



## *the* DURHAM UNION

MEETING OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 29TH APRIL 2026

THE READING ROOM, 24 NORTH BAILEY

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The meeting commenced at 14:01; the Assistant Secretary is taking the minutes.

### **Item One: Welcome and Greetings**

The President opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

### **Item Two: Report of the President**

Mr Tye began by reflecting on the term ahead, noting that “the term looks alright”. He proceeded to outline some of the realities of securing speakers, stating that approximately 3% of invited speakers accepted. He further noted that “luck and nepotism” often play a role in securing high-profile speakers.

Mr Tye provided a breakdown of speaker outreach, noting that approximately 46% of those invited were left-wing, and 42% were women, with 3 of the 8 confirmed addresses being women.

He highlighted the need to consider alternative venues in the event of potential protests for select events.

### **Item Three: Report of the Treasurer**

Ms Purcell reported that year-wide publicity expenditure remained under £700. She noted that the social budget this year had been £500 per term, but with spending

coming in at around £400 each term, there is a view to reduce future term's budgets to £300.

Ms Purcell noted an overspend last term on debates, with 8 debates costing over £9,000.

She explained that booking Elvet Methodist Church as venue had resulted in a saving of around £600.

Ms Purcell concluded by reflecting on her tenure and thanking members for their support over the last year.

#### **Item Four: Report of the Social Secretary**

Ms Andreou highlighted the success of the Monte Carlo Ball, noting over 120 tickets sold out in 5 days, and that the raffle raised around £360 for St. Cuthbert's Hospice. She added that improvements would be made to the ticketing process in the future, apologising for any inconvenience.

Ms Andreou also noted the success of the New Year's and Valentine's Day socials and highlighted the financial contribution of the Officer auction.

Looking ahead, she announced that tickets for the Boat Party on the 12th June would be released next week, and that the Garden Party would have a BBQ and drinks.

#### **Item Five: Report of the Sponsorship Officer**

*Mr Smith was not initially present - item delayed to the end of the meeting.*

Mr Smith opened by remarking "we all want to go home and watch Arsenal beat Atletico Madrid".

He stated that he sought to build on the work of his predecessor, strengthening relationships with local businesses. He reported a range of collaborations with local businesses for the raffle at the Monte Carlo ball, and that he had met with the Treasurer and agreed to a "strategic pivot".

#### **Item Six: Report of the Speakers Secretary**

*Ms Comer was not present - no report was given.*

#### **Item Seven: Election of the Treasurer**

One valid nomination:

- Vatsa Dubey of St. Mary's College, proposed by Magdalena Andreou of Trevelyan College, seconded by Tobias Gumm of the College of St. Hild and St. Bede.

Vatsa Dubey, Candidate

Mr Dubey began by outlining his commitment to the values of the Society, drawing on his experience on the Secretary's Committee, as Assistant Custodian, and as Debating Secretary.

He emphasised the importance of pragmatic and deliberate financial strategy, aligned with the Society's objectives, and spoke of his intention to introduce a more professional budgeting framework.

Mr Dubey highlighted his experience as Assistant Custodian, noting his familiarity with bar operations, and stressed the importance of financial transparency, proposing the introduction of regular Treasurer's reports. He also suggested exploring a constitutional amendment to formalise transparency.

He proposed the creation of a social mobility fund to support access initiatives and reduce financial barriers to participation in the Society. He further emphasised the importance of targeted publicity and continued outreach work with local schools including a 'North East Schools Conference'.

Questions:

Molly Purcell: What are you most looking forward to about the role?

Mr Dubey: Raising the national profile of the society through outreach initiatives.

Blake Leonard: Would savings from external venue hire be used to secure speakers once the chamber reopens?

Mr Dubey: Such funds would be better utilised in the Freshers Drive, ensuring long term revenue and financial sustainability.

Adam McIntyre: Favourite line in the constitution?

Mr Dubey: The function of the society to stimulate free speech and debate in an academic setting.

Edward Tye: How flexible is your bedtime?

Mr Dubey: Flexible when necessary.

Magdalena Andreou, Proposer

Ms Andreou described Mr Dubey as “made for the role”. She noted that he is calm, sensible, intelligent, and reliable.

Ms Andreou highlighted Mr Dubey’s contributions to the Society up to now and urged the Committee to join her in voting for him.

Voting:

*Vatsa Dubey: 34*

RON: 5

*Vatsa Dubey is duly elected as Treasurer of the Durham Union Society.*

### **Item Eight: Election of the Equalities Officer**

One valid nomination:

- Francesca Greenhalgh of St. John’s College, proposed by Maria Hunt of St. Aidan’s College, seconded by India Jubb of University College.

Francesca Greenhalgh, Candidate

Ms Greenhalgh began by praising the work of the outgoing Equalities Officer and expressing her desire to continue building on this foundation.

She outlined her experience as Disabilities Representative, St. John’s Secretary, and Speakers Secretary for Michaelmas Term 2026.

Ms Greenhalgh proposed a number of initiatives, including mid-term check-ins, greater integration of Equalities into the Freshers Drive, and improved communication between the Equalities Committee and other Committees.

She also proposed working with the Returning Officer to produce guidance on how to draft constitutional amendments and improve awareness of the complaints process.

Questions:

Robbie Bono: What is your first priority in implementing the EDI plan?

Ms Greenhalgh: Accountability and improved communication.

Adam McIntyre: What changes would you make to the complaints panel?

Ms Greenhalgh: Improving accessibility and awareness, rather than concrete structural change.

Joshua Brookin: What experience do you have that would assist in SU negotiations?

Ms Greenhalgh: Communication skills prior to experience in student representation.

Robert Bono: How would you improve the Equalities Instagram account?

Ms Greenhalgh: Making it more active and less formal.

Maria Hunt, Proposer

Ms Hunt highlighted how Equalities runs through everything in the Union. She praised Ms Greenhalgh's ideas for an 'Early Arrivals Social' and a 'Girls Night Social'. She highlighted the work of Ms Greenhalgh up to now on the Equalities Committee, including securing sanitary products and a ramp for the Reading Room.

Questions:

Louise Brown: What is your favourite personal experience with Fran that would make her shine as Equalities Officer?

Ms Hunt: I had "a bad night out", and Fran stayed with me all night until 4am - this is the sort of person she is.

Voting:

*Francesca Greenhalgh: 38*

RON: 5

*2 spoiled ballots.*

*Francesca Greenhalgh is duly elected as Equalities Officer of the Durham Union Society.*

### **Item Nine: Election of the Alumni Officer**

Two valid nominations:

- Harry Murgatroyd of Trevelyan College, proposed by Maria Hunt of St. Aidan's College, seconded by Reuben Fisher of University College.
- Muhammad Inayat Khan of Hatfield College, proposed by Yiya Zhang of Grey College, seconded by Divvesh Kumavarel of Van Mildert College.

Harry Murgatroyd

Mr Murgatroyd spoke of his experience on the House Committee as well as on the Secretary's Committee, before commending the work of Oliver Hughes as Alumni Officer.

Mr Murgatroyd cited his job as a Parliamentary Assistant as an effective "apprenticeship" for this role, he argued that it helped him learn how to build relationships and manage a busy schedule.

Mr Murgatroyd noted his work organising the Politics Careers Workshop in Easter Term, all leveraging personal connections.

He expressed his plan to stage more regular meetings with the Alumni Advisory Board, revitalise the Union LinkedIn, explore more alumni events in London, build upon the 'Friends of the Union' scheme, and encourage more alumni donations.

Muhammad Inayat Khan

Mr Khan noted his experience on the Secretary's Committee and the Equalities Committee, arguing it has helped him understand the Union from multiple perspectives.

He referred to the sourcing of an international speaker for Epiphany Term and his work on the President's Committee for Easter Term.

Mr Khan argued that the current Alumni Mentorship Programme is "passive", arguing that the system has moved from a 1:1 to a 1:6 ratio. He proposed the

introduction of an '1842 Portal', and suggested the society should target 2015-2020 graduates, citing their experience applying for jobs in the modern market.

Mr Khan agreed with Mr Murgatroyd on the need to work with the Alumni Advisory Board, and argued that we do not treat alumni who give to the society well enough, proposing "thank you letters" as a potential solution.

Questions:

Maria Hunt: Is there anything that you have learnt from the last election?

Mr Khan: Yes, I changed mechanisms of the mentorship proposal to be more GDPR compliant.

Mr Murgatroyd: I have spoken to people about what has and hasn't worked in the past - a focus should go on hosting events in London.

Francesca Greenhalgh: What experience do you have which makes you the best suited to be an 'ambassador' for the Union?

Mr Murgatroyd: I represented the MP I worked for in a meeting with a Culture Minister for a vote. I have a lot of experience building a rapport with people in high positions, and I can bring in alumni from a range of sectors.

Mr Khan: I have a lot of experience inviting guest speakers. I interned at the Foreign Ministry of Pakistan. I have experience working in the types of environments that our alumni work in.

Joshua Brookin: What plans do you have outside of the mentorship scheme?

Mr Khan: Reaching out to the Alumni Advisory Board, building on our relationship with alumni.

Mr Murgatroyd: Expansion of careers workshops similar to those I organised this term, more events in London.

David Pegler: What would giving more back to alumni look like in practice?

Mr Murgatroyd: We have to brand it so that there are benefits to both sides. Mentoring allows professionals to develop their own leadership and communication skills.

Mr Khan: Thank you letters, acknowledgments in termly newsletters, involving them within the operations of the Union, inviting them back to debates.

India Jubb: How will you help students maintain relationships that they have developed with alumni?

Mr Murgatroyd: Publicising things like charitable initiatives and regular updates on our events on LinkedIn can attract people from across sectors and foster more authentic relationships.

Mr Khan: Group community events are a good idea, I agree with Harry. I will target “low-friction outreach”, leverage Union records, and target “near-peer cohorts”.

Voting:

*Harry Murgatroyd: 28*

*Muhammad Inayat Khan: 15*

*3 spoiled ballots.*

*Harry Murgatroyd is duly elected as Alumni Officer of the Durham Union Society.*

### **Item Ten: Election of the Outreach Officer**

Two valid nominations:

- Ava Charlton of St. Mary’s College, proposed by Sean Smith of South College, seconded by Theo Sanguinazzi of John Snow College.
- William Haworth of St. Cuthbert’s Society, proposed by Blake Leonard of Hatfield College, seconded by George Smith of St. John’s College.

Ava Charlton

Ms Charlton suggested a new mechanism for how people could donate to charitable causes the Union is promoting. She highlighted the importance of building relationships with local schools, focusing on accountability and transparency, and engaging underrepresented communities in the Society.

Ms Charlton suggested working with Officers to design Committee-specific stash and expanding female options, expressing frustrations that she has never been able to wear the House Committee tie.

Ms Charlton highlighted her commitment to the Society, citing her time on the House Committee as well as Debate Social Secretary, as well as her work volunteering at Durham Schools, interaction with the John Locke Institute.

Ms Charlton promised to serve with integrity, passion, and dedication.

William Haworth

Mr Haworth apologised to the Committee for using his phone for his speech. He expressed his love for the Union, with emphasis on 24s and the weekly pub quiz.

Mr Haworth noted that he knew the Headmaster of a local school, highlighting the importance of working with the community. He stated that he knew people who made high quality clothes for stash, and suggested a new social campaign to drive engagement.

Mr Haworth suggested in-person initiatives to drive relationships with colleges - working with the Secretary's Committee.

Questions:

Louise Brown: Do you have any relevant experience in engaging the local community?

Ms Charlton: I've previously contacted local schools for another initiative, an opportunity I cherished.

Mr Haworth: *Response not recorded.*

Blake Leonard: Should the Union do more Outreach to political societies?

Mr Haworth: I would work with the student parties. There's so many these days.

Ms Charlton: I would work with Standing to host more events like the Mock Election - this was a huge success.

Reuben Fisher: Are Union cufflinks on the table?

Mr Haworth: Yes.

Ms Charlton: Yes.

Molly: Should we do more female-specific stash?

Ms Charlton: It's a massive shame that the tie is the most popular stash item and it is pretty much male-exclusive. I want to diversify stash. I will work with female Officers on this.

Mr Haworth: Yes - we can definitely look at options for female-specific stash.

Charlotte Martin: Opinion on Union socks?

Ms Charlton: I am willing to hear everyone's suggestions - why not!

Mr Haworth: Socks would be great!

Voting:

*Ava Charlton: 30*

*William Haworth: 3*

*2 spoiled ballots.*

*Ava Charlton is duly elected as Outreach Officer of the Durham Union Society.*

### **Item Eleven: Election of One Rules Committee Seat**

One valid nominations:

- William Pugh of South College, proposed by Sean Smith of South College, seconded by Daniel Anbinder of Trevelyan College.

Mr Pugh stated he isn't sure that his record with the Rules Committee has been friendly, but that he has learned some lessons.

Mr Pugh stated he believes the rules can appear distant but stated his belief in the centrality of the rules committee. He noted that he has delivered constitutional change creating the Media Committee, stating it was transformative and has taught him the intricacies of amendments.

He continued to state his experience as pragmatic, as well as his theoretical understanding of all rules.

Questions:

Adam McIntyre: Are you suggesting that you will be acting as the representative of the Rules Committee?

Mr Pugh: That is not the case - I just want the Rules Committee to appear less intimidating and more accessible.

Edward Tye: What is your favourite line in the Constitution?

Mr Pugh: The line we created - “there shall be a Media Committee”.

*William Pugh is duly elected to the Rules Committee.*

### **Item Twelve: Any Other Business**

The Custodian announced a new incentive for door duty completion, with the person with the most duties receiving a free pre-event dinner.

The Social Secretary reminded members that tickets for the Mamma Mia Boat Party will be released next week.

The Speakers Secretary-Elect announced that Michaelmas term planning was underway.

The meeting was adjourned at 15:56

