Falmouth & Exeter Students’ Union

Student Forum

Monday 5th February, 13:00- 15:00, AIR- Sandpit.

**Attendees:**

Theo Aldridge-Stone (TAS) Chair

Hannah De Oliverira Whitlock (HDOW) Falmouth President

Connie Chilcott (CC) Exeter President

Phil Green (PG) Vice President

Orestis Collins (OC) Vice President

Ollie Miners (OM) Community Officer

Charlotte Arthurs (CA) Societies Officer

Stacey Siekei (SS) Green Officer

Hana Soliman (HS) International Officer

Neo Stansby (NS) LGBTQ+ Officer

Josh Difford (JD) Mature Student Officer

Sejar Kumar (SKu) PGT Officer Exeter

Mariam Alnasser (MA) Accommodation Officer

Alice Gregory (AG) Education Officer

Alicia Parfitt (AP) Disability Officer

Alex Levontine (AL) Green Officer

Alice Tulissio (AT) Green Officer

Elizabeth Harvey (EH) Green Officer

Auriel Lothrian (AL) Widening Participation Officer

Simran Kohli (SKo) Racial Equality Officer

Kayleigh Hardy (KH) SU Head of Engagement

Lesley Quinn (LQ) SU Democracy & Engagement Coordinator (Minutes)

**Welcome**:

* Apologies from Becky Fry, Green Officer and Katy Ladgen, Distance Learning Officer.
* SU Sabbatical Officer nominations open. Chat to KH or LQ or see SU website for further details.

**PG presents Democracy Pilot:**

* Overview and context, including research, supporting document circulated to Officers prior to forum. Part-time Officers were elected to pilot an Assembly model. All students to work together to widen participation and inclusion for SU democracy pilot.
* Q+A session (lasting 60 minutes).
* TAS requested nominations for a Co-Chair, as required for the Assembly model, to be decided by ballot vote at the end of forum.

**ACTION: All students to promote the Assembly model pilot and invited to form an Executive Committee & Working Group, working together to find solutions, design and implement the democracy pilot. The SU can organise training to assist with this, including restorative practices, as requested.**

AP and HDOW left at 13:53.

**Make a Change (MaC):**

Plant-based Universities: SU to endorse campaign and all SU events to be plant-based.

Presented by EH. It is a national student-led campaign implemented at other universities calling for institutional change to reduce carbon emissions. The goal of campaign is for FXPlus to commit to having only plant-based food on campus and not to affect individual’s diets. Well received on MaC with 150/156.

* OC requested clarity for what and who this will affect.
* PG confirmed it will only affect the services directly provided by the SU e.g. pizza at Freshers Fair, and conversations are ongoing to incrementally build upon this, including societies.
* PG is working with FXPlus who are reviewing the food offer on campus and are open to student input.
* TAS expressed concerns for students whose medical/health conditions prevent them eating plant-based meals and the need for there to be suitable alternatives. Would students be expected to bring their own food?
* EH explained there are many intricacies to be explored and conversations are ongoing so it is not known what that will look like yet.

**Vote: For 15, Against 1, Abstain 2.**

The SU to commit to Mature Student Enrichment.

Presented by JD who feels the SU is failing in provision and representation for mature students and EDI and wants policy in place to action support for the next three years.

* PG praised JD for their time and effort.

**Vote: For 18 (unanimous).**

SU Endorsement for Ecosia to be used as default search engine.

As the MaC was submitted anonymously, TAS briefly revisited the previous meeting’s discussion. Ecosia is a C02- neural search engine that plant trees.

* OM praised the good work of cause as they’ve used it before and explained an individual can always change it to another search engine.
* PG confirmed FXPlus is responsible for all IT services, including both universities, which would be affected.

**Vote: For 17, Against 1, Abstain 0.**

No to occupation! No to imperialism! Solidarity with Palestinian youth and workers!

Submitted by Gillen Minchin; presented by CC. CC, PG, GM, HS, OM worked together to discuss what this MaC means in practice with the aim of understanding how others are affected.

* HS spoke about the importance of the SU doing as much as possible to provide support, raise awareness and show solidarity. There have been constructive ideas and discussion, including a donation box for canned food and creating a safe space for students to share how they are feeling as international students face challenges being able to talk about their experiences.
* OC enquired about moderating the safe spaces and asked if wellbeing services will be involved.
* CC explained ideas are still being discussed and the Executive Committee will make final decision.
* PG discussed the SU developing a statement for a ceasefire and the demilitarisation of Gaza with the Executive Committee representing a diverse range of voices. Students can support by leading fundraising events.
* OM said the statement will be carefully considered, denounce islamophobia and antisemitism and state harassment of any form will not be tolerated. The statement will focus on a ceasefire and ensure it is an inclusive humanitarian statement, standing with students who are affected. It is intended to engage students with what happens in the world.
* KH pointed out any statement will need to be approved by the board of trustees as there is an element of organisational risk.

**Vote: For 18 (unanimous).**

Societies to be prioritised at freshers fair and mental health services to be present.

Anonymously submitted. Feedback from societies being in the Exchange Courtyard included the lack of space and feeling sidelined for Domino’s pizza, who were in the lower Stannary. As a staff member responsible for organising the fair, KH explained the fair is growing each year and talked through some of the logistics on a practical and operational level. The Stannary is most accessible for larger commercial vehicles and does not have steps like the sports centre and Exchange Courtyard. Commercial bookings pay for the rent of the sports hall and the freebies given out which promote the SU (tote bags etc). These bookings provide guaranteed income for the SU. Without it, subsequent fairs and events will be affected. It is trial and error and the SU welcomes student suggestions to improve for next year.

* OC stated there will be four fairs exclusively for wellbeing next year.
* OM asked about the viability of spreading it over a couple of days to try and include everything.
* KH explained this is not possible because the Exchange is a teaching space and there are additional costs incurred with the sports hall, table hire and staff from the estates team. Being a smaller campus, there are limitations and the SU want to involve more students in the conversation. CA can be the link for this. This was the first freshers’ fair since the pandemic so teething issues were to be expected and it was a learning experience.
* TA stated the MaC is nebulously worded and doesn’t specify any direct action.
* PG explained the MaC was submitted before the freshers’ fair feedback from societies.

**ACTION: CA to be link for forum and societies involving them in conversations going forward and the SU to conduct feedback with societies again.**

**Vote: For 0, Against 5, Abstain 12.**

Sleeping pods on university campuses.

Submitted by Sarah Bellis. Students with medical/health conditions can book the pods for sessions throughout the day so they can rest.

* CC raised concerns about managing and maintaining the pods. Students should have access to spaces to relax that are quiet and can accommodate sensory needs.
* NS spoke to lived experience and the importance of being able to lie down in a rest zone. Also raised concerns over logistics of maintaining hygiene, cleaning, and managing a booking system. Realistically many students cannot anticipate when they will need to rest in advance.
* TAS called for a vote to direct Executive Committee about expanding campus rest zones.

**Vote: For 17, Against 0, Abstain 1.**

Motion: Declaring a climate & nature emergency.

Proposed by PG & seconded by CC. Motion has been submitted because the SU has not released a statement to declare an emergency and act accordingly. It calls for the allocation of funds for training regarding, decolonisation, intersectional issues and supporting students involved in grass roots movements. Also, NUS charity compliant.

* JD asked what this means for the SU.
* PG explained that the statement is a public declaration and that funds will be allocated to support the emergency. PG’s manifesto focuses on this, but this ensures a legacy as it provides ongoing protection as policy for future years. It will include working groups, supporting student health and wellbeing concerning eco-anxiety and emotions related to the climate crisis as well as providing support for students engaged with local initiatives and to start and run their own campaigns.
* OC signposted additional support from UoE’s Breathing Space.

**Vote: For 15, Against 2, Abstain 1.**

Updates from Sabbatical Officers:

<https://www.thesu.org.uk/news/article/6013/Term-1-Update-from-your-President-Falmouth-Hannah-de-Oliveira-Whitlock/>

<https://www.thesu.org.uk/news/article/6013/Term-1-Update-from-your-President-Exeter-Connie-Chilcott/>

<https://www.thesu.org.uk/news/article/6013/Term-1-Update-from-your-Vice-President-Orestis-Collins-Alamanos/>

<https://www.thesu.org.uk/news/article/6013/Term-1-Update-from-your-Vice-President/>

Co-Chair nominations and hustings:

HS & OM put themselves forward to be Co-Chair.

**Vote: HS 11, OM 7.**

TAS leads congratulations to HS as Co-Chair.

**ACTION: TAS to set and share next date for Student Forum.**