AGENDA

1. Welcome

2. Accountability
   Paper A

3. Accessibility Break

4. Motions:
   Motion for free bus passes for disabled students, submitted by Ellen Blunsdon
   Paper B
   Motion to cease the sale of all beef products in Students’ Association cafes and restaurants, submitted by Elena Silverstein
   Paper C
   Amendment to: Cease the sale of all beef products in Students’ Association cafes and restaurants, submitted by Andrew Wilson
   Paper D
   Motion to support the Campaign to get the tree-planting search engine Ecosia to be installed on Campus, submitted by Lucie Scharre
   Paper E
   Motion for the Main Library Helpdesk to open at 8.30am, submitted by Alexandra Taylor
   Paper F
   Motion to support campaign for universal access to menstrual products, submitted by Martha Reilly
   Paper G

5. NUS Motion Development

6. Any Other Business (AOB)
   Shout outs
Paper A: Accountability Reports

Report from Andrew Wilson, President

As your Students’ Association President, I represent the interests of students to the University and beyond, as well as leading your Students’ Association to be a relevant and representative union for its members. Here’s what I’ve been up to recently:

Getting In and Getting On

Throughout my year in office, I have been championing the idea that each and every student, regardless of background, should be able to access the University of Edinburgh and get in to education, but also get on whilst they’re here, making the most of their University experience with the best support available to them.

- I have started to vocally address the importance of tackling cost of living in relation to ensuring that students are satisfied with their experience in Edinburgh.
- Working with your Vice President Community, we have begun a body of work in regard to affordable accommodation in the city, whether that be University-owned, purpose-built student accommodation or in the private rented sector.
- A sustainable and affordable transport solution that works for all students is key, that’s why I will firmly oppose any changes to the transport provision, including the scrapping of the King’s Buildings Shuttle Bus, until the University can demonstrate an alternative that students believe will work for them.

A Relevant Students’ Association

Our Students’ Association must be relevant to student life and representative of all our members which is why I have:

- Continued to organise Sexual Health and Guidance Week (10th – 14th February), The week will aim encourage students to engage in their sexual health at a pace and in a way that is suitable for them, ensuring a broad audience is reached through high-impact activity across campuses – Edinburgh is about to get sexier!
- I have made progress on creating a Local Business Directory so students can shop at local businesses and benefit from exclusive student discounts – coming early March.
- I have been working with PhD students to work through solutions with the University in response to their Where’s Our Space? Campaign.

Students as Changemakers

As students, we have the power to shape local and national decisions and the future of our University, here’s what I’ve been doing to facilitate that:

- I travelled to Brussels for the launch of UNA Europa’s 1EUROPE project, an alliance of 8 leading research universities from across Europe aiming to shape the University of the future. I spoke about how to ensure the University of the future is accessible and affordable for all.
- As your President, I have been involved in various recruitment processes at the University to ensure that all appointments have a student-focused element.
- I have sought student feedback and have been representing student concerns in regards to developments of the Fringe Festival and the Graduations operations and the University’s relationships with Underbelly.
Increase Participation and Communication

- The Schools’ Dodgeball tournament is now live to sign up to join your academic school’s team. It is on Wednesday 5th February 2020 3-6pm in Pleasance Sports Hall, open to staff and students, everyone is welcome. No prior experience needed for this very relaxed afternoon of activity. Please contact me if you are interested or would like more information. You can sign up at www.Students’ Association.ed.ac.uk/SchoolDodgeball.
- The ‘Student Events of Interest’ has been added to students’ outlook calendar. Another project that is now live. These events are relevant to all students: “LGBT+ History Month” and “Student Elections” are upcoming events to look out for.
- Following on from the Wednesday afternoon survey, I am preparing to present a paper to the University that summarizes the findings from the survey. The paper is open so if you would like to be directed to it please get in contact or if you have any questions or would like any more information on this paper feel free to contact me.
- We had a really fantastic ‘Give It a Go’ week with 100+ events and it was great to see so many people getting involved.

Improving Services

- Following on from the Christmas market at King’s Buildings I have also been working to get more stalls set up on this campus. On Thursday 23rd January there will be a Smoothie Stall hosted by RBS in the Tempo Foyer.
- I have been working with various different groups in the University to start planning for a second series of the Let’s Talk podcast to try and cover an even more diverse range of experiences with Mental Health and Wellbeing.
- I have also been working with the University to discuss whether to develop an app for our students to show all available study spaces and other facilities such as Heat n’ Eat stations across campus.

Celebrating Students

- #WeAreEdinburgh profiles are continuing in Semester 2. January was of course themed ‘Give It a Go’ with the wonderful Female Choir doing a fantastic profile. February is covering the themes of underrepresented groups such as student carers or parents and mature students. As well as Volunteer Week which is 10th - 14th February. This is a student led project, so if you any have any ideas please do not hesitate to get in touch. Profiles are available on the Student Association Facebook and Instagram.
- The Student Awards nominations are now open so please nominate your friends and colleagues! There are a diverse range of awards to nominate for, such as Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Award, Unsung Hero Award as well as awards for Outstanding Academic Reps, Peer Learning and Support Groups and Societies (all separate of course). The Student Awards is being held on Thursday 2nd April so please get nominating. Nominations close Monday 3rd February at 5pm.
Report from Oona Miller, Vice President Welfare

Committing to Campus Accessibility

- Co-organised/hosted first ever Postgraduate Disabled Students’ Forum in December alongside Disabled Students’ Campaign and Student Disability Service – we received lots of excellent feedback specific to our PG students. I am looking forward to getting more feedback from the Disabled Students’ Forum on 31st January.
- First meeting convened for Students’ Association and University regarding creation of a central Disability Policy for students, as is best practice throughout higher education sector. We are developing a pathway towards a Policy which includes bringing together a cohesive and holistic framework for supporting disabled students.
- Longstanding issue of the faulty Teviot lift has been repaired and similarly frustrating Pleasance lifts are set for replacement! I have recently brought together Students’ Association Estates staff and University staff managing £15m accessibility fund to ask that they identify areas for accessibility improvements in Potterrow, Pleasance, KB House and Teviot (please get in touch if you have something to highlight here).

Fostering a Compassionate University Community

- I have begun investigating financing options for piloting a Getting Home Fund which would be available to students who need to travel at short notice due to illness/bereavement/etc. but find cannot afford the cost of travel. Relatedly, I am starting to work with the University to review the Hardship and Discretionary Funds. I’ve given feedback that these are generally too restrictive, or even punitive to students who go to great lengths to avoid requiring “emergency” assistance.
- Refreshed #NoExcuse materials that are being produced this Semester, and I will shortly be arranging an open consultation for crafting the future of #NoExcuse as an anti-Gender Based Violence campaign.
- I recently participated in a QAA Collaborative Cluster event on the integration of mental wellbeing into curriculum design, where I contributed to discussions on, for instance, staff-student partnership, and took home examples of best practice to pass on to our University.

Tackling Elitism and Building Inclusivity

- I worked with Tackling Elitism group to begin the process of setting up a Peer Support group for students who are first gen, working class, low-income, estranged or care-experienced. And to support the creation of stickers/badges to be distributed to members of University staff as a community-building activity.
- Co-hosted Holocaust Memorial Day event with the Jewish Society and BME Campaign.
- Liberation Officer objectives: recently I’ve been working with Elliot to address procedural discrepancies for a student changing their name/gender through Student Systems, and with Martha to make Zero Tolerance training a compulsory online module for staff working in Students’ Association venues.

In other news...

- Student Administration and Support Board (and other relevant committees) has now approved a costed proposal for the new Student Support and Personal Tutoring system, meaning we can spend this semester ironing out details, making specific proposals and be on track for 2021 implementation.
- Student elections are happening! Nominate yourself for the coolest job ever!😊
Report from Rosheen Wallace, Vice President Community

Sustainability Committee
- Recently, I have focused on setting up a sustainability group or committee for the Students’ Association, in order to make sure that this work is happening in all areas of the organisation.
- I’ve held one staff and one student event where there was a lot of discussion around both what the Students’ Association could do more of, and how we could better support student groups in their own ideas and initiatives. Both were very positive and the next steps are arranging the first formal meeting of this group.

Flatmate finding website
- I have been working with IT to look at setting up a flatmate-finding website for students, allowing students to find others to live with, or flats and rooms to take over, which will incorporate the University’s login system ensuring that it is secure and users are not vulnerable to scams.

Guarantor scheme
- In December I wrote to a number of letting agents asking if they were aware of the guarantor scheme and whether they would use it. I received quite a few replies giving useful feedback from letting agents on the scheme, which will help inform further discussions with the University. However, this project is somewhat frustrating as progress is slow, and it is unclear who in the University is ultimately responsible and when a reform will happen. Next steps, I am looking to arrange a meeting bringing a group of University staff together in order to progress on this issue.

Housing information
- I am currently filming videos about housing and tenancy rights which are to be used as part of an effort to increase awareness of tenancy rights and of how the Advice Place can help in searching for accommodation. I hope to do more of these throughout the course of the year, and in addition, I am planning to host one or two more flatmate-finding events following that which was held in ‘Give It a Go’ week.

Transport
- We have been pushing the University for an update, however, there have been a couple of delays including meetings cancelled or postponed, meaning the University is not any further forward to finding a solution. However, we have made it clear to the University that we will argue to keep the existing transport provision, as we are not convinced that there is any possible alternative for next year that would benefit more students.

Other
- Attended second meeting of the new travel and aviation group. The University hopes to develop a strategy to reduce carbon emissions that result from flying and other business travel.
- I attended the Sustainable IT group and brought a paper to discuss how the University might further incorporate Ecosia as a search engine.
Report from Stephanie Vallancey, Vice President Education

Quality and constructive feedback
- I’m working on encouraging and helping create open channels of communication between staff and students using the existing feedback mechanisms: Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC), Mid-Course Feedback, and Course Enhancement Questionnaires.
- Just started on a working group which is addressing Course Enhancement Questionnaires, and how to make these an effective method of collating course related feedback.

Hidden Course Costs
- This has been one of my key priorities. We have an informal survey out in the College of Art to identify the areas of work- and what these costs are.
- Currently meeting with the ECA Principal and UG School Rep to discuss the next steps and how to progress. We will be organizing focus groups to identify solutions with students and staff in the school.
- Second half of my course costs is the University wide campaign. Currently collating a report to be presented to the University with recommendations and best practices of other Universities. The recommendations include ensuring the longevity of this campaign- and that course costs are recognized as a problem for students and are addressed in a timely manner.

Representation Support
- First semester of a pilot at College Science and Engineering Staff Student Liaison Committees has been an (initial) success. Have been assisting and chairing meetings between relevant school reps and College staff on the key issues relating to undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students. We have been addressing issues such as timetabling, PGR support and training, and communication throughout the College.
- Working with our school reps and enhancing their role and making sure they have all the support and resources they need both from us and within their school. This includes, linking our reps up with each other and helping support enhancement projects and, engaging in additional University projects.
- Currently in the stages of drafting the school rep handbook- and gathering best practice from other institutions over what has been most successful.

Other
- The Lecture Recording Project has been finishing up- with now over 300 spaces fitted with the technology! Further work will be going towards addressing the benefits coming from this project.
- Industrial Action- During the action your sabbatical officers coordinated and led tea/coffee runs to the picket lines and supported the organization of events for UCU.
- The new Student Support Model has been approved at its respective committees meaning it will now move onto the next stage. Myself and our VPW, Oona, are still involved in this process- if you are interested in what it will look like; you can check out the SharePoint site!
- Election nominations have opened- look at our webpage and nominate yourself for a position!! Your sabbatical officers are free for a chat if you have any questions about the role- or just curious!
Paper B: Free bus passes for disabled students

What we will do

1. Free bus passes will be available to disabled students as an adjustment option from the Student Disability Service.
2. These will be provided to students on an individual basis depending on personal need as determined by the Student Disability Service.
3. This will automatically be provided by the University to students who have previously been registered with the Student Disability Service.

Background to this

1. There has been a discussion about the University offering discounted bus passes to students who rely on buses to get to classes, for disabled students, this discount is not enough.
2. The Disability charity Scope estimates that being disabled costs an extra £583 per month. This comes from buying mobility aids, extra heating, carers and, especially, extra transport.
3. While Edinburgh City Council does offer free bus passes for disabled people, you need to present ‘proof’ of your disability in the form of a benefits letter. As many disabled people aren’t eligible for benefits, are in the long process to receive benefits or have had their claims denied, University provided bus passes are clearly needed to help disabled students.

Beliefs and motivating actions

1. The University should be doing more to give disabled students the provisions they need to get to classes.
2. Disabled people also deserve to have access to free transport to optimise their student experience, e.g. for use to get to lectures, sporting facilities, society events etc.
3. Disabled students already have to combat extra costs and discounted rate of travel will not be enough to compensate this.

Submitted with 20 Student Signatures by Ellen Blunsdon
Paper C: Motion to cease the sale of all beef products in Students’ Association Cafes and Restaurants

What we will do:

1. Students’ Association should put an end to selling beef in all the Students’ Association run cafes, restaurants, shops and any freebies or events held around the university.
2. Students’ Association should also put pressure on the university to do the same in non-Students’ Association run cafes on campus and in student accommodation.

Background to this:

1. Multiple universities including Cambridge University, Goldsmiths University in London and Portugal’s oldest university, The University of Coimbra have already completely stopped selling beef and Cambridge University have also stopped selling lamb. We can do the same.
2. Tasty meat-free products are on the rise and are now readily available in many UK supermarkets.
3. According to The Guardian, giving up beef reduces an individual’s carbon footprint more than giving up a car.
4. The UK has the 2nd largest beef herd in Europe according to the National Farmers Union of Scotland.
5. In 2009, the livestock industry was responsible for 37% of all methane emissions, 65% of nitrous oxide emissions and 9% of CO2. This is only getting worse.
6. According to the BBC, if everyone became vegetarian by 2050, there would be 7 million fewer deaths each year.
7. Plant-based diets can reduce the land we use for agriculture by 76% according to George Monbiot, a columnist at The Guardian and British environmentalist.
8. The rise of intensive beef farming has raised concern about water pollution from livestock faeces and disease as well as animal welfare.

Beliefs and motivating Actions:

1. Our petition to cease all sales of beef has received over 530 signatures. This shows strong support from meat eaters and non-meat eaters alike, uniting to reduce our university’s environmental impact.
2. Beef can be easily replaced in our cafes with meat-free alternatives that still contain all the necessary nutrients.
3. Changing our collective diet is perhaps the easiest and most effective step that we can take right now.
4. Changing our diets to be more sustainable cannot simply be left up to individuals, we need some system change to help progress.

Submitted with 20 Student Signatures by Elena Silverstein.
Paper D: Amendment to:
Motion to cease the sale of all beef products in Students’ Association Cafes and Restaurants

What we will do:
1. Mandate the Students’ Association to conduct a feasibility study exploring the impact of ending the sale of beef in Students’ Association run cafes, restaurants, and shops
2. Mandate the Sabbatical Officers to table a discussion at the next Students’ Association’s Executive on the option to call a referendum on:
   a. The Students’ Association should put an end to selling beef in all the Students’ Association run cafes, restaurants, shops and any freebies or events held around the university
3. Mandate the Students’ Association to re-launch its Meat Free Mondays campaign; reaffirm its commitment to its Local Food Policy; and continue to expand its offer of vegetarian and vegan food options

Submitted with by Andrew Wilson.
Paper E: Support the Campaign to get the tree-planting search engine Ecosia to be installed on Campus

What we will do

1. Promote the campaign (i.e. in Newsletters, Flyers etc.)
2. Lobby the University to install Ecosia as the default search engine
3. Approach head of schools and the IT departments directly demanding action

Background to this

1. Last year Sustainable Development Association and a few other interested students have started a campaign trying to gather some student in order to implement Ecosia as the default search engine on University computers.
2. Ecosia is an alternative search engine that plants trees from their ad revenue. They have 8 million active users and have planted 73 million trees so far. In doing this, they partner with local communities to improve their livelihoods. Additionally, they are financially and morally transparent: pay taxes and don’t sell or collect their users’ data.
3. With the University’s Zero by 2040 goal in mind, installing Ecosia as the default search engine on all university computers could be a fantastic tool to make the University sustainable!
4. So far we have gathered 177 likes on our Facebook campaign and planted 113 trees via our custom install link for people to use on personal devices.
5. Roughly 45 searches finance one tree, which each removes 50kg of CO2 from the air in its lifetime.
6. The energy used is offset with renewables, making the searches carbon negative! If Ecosia was as big as Google, it would offset 15% of global CO2 emissions!
7. Other Universities have already implemented it and have financed tens of thousands of trees in just a matter of months!
8. If our 40,000 students make an average of 3 searches per day and it takes 45 searches to plant a tree, we could plant 40,000*3*365/45 = 973,333 trees a year!
9. We are planning to continue to raise student awareness but also want to try to use the current buzz around the climate crisis to find a good time to bring this forward to “the higher-ups” and IT.
10. The Vet school is also already looking into installing Ecosia.
11. The department of Social Responsibility and Sustainability has developed a policy brief (CSSD Persuasive Brief Number B144723) recommending Ecosia as a default search engine for UoE.
Beliefs and motivating actions

1. We believe that in the urgency of the climate crisis we can't ignore any potential tools that could help us mitigate catastrophic impacts.
2. Planting trees is one of the most effective ways to do so.
3. A switch that is as easy as setting a different default search engine and as a result planting thousands of trees holds huge potential.
4. Ecosia also does not collect user data, thus this would also improve information privacy on university computers.

Submitted with 20 Student Signatures by Lucie Scharre.
Paper F: Motion for the Main Library Helpdesk to open at 8.30am

What we will do

1. For the Students’ Association Sabbatical Officers to lobby the University to open the Main Library Helpdesk at 8.30am on weekdays during term from September 2020, ensuring the Main Library is properly resourced with extra staff and support costs.
2. For the Students’ Association President to write a letter on behalf of the Students’ Association to the Head of Information Services and the Head of Estates, declaring support for this.
3. For the 8.30am start time to be reviewed at the end of the 2020/21 academic year, through staff tallying the number of students that use the service before 9am during the year, in order to not overstaff the service if unnecessary, while still ensuring students can resolve issues before their academic day begins.

Background to this

1. Problems can arise outside Helpdesk working hours.
2. Some students have class as early as 9am.
3. If the Helpdesk opens at 8.30am, 30 minutes earlier than it currently does, problems can be resolved before students have to head to class.
4. The proposal is limited to term time weekdays, as the focus is to help students who may have issues which need resolving before their 9am class.
5. In order to not cause too much disruption to Helpdesk staff the proposal would change the opening hours by only 30 minutes.
6. Even if only one staff member were to open the Helpdesk at 8.30 this could still help resolve pressing issues.
7. There are other UK university Helpdesks which open earlier than 9am Monday to Friday, such as: Queen Mary (8.00), Cambridge (8.30), and Dundee (8.45).

Beliefs and Motivating Actions

1. If issues arise outside Helpdesk working hours students should be able to resolve these before they begin their academic day, particularly if these issues would affect their attendance or levels of stress, without unnecessarily creating extra costs or stressing Helpdesk staff.

Submitted with 20 Student Signatures by Alexandra Taylor.
Paper G: Support campaign for universal access to menstrual products

What we will do:
Endorse and support the campaign for universal access to menstrual products in Scotland by:

1. Signing Monica Lennon MSP’s open letter in support of the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill.
2. Supporting the campaign to back the bill and raise awareness among the University by:
   a. Signing the petition in support of universal access.
   b. Supporting the poster campaign through the use of Student’s Association spaces.
   c. Issuing a public statement in support of the campaign.
   d. Including the campaign and petition in the Student’s Association newsletter.

Background to this:
1. A 2018 survey revealed that nearly 1 in 5 menstruators in Scotland cannot afford period products, with many resorting to toilet paper, rags and old clothes.
2. In September 2018, the Period Products (Free Provision) Bill was passed in Holyrood, making menstrual products freely available to all students in Scotland.
3. This month (January 2020), Monica Lennon MSP submitted an amended bill calling for universal access. This would mean that all menstruating people in Scotland could have access to these crucial products.
4. Free, universal menstrual product provision was trialled in Aberdeen from 2017-18. The report found that the greatest beneficiaries from the scheme were unemployed people (constituting over half of the service-users) and people experiencing problems or delays with benefits, disability or illness, paying off debts, coping as a single parent, and changes in family circumstances.
5. Communities Secretary Aileen Campbell has announced that the Scottish government does not plan to back the new bill.
6. Period poverty most significantly impacts the most vulnerable communities, such as low-income families, as well as refugees, asylum-seekers and homeless people. These are communities which several groups within Edinburgh University have historically mobilised around to support.
7. Free provision has improved access to education for students. We are now seeking to extend these benefits to the wider community who experience the same, and often greater, needs.

Beliefs and motivating actions:
1. Access to menstrual products is a universal right. Circumstances which make menstruation a difficult experience include homelessness, coercive, controlling and violent relationships and health conditions such as endometriosis (affecting 1 in 10 women). Trans and non-binary menstruators also experience difficulties and heightened stigma in accessing period products. Access to period products should be made freely available to all those who menstruate.
2. We study in an elite, privileged institution. Undoubtedly, students have greatly benefited from the free provisions scheme, and it has improved access to education for many. Now is the time to stand with the wider Scottish community who have yet to access these benefits.
3. Students from the University of Edinburgh do not only require menstrual products within their place of study. They also deserve to access these items in their community spaces.

4. Universal provision goes a step further to support students from a Widening Participation background to access education.

5. We believe the Students’ Association should stand in solidarity with menstruators across Scotland who have not had access to the same privileges as us.

Submitted with 20 Student Signatures by Martha Reilly.