



the DURHAM UNION

MEETING OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 11TH FEBRUARY 2026

LOCATION: THE READING ROOM, 24 NORTH BAILEY

The meeting commenced at 14:06; the Secretary is taking the minutes.

Item One: Welcome and Greetings

The President opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Item Two: Election of the Returning Officer

One valid nomination:

- Adam McIntyre of University College, Proposed by India Jubb of University College, Seconded by Reuben Fisher of University College.

Adam McIntyre, Candidate:

Adam McIntyre outlined his previous experience, citing 357 days on the Rules Committee, seven months as Deputy Returning Officer, and prior service as Custodian. He described the Returning Officer role as a “backroom” position and emphasised the importance of improving the publicity of elections, particularly during Michaelmas Term.

Mr McIntyre further criticised the “bureaucratic” nature of the Rules Committee and committed to making the Constitution more readable and accessible for

ordinary members. He also pledged to publish Rules Committee case law and to continue Rules Committee socials in the Reading Room.

Questions:

-Will Pugh: Will committee chairs be notified more efficiently of elections to their committee?

Mr McIntyre: Yes.

-Joshua Brookin: What is your favourite line in the Constitution?

Mr McIntyre: A line which states that nothing shall bear upon the Rules Committee.

-Blake Leonard: Will you also work on the WhatsApp Channel as well as Facebook?

Mr McIntyre: Yes, alongside the Secretary.

-Edward Tye: How will you ensure that candidates are members of the Society?

Mr McIntyre: By verifying through the Secretary or Office Manager, both of whom have access to Upmind.

India Jubb, Proposer:

India began by citing their shared experience on the Rules Committee. Ms Jubb emphasised Mr McIntyre's extensive constitutional knowledge and expressed full confidence in his authority, referencing his "imposing" presence as Custodian. She further noted that he understands the challenges faced by the Rules Committee.

Questions:

-Edward Tye: How flexible is Adam's bedtime?

Ms Jubb: You should know better than anyone the importance of a Returning Officer having a flexible bedtime.

-Will Pugh: What is your favourite memory with Adam on the Rules Committee?

Ms Jubb: The Easter Rules Committee social.

Voting:

Benjamin Huthwaite of Stephenson College proposed that the election is taken on a general aye, seconded by Blake Leonard of Hatfield college.

Adam McIntyre is duly elected as Returning Officer of the Durham Union Society.

Item Three: Constitutional Amendment I - Proposed by Reuben Fisher of University College, Seconded by Callum Oxley of Trevelyan College

Mr Fisher first proposed an amendment to the amendment, extending its scope so that the Deputy Returning Officer may also accept postal votes. *This amendment to the amendment was passed on a general aye.*

Mr Fisher then outlined the principal amendment, which sought to abolish online postal voting and replace it with in-person alternatives, citing concerns regarding individuals potentially voting twice.

Questions:

-Joshua Brookin: What about accessibility if someone cannot attend in person?

Mr Fisher: The Returning Officer could go to them, or their Deputy could act in their place.

-Callum Oxley: This seeks to address broader concerns about people voting twice.

Mr Fisher: That is correct.

-Molly Purcell: Is this not more about removing postal voting?

Mr Fisher: Effectively, yes.

Ms Purcell: You cannot vote on 24s premises, which raises practicality issues.

Mr Fisher: I think this is a minor issue.

-Oliver Cox: Why not abolish the system entirely rather than complicating it?

Mr Fisher: I do not believe this complicates things.

-Edward Tye: Where would people go to vote?

Mr Fisher: The Returning Officer could go to them.

-Mr McIntyre: Is there a risk that people could vote on behalf of others?

Mr Fisher: Membership cards would be required, as well as evidence of Votate not working.

-Joshua Doherty: Could the Returning Officer not simply discard votes?

Mr Fisher: This would require a separate amendment.

-Will Pugh: How often are postal votes actually used? What is the scale of this issue?

Mr Fisher: *Directed to the Rules Committee.*

Mr McIntyre: Six postal votes were cast in the most recent by-elections.

-Sheel Argarwal: Why not verify membership via email?

Mr Fisher: It would slow the process.

-Louise Brown: Would it complicate the matter of keeping a record of who has made a postal vote?

Mr Fisher: Records could still be kept.

-Benjamin Huthwaite: What if many people attempted to vote in person if there was a broad issue with Votate?

Mr Fisher: If this was the case, cases would not be dealt with individually.

-Blake Leonard: Would the Returning Officer be required to remain in one location?

Mr Fisher: This was not covered in the amendment, so I will not comment.

Voting:

Ayes: 16

Noes: 15

2 spoiled ballots

Owing to the 2/3 majority required, the amendment was not passed.

Item Four: Secretary's Report

The Secretary reported that 63 memberships had been sold during Epiphany Term, placing the Society on track to surpass both last year's total and the internal target of 100. He thanked all those who participated in leafletting.

Mr Cox highlighted the ongoing development of the "Meet Sec Comm" social media campaign with the Media Committee, a proposed constitutional amendment to publish Standing, General Committee, and Trustee minutes.

He also highlighted the expansion of collaborations with other student societies and academic departments, including the Jewish Society, DURFC, the Law School, the Christian Union, and political societies.

He also confirmed that hill college walk-downs had been reintroduced.

Item Five: Debating Treasurer's Report

The Debating Treasurer reported recent competitive successes and noted an upcoming competition in Manchester. She further highlighted the focus on Durham Schools and the continued financial success of the Debating programme.

Item Six: Alumni Officer's Report

The Alumni Officer reported that 60 alumni had signed up to the Mentorship Scheme, with over 100 spaces available for mentees. He highlighted the range of participants, including barristers, law firm partners, politicians, advisers, a member of the House of Lords, and a wine educator.

Mr Hughes outlined the launch of the "Friends of the Union" scheme and thanked the Deputy Publicity Officer for the LinkedIn post, as well as the Secretary for publicising the scheme in his weekly email.

He confirmed that pairings had begun, prioritising Standing Committee, followed by Junior Officers, General Committee, and regular members. He cited an example of a placement secured through the Alumni Dinner.

Questions:

-Callum Oxley: Does having multiple mentees reduce effectiveness?

Mr Hughes: Alumni have chosen this and it reflects their willingness to engage. The quality of relationships depends on individual approaches.

Item Seven: Any Other Business

The Publicity Officer encouraged members to engage with the Society's revitalised TikTok account.

The President encouraged members to engage with the new Instagram reel promoting the upcoming free speech debate.

The meeting was adjourned at 14:50.