



# **Ideas for Council**

**30/04/2018**





## Eating Disorder Awareness Week (B-eat)

*Raising awareness about eating disorders on campus and encouraging support and recovery.*

Details:

On average it takes 3 years for someone with an eating disorder to get the support they need, and the rates of eating disorders amongst men and women are growing each and every day, however the support the university provides is insufficient and there's a total lack of awareness regarding eating disorders on campus.

B-eat runs an eating disorder awareness week each year and (this year its landed on the 26th February - 4th March) and they tend to run different campaigns, such as a funky socks week where you just wear silly socks and fundraise, or other fundraising and awareness drives. This year they're also launching a video campaign called #WhyWait about recovering from eating disorders.

AberSU have already met with B-eat, and with the backing of Council should proceed to fully support campaigns on campus, and provide signposting and information about eating disorders.

Submitted by: Georgina Whiteman





## **Independent Students' Officer**

*We need an officer to represent independent students who are currently not represented by any of the other union officers.*

Details:

AberSU currently has many officers to represent certain groups of students. There is, however, a gap in the representation. The university currently does not have any student representation for independent students.

The term 'independent' student is an umbrella term to cover a number of students who in some way are not supported. This includes care-leavers, estranged students, refugees, young carers, and parents in education. This means that this group of students, who may have different priorities and needs to the general student population, are not represented and ergo not getting the best experience possible from university.

The lack of support may be very difficult for these students, so the least that we can do is have a designated person within the union to support them and speak for their needs. AberSU should create a new volunteer officer role called Independent Students' Officer for these students, so that they can have a voice within the university. The role should be made available for students to stand in the next officer election.

Submitted by: Samantha Wilding





## Council Clearout!

*Updating the structures of Union Council to better represent current students, this policy hopes to revitalise democratic meetings and engagement with them. Changes include a name change to Senedd, the overall reduction of voting members and the introduction of a priority ballot for future Ideas for meetings.*

Details:

### The Basic Facts

- Union Council has in recent years failed to reach quoracy of over 50 voting members on a number of occasions despite a variety of attempts to ensure that students are aware of the meetings and of what is being discussed/decided.
- Union Council currently has membership of almost 1400 students including Full-time Officers, Volunteer Officers, Academic and Institute Reps, UMCA Executive, Sports and Society Committee members.
- The majority of those who are currently voting members do so by nature of the position in which they hold, not specifically to be able to vote at council. For example committee members primarily stand to develop and lead their club or society not to pass Union policy.
- Comparable Student Union's operate more efficient and effective structures with between 20-40 voting members with many using online mechanisms to gather feedback on ideas from all students in advance of the meeting.
- Feedback from some those attending are that the meetings are too long, not relevant to the role in which they are representing or how they wish to be involved in the Union.

### Proposed Solutions

- Renaming of Union Council to become Senedd.
- The removal of Academic Reps, UMCA Executive as well as Sports and Society Committee members.
- The creation of 10 new places to be filled by representatives of Sports and Societies equally.
- The creation of 2 new places to be filled by members of the UMCA Executive.
- Introduction of a new Quoracy of 50%+1 of voting members.
- The creation of a priority ballot for the order of ideas which is open to all students.
- Time limits on debate which can be extended by voting members where required.
- Notification of policy due to lapse at the first meeting of the academic year.

These changes will reduce the overall membership of council while ensuring a breadth of representation, increasing accountability of voting representatives, and increasing the effectiveness of such meetings.

They are based on consultations with the Full-time Officer Team and well attended Zone Meetings held in late March.

All students would remain able to attend, speak and submit ideas to future meetings.

Submitted by: Bruce Wight





## HIV - Testing, Testing, Testing

*Lobby the Welsh Government to fund free HIV Home Testing Kits for residents in Wales, in an aim to increase the rates of HIV testing, as has already been done in England.*

Details:

Currently, home HIV testing kits are not available on the NHS in Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland, however these kits are provided for free on the English NHS. Home testing kits come in two types, in the first you take a sample of your own blood or swab of saliva which is sent to a laboratory for testing, in the second type the sample can be tested at your own home. These tests are provided free in England to encourage testing for HIV as according to the NHS as many as one in five people with HIV may not be aware of it.

In November 2016 the Minister for Social Services and Public Health commissioned the Public Health Wales Trust to carry out a review into sexual health services in Wales, part of this review included the access to home testing kits. In Aberystwyth there is an immense strain on the NHS already due to the fluctuating student population, and across the county some may live long distances from their local GP. Making tests accessible to all would lessen this strain, as instead of going to the doctors you could quite easily get a test delivered to your home. Given that a one-in-five may not be aware they are HIV Positive, testing is essential and should be encouraged as well as accessible.

Some would argue that the best option, however, would be to go to the local GP to get a test, and receive information on the risks of HIV infection and how to reduce this. Yet, many LGBTQ+ people know the risks of HIV infection and get tested for these very reasons. Assuming that people are unaware of the risks and giving them, what may be perceived as a lecture, may feel patronising and off-putting to LGBTQ+ people and enforce the idea that people do not know what they are doing. An attitude like this could push people away from getting tested at a doctors, increase stigma on the LGBTQ+ community, and make people less comfortable going to the doctors to receive a HIV Test. Therefore, this Idea calls for AberSU to lobby the Welsh Government to provide these tests for free on the NHS within Wales, especially given the recent review. This is an issue that affects not only students, but everyone in Wales and tests like this would make the experience for students far better than it might have been before. It will also help make testing quicker, easier, and more accessible, meaning that we may be able to increase rates of detection of HIV. Making tests accessible, and increasing the rates of detection, is the best way to lower the rate of HIV infection not just in Aberystwyth, or Wales, but globally.

Submitted by: Samuel Smales





## Sex work is just that, work.

*Sex work is an alternative job that some students may seek to pay bills, we must not discriminate for it, it is also a risky job, but with the right support we can protect the wellbeing of sex workers.*

Details:

During the Student Sex Work Project, around 5% of the respondents were found to be sex workers. In the recent NUS Student Sex Worker's Survey, 71% of Student Sex Workers identified as Women, 17% as Non-Binary, over 70% as LGBTQ+, and over 55% identified as having a disability. Many of these people come from already disadvantaged backgrounds and participate in sex work for varying reasons, whilst it is not our place to discuss why someone may go into sex work, a majority are motivated purely by a lack of money and a need to survive. These people use sex work to fund living expenses, bills, food, rent, clothes, or resources for their education. Sex work is a flexible revenue that allows a student to work around university hours in their job. This situation can only increase with inflation and the rising costs of being a student. There are many risks to being a sex worker, 65% of respondents had faced harassment and 47% had experienced sexual assault. It is important to remember that just because a sex worker engages in sexual acts it does not mean that they do not have boundaries that can be crossed, nor that consent is always a given. Given that 48% of respondents said they would be uncomfortable going to the police, this means that harassment and assault goes unreported and uninvestigated for these people, who fear that the law will go against them rather than perpetrators. In terms of accommodation, there can be far reaching consequences for sex workers working from their own homes (around 47% of respondents), where landlord "morality clauses" mean that if found out a sex worker could face a forced eviction, without getting their rent back, and making them face more financial difficulty, and possibly homelessness. In some universities Sex Workers may face expulsion or suspension for their work, which can be extremely harmful for their wellbeing, and again force them further into the conditions that drove them to sex work in the first place. Additionally, due to their work, many may find it difficult to talk to others, or to talk to staff at universities for fear of repercussions that might affect their finances, education, wellbeing, or lead to legal action against them, leading to a high level of loneliness amongst sex workers. These problems are widespread with only 15% of respondents in the survey saying that their institution or students union provided sufficient support. This is what we must change. Therefore, this motion calls for AberSU to back decriminalisation of Sex Work, whilst sex work itself is not illegal, many of the acts around sex work are. Decriminalisation would; increase safety, enhance health, protect sex workers, end criminal records, stop rapists, and free up police time. In addition to this the union should campaign to the end of morality clauses, or at least identify landlords without morality clauses, to make sure the university does not discriminate based on sex worker status, and make sure that the conditions that drive people further into sex work are not allowed to be created. In addition the university should make sure that people are aware that a status such as sex work does not affect the help given through university run services, and the students union should aim to set up confidential support groups to make sure that those in sex work can access the support groups they need with the confidence that they will not be discriminated due to this.

Submitted by: Samuel Smales





## **Clear Complaints Disciplinary and Appeals Processes for ALL**

*To approve the new Complaints, Disciplinary and Appeals Processes.*

Details:

### The Basic Facts

- The existing bye-law has yet to be reviewed for a number of years and outlines what is widely considered across students as out of date and inaccurate practice.
- Existing processes do not clearly differentiate delegated authority between stages, risking the chance that an investigation is overseen by an individual who reviews any appeal – good practice has ensured this hasn't happened but the risk persists.
- This new policy is based on existing process from comparable Students' Unions and incorporates aspects of the existing bye-law.

### Proposed Solution

- To approve the new Complaints, Disciplinary and Appeals Processes.

Submitted by: Bruce Wight





## Recognising Representatives as Volunteers

*Renaming of Part-time Officers to Volunteer Officers with the inclusion of Institute Representatives and where passed any newly created Sports and Society Representatives.*

Details:

### The Basic Facts

- Currently students who are elected alongside their studies to represent specific groups of students and aspects of student life where not related to study schemes are described as Part-time Officers of the Union.
- The title of Part-time Officer doesn't effectively recognise the important work of those who hold such positions and risks perpetuating myths about the role itself, its level of reward and/or the efforts of those elected.
- The Union recognises that such roles are responsible and important ones, providing individuals with opportunities for personal development and the acquisition of valuable graduate skills. As such recognising such students as volunteers only further enhances the contribution they make.

### Proposed Solution

Renaming of Part-time Officers to Volunteer Officers with the inclusion of Institute Representatives and where passed any newly created Sports and Society Representatives.

Submitted by: Bruce Wight







## Success with Access

*Rename the Disabled Students Officer to Accessibility Officer*

Details:

### The current situation

AberSU has had limited engagement with activities and campaigns for students with disabilities. Although focus should never sway from supporting students with disabilities, we know not everyone who benefits from the kind of support on offer self defines as having a disability.

This idea seeks to widen the awareness of the role, and help students understand its purpose.

Over 15% of Aberystwyth University Students have declared a disability, but not all students receive the support they need. Despite this, events such as meet and greets and society start up meetings have a low take-up. Student Support Services and AberSU have met to discuss how students seeking representation and information regarding accessibility can do so.

Changing the role name to Accessibility Officer could make the name more inviting to students with disabilities, as they wouldn't be so publicly labelled as such. The Officer elected would have the option to liaise with students with disabilities, and brand events appropriately.

What are the Solutions?

- Change the name of Disabled Students Officer to Accessibility Officer ready for election at the first opportunity in the 2018/19 academic year.
- Update all instances of Disabled Students Officer in relevant policies and role descriptions.

Submitted by: Dante Lloyd





## **Come on Aberystwyth - get with the pro-choice program**

*Let's campaign to end the disparity of access to terminations in Wales!*

Details:

Terminations in rural Wales are insanely hard to get, having to wait until 8 weeks pregnant to be allowed a proper consultation, forced to be faced with an ultrasound, potential lack of treatment due to non-viable pregnancies and then if you want to go to a clinic in Welshpool, which is the nearest - being forced to pay for a simple treatment that should be provided on the NHS. This is the same if you want to go into England. I propose we push the health board and the NHS in Wales to make terminations more accessible and fight for women's rights to choose in Wales.

Submitted by: Molly Jean-Longden





## Emergency Idea

### Penglais Campus – A Minimalist Vision

*To condemn the recent ground works on our campuses that did not consult students, and push for better strategies and consultation for future changes.*

Details:

As of last autumn, campus grounds management work has resulted in a considerable loss to biodiversity. This has been by the grubbing up of large patches of green space and hedges which have been replaced with either woodchip or grass seed respectively. The Estates Department justified this by claiming students find hedges intimidating in darkness hours, that these are a health and safety risk, and that they cost too much to maintain in a time of financial difficulty. Whilst the latter two of these appear to be reasonable grounds for a different approach to management, even the most inept botanists, ecologists and horticulturalists will inform you that these solutions are short-term at best and may even result in long term financial losses, not to mention the associated detrimental ecological impacts.

Most recently, this has been in the form of turf laying where there was once an abundance of hydrangeas, olearias, escallonias and fuchsias around the base of the Llandinam building. Gardeners know that this bright green turf will soon lose its lustre in the shade of evergreen trees and ecologists know that while a species-diverse grassy meadow is an asset, new uniform turf is little more desirable than astroturf. The tragedy is that this expensive form of re-instatement is only the briefest of fixes, a decision which would only have been taken (and was) by Estates Department staff, totally unqualified and unversed in horticulture. The fear is that, chagrined at the consequences, those same decision-makers will then cut down the remaining trees to save the new grass! Furthermore, they have failed to achieve even their own goals with regards to their health and safety. Where a ledge was once protected by a hedge of shrubs, they have installed railings consisting of just two horizontal rails, of the sort that many a drunk student has vaulted over for fun.

This is to reference just one of many ignorant actions taken, entirely at odds with the land management stewardship ethic advocated by IBERS, one of the University's flagship departments. It is feared that if this 'clear up' operation continues in the same vein, the University may be at risk of losing their EcoCampus Gold Award and Cadw Grade II\* listing.

We therefore call on the SU to take the following actions:

1. Condemn recent grounds work without proper consultation of the student body (who after all live and work in the environment).
2. Push for the formation of an Estates Department / Students Union consultative committee before future grounds management is undertaken, ensuring that student opinion (on which the University prides itself) is taken into account.
3. To mandate the Environment and Sustainability Officer, to work with the committee and represent prevailing student opinion.

Submitted by: Sam Bannon

