



**Trustee Report**  
**The Big Meeting (AGM)**  
**Monday 22 February, 6pm, Zoom**

**TRUSTEES STATEMENT FOR ANNUAL ACCOUNTS YEAR END 30 JUNE 2020**

The trustees have pleasure in presenting their annual report and consolidated financial statement for the year ended 30 June 2020.

Aberystwyth University Students' Union (AUSU) is a students' union within the meaning of the Education Act 1994. AUSU is devoted to the educational interests and welfares of its members

**STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

The primary aim of AUSU is the advancement of education of students at Aberystwyth University for the public benefit.

The Aberystwyth University Students' Union, for the period ended 30 June 2019, was an unincorporated association and is governed by the Union's constitution dated 26th June 2012. The company's share-holding, which is held in trust for the Union, is registered to the President. The trading company is a registered company with Companies House. The Union applied for and continue to hold charitable status since January 2013 under the name Aberystwyth University Students' Union (AUSU). There is no requirement for the consolidated accounts under review in this report to be audited. However, it is the Union's choosing, for the benefit of its members, to have its accounts audited and to prepare annual consolidated financial statements which are in accordance with the Union's constitution. The Aberystwyth University Students' Union vision statement is "We believe Aber students should have an epic student journey. They should be happy, healthy and empowered, with lasting friendships and promising futures." Its mission statement is; 'We want Aber students to love student life and be ready for anything.'

**a) Constitution**

The Union's principal governing document is its Constitution, agreed by the members in a cross campus referendum and ratified by the University's Charter Committee, Senate and Council. Copies of the Constitution are available from [www.abersu.co.uk](http://www.abersu.co.uk)

**b) Trustees**

The board for 2019/20 comprised of 12 members; 5 elected sabbatical officer Trustees, 2 elected student trustees and 5 selected external trustees. The term of office is one year for elected trustees and 4 years for external trustees.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the strategic direction, governance and sustainability of AUSU. Officers are required to take a sabbatical year away from their studies and are remunerated by the Union during this period. All other trustees are volunteers and able to claim reasonable expenses to undertake their duties.



Officer and Student Trustees are elected through a secret ballot by the members each year, normally serving for one year in office but can serve a second term if re-elected. External Trustees are appointed in accordance with the Union's constitution (clause 52-54).

Upon appointment all trustees receive a variety of information through their induction. Trustees are briefed on their legal obligations and other trustee responsibilities. The Officer Trustees are new to the Board every year or two years, so they undergo a more intensive training period. This training starts after they are elected, and before they start their term of office to ensure that they are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and can perform their duties to the best of their abilities as soon as possible. They attend training sessions on the history of governance at AUSU, their legal responsibilities as trustees, briefing sessions on key issues and decisions that have been made by the Board of Trustees and receive training on how to deal with potential conflicts of interest.

The Trustee Board meets a minimum of 4 times a year. All trustees are provided with copies of the Charity Commission's Guidance to Trustees and introduced to the activities of the Union during their handover or by the Board. Trustees are provided with training and have the option to attend refresher training on an annual basis. AUSU operates on democratic principles, with Policy being acted upon by the five elected Sabbatical Officers. During the year members can bring forward ideas for change, political stances or development to the SU Senedd. These ideas are then voted on by the membership of Senedd which consists of:

- Elected Full-time Officers
- Elected Volunteer Officers

### **c) Staffing**

The Union employs permanent staff to ensure the effective management of its many activities and to implement the policy decisions for Trustees on behalf of the membership. There is a delegated authority, through the Chief Executive, for operational decision making and accountability within the departments of the Union, in accordance with its organisational structure.

The Students' Union currently employs 13 permanent members of staff.

#### **Senior Management Team**

- Patricia McGrath, Chief Executive Officer
- Eleri Roberts, Communications & Engagement Manager
- Catrin Hopkins, Finance Manager
- Lucie Gwilt, Student Opportunities Manager
- Martin Dodd, Student Support & Representation Manager



In addition to the work of the sabbatical officer trustees' work the Trustees delegate the day to day management of the charity to the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team.

#### **d) Relationship with Related Parties**

Under the Education Act 1994, the Aberystwyth University has a statutory duty to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that AberSU operates in a fair and democratic manner and is held to proper account for its finances.

The Union continues to receive valuable support from Aberystwyth University ('the University') and the block grant in 2019/20 was at £700,000 (2018/19: £700,000). The University also provided an additional £50K to supplement British University College Sport (BUCS) activity. The Students' Union part-occupies a building owned by the University and the University also provides portering and payroll services. This support is intrinsic to the relationship between the University and the Union.

Following the transfer of commercial services to the University in September 2016, the Students' Union is dependent on the University's financial support, however there is no reason to believe that this support will not continue for the foreseeable future. The University requires notification of any changes in the governance of the Union and regular reports on the Union's activities, management and financial situation. These are given to the University at various committees such as Finance and Strategy Committee and Council. Sabbatical Officers and Union staff sit on various University committees.

#### **e) Risk management**

The Trustee board and Senior Management team have examined the major strategic, business and operational risks faced by the Union. The Board of Trustees reviews the major strategic risks faced by AUSU on an annual basis as a minimum. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks that the organisation faces. Budgetary and internal control risks are minimized by the implementation of procedures for authorisation of all transactions and projects. Procedures are in place to ensure compliance with health and safety of staff, volunteers and participants on all activities organised by the Union. These procedures are periodically reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the charity. The Trustee board is made aware of any changes in the risk register and acts accordingly.

During this year, we focused on improving our HR practices and procedures.

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### **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

The principal objectives of the Union are to benefit its current and future members and staff by advancing their education. AUSU achieves this through:



- promoting the interests and welfare of students at Aberystwyth University during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising students;
- being the recognised representative channel between students and Aberystwyth University and any other external bodies; and
- providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of students.

Whilst pursuing our aims and objectives and providing various activities for members AUSU seeks at all times to:

- ensure that the diversity of its membership is recognised, and that equal access is available to all members of whatever origin or orientation;
- pursue its aims and objectives independent of any political party or religious group
- pursue equal opportunities by taking positive action within the law to facilitate participation of groups discriminated against by society.

**Mission:** We want Aber students to love student life and be ready for anything.

**Vision:** We believe Aber students should have an epic student journey. They should be happy, healthy and empowered, with lasting friendships and promising futures.

**Values:** Shaped by students – Aber students are in control, Friends – we want you around, Straightforward - we tell it like it is, All embracing - everyone matters, Welsh – obviously

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## ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

A new strategy for 2017-2020 was developed throughout the 2016-17 year and the SU worked against a cohesive operating plan based on the principles of that plan for 2019-20. In total, in 2019-19 62% of students either voted in an election, volunteered, were part of a Club or Society or were an Academic Rep. AUSU provided a variety of services and activities for students including:

- **Advice Service:** We continue to provide a specialist service to our members in the areas of housing, money and academic issues. Despite a reduction of 1FTE staff member the Advice Service supported over 300 students directly through casework. Additionally the Service provided online advice and guidance on key student issues, took part in a number of outreach activities such as World Mental Health day, LGBTQ History month and National Student Money week.

- **Student Opportunities:** A choice of 150 clubs and societies offered a diversity of opportunities for social and skills development. 3036 students registered as an AUSU club or society member during the year (42% of the student population). We also supported student-led volunteering, helping over 600 students to lead their student groups. The Opportunities team is made up of three staff members, and provided support, advice and help with the safe running of activities especially around health and safety, recruitment, communication, delivery and finance including fundraising



and development. This year an online platform for brokerage and recording volunteering hours and skills was developed.

● **Democracy and Representation:** We supported 221 Course and Institute Reps and 2,464 students voted in our main elections which showed a steady turnout of 34% or over for the past three years in maintaining our position as holding one of the highest Students' Union election turnout percentages in the UK.

We continued to support students to campaign for change in the organisation, the University and in the student and local community including campaigns for Erasmus students post Brexit, climate change measures and University divestment from fossil fuels, access to gym services and protecting students rights and academic performance at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

● **Facilities:** The majority of the Students' Union building would still benefit from refurbishment and redecoration particularly at the main entrance. The Students' Union continues to work with the University to plan a major building refurbishment in the future. Further works to the front doors were planned to begin in July 2017 but were initially delayed due to University funding restrictions and then again in 2018-19 due to the potential for longer term refurbishment.

● **Awards:** The Students' Union and SU staff were thrilled to receive the following awards and recognition:

- Chwarae Teg Fair Play Employer Leading award
- Chwarae Teg Gender Equality Champions Womenspire Award winner 2020

● **Officer projects:** In 2019-20, the Officers worked on a range of priorities including:

- Reopening Pantycelyn by 2020
- No detriment policy for students undertaking assessments during the lockdown
- Mental health
- Sports funding and access
- Divestment in unethical companies
- Women in Sport
- Building refurbishment

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## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Aberystwyth University Students' Union is working to achieve the aims and objectives as set out in our 2017-2020 Strategic Plan:

We promise we will grow together as an Aber family



- Affinity with the SU. Students will connect engaging volunteering, clubs and societies membership or leadership, and Academic Rep experiences with the Students' Union.
- Champion and support student groups to create events, activities, media and campaigns, increasing numbers of opportunities to contribute, lead and learn.
- We will help students find, grow and celebrate their diverse communities
- Students will play a positive role in the wider Aberystwyth Community

We promise to give you the last word

- Students will understand what the SU is, that they are members and will shape AberSU activity and Policy.
- Students will influence and shape their education and wider University experience.
- We will be the experts on Aber students – we will know how they behave, what they value and what they want/need.
- Student leaders will be a confident and powerful voice for Aber students

We promise to help you be as happy and healthy as possible

- The Advice Service will be the go to source for student life advice and support students to make informed choices.
- Strong relationships with local partners, support agencies and stakeholders
- Supporting positive student mental and physical health.
- Championing the rights of students and fighting injustice.

We promise to help prepare you for your next adventure

- AberSU Volunteering will provide a range of opportunities for students to enrich their time at University and benefit the student and wider Aberystwyth community.
- Our full range of student volunteers will identify and be able to articulate how their activity contributes to their development and next steps.
- Students will be prepared for life after University and will receive excellent support to take a range of next steps.

Targets and Actions detailing how we will achieve against our Plan are outlined in an annual operating plan each year.