



April 30, 2025, 18:00-20:00

ABERYSTWYTH STUDENT'S UNION

April 2025 SENEDD





Agenda

Welcome

1. Welcome and Apologies for any Absences.
2. Approval of Last meetings minutes.
3. Any Matters arising from the minutes.
4. Officer Report.

Ideas

5. Idea one: Should Undeb Aberystwyth end use of their "X" profile, and lobby the University to do the same?
6. Idea Two: Should UndebAber and the university transform the botany gardens into the 'Penglais Botanic Gardens', a dynamic, productive space for science, learning, and wellbeing?

End of meeting comments

7. Any other Business.
8. End of meeting.

Should Undeb Aberystwyth end use of their "X" profile, and lobby the University to do the same?

Officer Responsible: President

Submitted by: Luke Jones

Details:

"X" (formerly "Twitter") has undergone significant changes that have undermined its value as a safe, inclusive, and credible communication tool. Over the course of the last few years, "X" has seen a rampant and continuous rise in Hate Speech, Misinformation, Violent Content and Harassment Campaigns – all as a result of poor changes to moderation policy.

At this time, both Aberystwyth University and Undeb Aberystwyth have active pages on "X", for the purpose of communicating with those associated with the University.

In recent months, numerous public, commercial, educational, and governmental institutions have made the decision to end their use of "X" to communicate with their audiences.

Numerous similar institutions have – in recent times - made the decision to end, or otherwise decrease their use of "X" as a media and communication platform, including but not limited to:

- Undeb Bangor
- Sheffield SU
- UCL Institute of Advanced Studies
- Over 60 Universities across Germany
- Warwick Interpol Department
- University of York Library
- 7 of the University of Cambridge's 31 colleges

Undeb Aberystwyth has an opportunity to show their students that their actions are representative of their zero tolerance policy on discrimination, and their vision of transparency and ambition for all students, both invalidated by "X"s moderation and executive policy.

The values of "X" as a platform, in a sense of moderation policy and user behaviour, does not align with those of Undeb Aber. The continued use of "X" as a communication platform is contradictory of Undeb Aber's promise to act as a positive influence for students.

Should UndebAber and the university transform the botany gardens into the 'Penglais Botanic Gardens', a dynamic, productive space for science, learning, and wellbeing?

Officer Responsible: President

Submitted by: Rebecca Edwards

Details:

Originally constructed in 1950, this historic site has been beneficial to students and research for over 70 years. It has previously collaborated with a range of world-renowned botanic gardens across the globe. Since the unfortunate loss of a permanent member of staff the space has begun to struggle and gradually been used less.

The site is currently underfunded and overlooked despite housing a number of beautiful, fascinating plants and holding immeasurable potential for teaching, research, student life, and a multitude of other wellbeing benefits. The space is divided into four areas: a potting shed (with a computer, sink, kettle and many pots), an arid room (home to desert dwelling plants with enough space to fit approximately 30 stools- which can be found in the potting shed), temperate room (mimicking a warmer temperate climate with some of our bigger plant species, such as our impressive Cycad and Bird of Paradise. This room also includes a pond and 4 seater bench (which was implemented and painted by Phyte Club members), and a mist room (simulating a humid, tropical jungle environment).

Our vision for its future use (quite a few of which could actually fundraise money, paying for the upkeep of the space and making it more economically attractive for the university):

- Wellbeing activities- time and time again we have received feedback on how relaxing the space is and how chilled visitors feel there, especially with our bench and pond (who doesn't love sitting in a mini jungle, listening to the sound of a water fountain)
- Research projects- what better facility to use for DLS and DGES dissertation projects (for both undergrads and postgrads) there are also endless possibilities for external research collaborations too, using the rarer, whole plant specimens which are hard to find anywhere else in Wales. We have already spoken to some other interested, external organisations who are fascinated and excited about the space.
- Teaching- the space is currently used for a few practical classes, but was previously used much more frequently. This is mostly DLS, but many other degree schemes and departments could absolutely use this space for a variety of teaching opportunities. It could make a great location for film or art students, inspiration for creative writing students, and many, many more!

- Academic opportunities- showcasing this resource is brilliant at open days and for visiting students throughout the year.
- Volunteering opportunities- this is currently offered through phyte club during our weekly sessions but could be made more frequently accessible so more students can get involved. We sometimes experience some clashes in the timing of our Wednesday sessions and have received feedback that students would love to come at another point in the week.
- Community connections/ public engagement- there exist a plethora of local groups that would love to visit and use the space (which could be rented out or an 'optional donation station' set up, or could sell postcards with photographs of the space on) like the local Women's Institute, various church groups or local wildlife groups.
- Practical work experience- it is a great opportunity for students to get hands on and actually experience horticulture, gardening, botany, plant biology and much more. This is especially beneficial for students who may struggle with only written work. This boosts inclusivity for students who might otherwise struggle to understand concepts without seeing them first hand.
- External events- we would love to get more guest speakers into this space as we have done a few times this year, but we have aspirations of one day seeing this space host other, larger events (e.g., part of the Aberystwyth Poetry Festival; a slot of Aber Resonate; creating an exhibition as part of the Arts Centres art showcases etc)
- Student use- throughout this year we have opened up the space for various student societies and clubs to either use for socials (e.g., craft soc, creative writing soc and photography soc) and even as an area for Aberystwyth Sound System Society to host their committee elections.

How to implement our ideas:

- Change the site's name to the Penglais Botanic Gardens and put signage in place to better showcase the space and assist access to the area.
- Annual progress reports of the space status and what it has been used for to better determine future goals.
- A full time, permanent member of staff or member of UndebAber to be responsible for the space, so as to take pressure off members of staff and student volunteers so the space can be used and enjoyed. The member of staff could also help with implementing some of our ideas for its future use (working closely in partnership with Phyte Club and the Botanic Garden Committee). We campaigned and have been successful in persuading the university to put in place a part-time member of staff for 6months (over the summer). However, we feel this role needs to be a permanent position, to ensure the Botanic Garden's future is secured.

We got in touch with and had the people from the 'National Open Garden Scheme' come to visit this space as a potential space for future fundraising for their amazing charity (this was done previously here back in 2007). They were extremely interested and blown away by its beauty, its potential, and its tranquil environment. We put all the relevant members of staff in touch with them and got the ball rolling. However, sadly, nothing more came of this. We feel

that if there was a permanent member of staff at the site to sort things such as this out, it could absolutely happen. This would be an amazing way to increase the sites use and visibility within the wider community, all whilst raising money for charity.

We have such a passion and love for this beautiful space and see a great vision for its potential future. Phyte Club has consistently worked hard to both volunteer in maintaining the space and also to try to give this incredible resource the exposure/appreciation it deserves. We feel that we have been very successful in both of these goals this year. We are hearing more and more students talking about the Botanic Gardens, many of whom did not know of its existence before. However, there is only so much we can do as students, and we need your help to nurture this rare, invaluable space back to its former thriving state.

We think the university's Botanic Garden should be transformed from its current derelict and unloved state to a hive of activity, both for learning, research and academia, but equally to be used as a wellbeing space for students and the wider community.