



the DURHAM UNION

MEETING OF THE TRUSTEES AND THE STANDING COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 4TH MARCH 2026

Present:

Mr Joshua Doherty – President

Ms Molly Purcell - Treasurer

Mr Oliver Cox – Secretary

Ms Maria Hunt - Custodian

Ms Magdalena Andreou - Social Secretary

Mr Robbie Bono – Equalities Officer

Mr David Pegler – Publicity Officer

Ms Haya Chaudhri - Director of Debating

Mr Edward Tye - President-Elect

Mr Jonathan Moreland - Chair of the Trustees (Chair)

Mr Ian Keddie - Trustee

Mr John Kelsey - Trustee

Mr David Jackson - Trustee

Apologies:

Ms Louise Brown - Debating Treasurer

Ms Susan Shaw - Trustee

Mr Callum Oxley - President Emeritus

Dr Nigel Martin - Trustee

No Apologies Given:

Mr Adriano Lopez de Onate - Trustee

The meeting commenced at 18:02; the Secretary is taking the minutes.

Welcome and Greetings

The Chair of the Trustees opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

President's Report

The President, Mr Doherty, highlighted a number of successful events held during the term, and noted improvements in attendance compared with the previous term.

The Chair congratulated Mr Doherty on his work throughout the term, particularly his collaboration with the Secretary on partnerships with other student societies.

The Office Manager also congratulated Mr Doherty on his term.

Secretary's Report

The Secretary's Report was taken as read.

The Secretary, Mr Cox, reported that the Society remained on track to break the record for membership sales in an Epiphany Term.

Mr Cox reported that the Secretary's Committee had now been fully elected, with strong collegiate representation across the University. He also outlined plans for a "Meet the Secretary's Committee" social media campaign.

Mr Cox noted progress on transparency measures, including the publication of meeting minutes, and that discussions were ongoing with the Returning Officer regarding a constitutional amendment to formalise these measures.

Mr Cox highlighted increased collaboration with other student societies and academic departments, noting that these partnerships had broadened the Society's reach and would remain a central part of the Union's outreach strategy.

Mr Keddie asked where meeting minutes would be published going forward. Mr Cox responded that they would be posted in the General Committee group chat, as well as the Members' Facebook group.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report was taken as read.

The Treasurer, Ms Purcell, highlighted the Society's outreach work during the term, including collaborations with Durham Sixth Form Centre and Barnard Castle School.

Ms Purcell also reported on the Society's attendance at the Free Speech Union conference in Parliament on 19 February.

The Chair congratulated Ms Purcell on her work

Custodian's Report

The Custodian's Report was taken as read.

The Custodian, Ms Hunt, noted that she had only recently assumed her role in the last week. She highlighted that operations at 24 North Bailey were continuing successfully despite the absence of a full-time Bar Manager.

The Chair asked whether there were issues relating to capacity. Ms Hunt responded that while capacity issues existed, the Society would continue to manage them carefully while seeking to grow activity at the bar.

Equalities Officer's Report

The Equalities Officer's Report was taken as read.

The Equalities Officer, Mr Bono, highlighted the Active Listening Training that had recently taken place. He noted that discussions were underway regarding the possibility of rolling this training out more widely and making it obligatory for members of the Standing Committee.

Mr Bono also reported on work towards the creation of an access arrangements form for members, as well as the introduction of sanitary products at 24 North Bailey.

Mr Jackson congratulated the Equalities Officer and encouraged him to continue his work.

Mr Keddie asked whether the attendance of visitors from local schools would be formally announced. The Treasurer responded that she would ensure that this was arranged.

Publicity Officer's Report

The Publicity Officer's Report was taken as read.

The Publicity Officer, Mr Pegler, highlighted the benefits of working with the newly established Media Committee. He noted that short-form content had become a key driver of the Society's publicity strategy and emphasised the importance of continuing to modernise the Union's communications.

Mr Jackson asked about the reaction to the new publicity strategy. Mr Pegler responded that feedback had been largely positive.

The President noted that much of the Society's short-form content consisted of street interviews, and that any negative responses tended to be directed broadly at the Society rather than at individual members.

Mr Jackson asked about the status of the Society's camera equipment. Mr Pegler stated that the matter was related to an internal dispute. The Office Manager intervened to note that equipment decisions must balance priorities and budgetary constraints.

Social Secretary's Report

The Social Secretary's report was taken as read.

The Social Secretary, Ms Andreou, began by noting that socials this term had not been ticketed, which she believed had contributed to increased attendance.

She then discussed the 'Night in Monte Carlo' Ball, noting that tickets had sold out within five days, demonstrating extremely high demand.

Ms Andreou also highlighted the capacity limitations of 24 North Bailey, which remained a constraint on social attendance.

The Chair asked what the event "Où est le poulet?" involved. The President explained that he would be dressed as a chicken and that participants would attempt to find him.

The President also noted the success of the raffle held at the Ball, which raised approximately £360 for St Cuthbert's Hospice.

Director of Debating's Report

The Director of Debating's report was taken as read.

The Director of Debating, Ms Chaudhri, stated that she was "unbelievably proud" of the Society's debaters and of the work undertaken by the Debates Committee during the term.

She cited high turnout and novice training programmes as key factors behind recent successes.

Ms Chaudhri also noted the recent election of the Debate Competitions Officer, and highlighted the upcoming Durham Schools competition, scheduled for the end of March, with 72 teams already registered.

Mr Keddie asked whether most novice debaters were first-year students. Ms Chaudhri responded that while the majority were freshers, there were also a notable number of second- and third-year students participating.

Debating Treasurer's Report

The Debating Treasurer's report was taken as read.

President-Elect's Report

The President-Elect's report was taken as read.

The President-Elect, Mr Tye, reported that Baroness Hale had been confirmed as a speaker for Easter Term.

He also noted that the Pemberton Buildings would not be available for use, expressing disappointment at this development.

The Office Manager explained that the delay in accessing the Pemberton Buildings was related to the Council, noting that the University was prepared to proceed once the Council granted approval.

The Chair asked whether the President-Elect had been in contact with the University regarding security requirements and event approvals. Mr Tye noted that he has been in communications, but will do so again once all events for Easter Term have been confirmed.

Any Other Business

Mr Jackson encouraged the Standing Committee to “keep doing what you're doing.”

Mr Jackson also asked about alumni engagement. The President-Elect responded that he planned to organise an alumni workshop in Easter Term, while the President added that the Alumni Officer was currently pairing members with mentors as part of the Alumni Mentorship Programme.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and brought the meeting to a close.

The meeting was adjourned at 18:40.