currently, the lists on UpMind have not yet been updated, and the Secretary is waiting on UpMind admin to do so. The email will be sent out as soon as the necessary changes are made. In the meantime, the committee concluded that the Secretary will send out an email so that Masters' students can opt-in to future emails.

Item Six: Intercollegiate Debating Competition

The Debating Treasurer noted the need for Secretary's Committee to assist with the hosting of the Intercollegiate Debating Competition. The event infrastructure will be designed by Debates Committee, but implementation and advertisement will be assisted by the Secretary, Assistant Secretary and the Secretary's Committee. The committee concluded that a non-BP format for the competition would be preferable as it is more accessible to those not familiar with the style.

Item Seven: Local Consultation – Sponsorship

The President noted that we have historically relied on good relationships with local businesses for sponsorship. The committee agreed that attracting local sponsorships for debates would be very positive. The committee discussed reviving Treasurer's Treats as a means of achieving greater local engagement for sponsorship. The Treasurer has been seeking sponsorship from larger, national firms, whilst the Sponsorship Officer has been taking charge of local consultation. The Treasurer noted plans to visit local businesses in the advent of Michaelmas Term. The Treasurer commented on an upcoming meeting with the Free Speech Union on the matter of sponsorship. The Social Secretary was asked to look into raffle prizes, to which he agreed.

The committee discussed the potential to sell Union branded Port. The Custodian noted the high demand for such a product, and how well it has sold in the past. The committee concluded that Union Port could be sold at the bar, and also used as prizes for events.

The meeting ended at 20:21.