

NUS Wales Conference 2019

Resolutions

Contents

Living Wage Motion for NUS (Wales)	2
Rent Retainer Motion for NUS (Wales)	3
NUS Wales Student Housing Campaign	4
NUS Wales Divest Barclays Campaign	5
Stop Shutting the Student Voice out of the Brexit Debate!	6

Living Wage Motion for NUS (Wales)

Conference believes:

1. The current minimum wage set out by the government is not sufficient to properly subsidise students during their time at university.
2. As of April 2018, the minimum wage for those aged 16-17 is £4.20, 18-20 £5.90, 21-25 £7.38 and £7.83 for those over the age of 25.
3. By April 2019, the minimum and living wage is set to rise.
4. As evidence shows many students struggle with the cost of living, NUS Wales' 2015 "Pound in your Pocket" survey found many students must work or take on personal debt to support their study.
5. Around 55% of students working 0-8 hours a week feel they struggle with their course due to work commitments, with close to 70% of students who work more than 25 hours a week feeling they struggle with their course due to work commitments.
6. Students also have high levels of personal debt beyond their student debt
7. Close to 50% of undergraduate students have personal debt ranging from overdrafts to payday loans.

Conference further believes:

1. This is an area where Students' Unions across the country have a responsibility and an ability to take action.
2. Concerns over debt and money, often linked to socio-economic background, shouldn't be something which inhibits a student's ability to study.
3. Current government legislation has not gone far enough to address these problems.
4. The current structure of the minimum wage is insufficient to address these problems.
5. The age structure represents a form of discrimination which disproportionately affects students.

Conference resolves:

1. That Students' Unions across the country should pay the national living wage to all students in place of the minimum wage, regardless of age – this is currently set at £7.83 per hour.
2. Furthermore, that Students' Unions should increase the wage paid to SU staff in line with increases set out by the government.
3. That NUS should campaign to make every Students' Union across the country a Living Wage employer.

Rent Retainer Motion for NUS (Wales)

Conference believes:

1. That many Landlords charge some rent over the summer to “save” the house for the tenants.
2. That despite this, many students live in terrible conditions.
3. That many students do not know their tenancy rights.
4. That summer retainers are not compulsory, they are put on by landlords, even though in many cases students wouldn't be able to live there in the first place due to repairs.

Conference further believes:

1. That rent retainers are unfair and disproportionately affect lower-income students and care leavers.
2. That cost of living is one of the main factors stopping students from lower-income backgrounds going to University.

Conference resolves:

1. To lobby the Welsh Government and Housing Minister Julie James AM, to abolish rent retainers.
2. To lobby the NUSW to provide information on students letting rights to all students across Wales.

NUS Wales Student Housing Campaign

Zone: Welfare

Proposed by: NUS Wales NEC / University of Wales Trinity St David Students' Union

Conference believes:

1. That every student and learner in Wales has the right to good quality housing and accommodation, regardless of provider, throughout the entirety of their time in post-16 education in Wales.
2. Poor quality student accommodation or housing is one of the key inhibitors of academic success and positive mental health and wellbeing.
3. 90% of students live in privately rented accommodation, university-owned halls or private halls (Save the Student, 2018).
4. 44% of students struggle to keep up with their rent payments with 45% noting that accommodation costs have a detrimental effect on their mental health (STS, 2018).
5. The average weekly rent in Wales is £122, while the average maintenance funding works out to be £139, leaving many students in Wales just £17 per week to live on from maintenance support.

Conference further believes:

1. The increased cost and poor value for money accommodation offering for students across the UK has an undoubted effect on retention of students by the university due to being priced out of their studies and/or the knock on effect this has on mental health.
2. There are many examples of students having to pay 12 months of rent on a lease when only occupying and utilising a property for circa 30 weeks of the year.
3. The vast majority of students are not in full time and/or high paid employment, and this must be considered within leases to students.
4. A national, grass-roots level inquiry into student housing should be carried out by UK and/or devolved governments or sector organisations.
5. Tighter, fairer and better regulation of the student housing sector is needed to avoid further manipulation of students - this regulation must be informed by students as partners within the process and in close partnership with NUS.

Conference resolves:

1. NUS Wales should lobby universities, local authorities, UK and Welsh govt representatives and other colleagues/partners to achieve the following: A fairer economy for student accommodation, which sees a reduction of rental fees and/or an improvement in maintenance support.
2. To better inform students of their rights prior to searching for private rented accommodation and offer a guidance/advice service which is easily accessible by all to provide clear support.
3. NUS Wales to work in partnership with stakeholders to conduct localised student accommodation and housing surveys on an annual basis in order to ensure that private landlords and commercial providers are delivering a value for money service for students and to identify areas of improvement, concern and good practice.
4. NUS Wales to collate this data and interpret to provide a national picture for Wales, allowing stakeholders to remain informed of the developing picture of student housing and accommodation and call for changes as appropriate.

NUS Wales Divest Barclays Campaign

Conference believes:

1. That fossil fuels are a major contributor to climate change and that by dramatically reducing their usage would have a significant beneficial effect in the efforts to reduce global warming.[1]
2. That climate change has racist [2], sexist [3] and classist[4] connotations, which whilst adding to the complexity of the issue at hand also highlight the need to address climate change multilaterally.
3. That Barclays Bank is a major financial contributor to fossil fuels, with approximately £15,653,000,000 (£15bn) invested in the fossil fuel industry [5], notably in controversial initiatives such as the North Dakota Access Pipeline [6] and fracking in Ryedale, Yorkshire.[7]
4. That Barclays is a major stakeholder in the UK Higher Education sector[8], investing in multiple HE institutions throughout Wales and the wider UK and as such, should be taking the views of its fellow sector stakeholders, students, into account when using our sector's finances to fund other initiatives.

Conference resolves:

1. That NUS Wales supports Students' Unions in Wales in opening a dialogue with their institutions about the ethical (or otherwise) nature of their corporate banking and finances.
2. That NUS Wales supports the People & Planet 'Divest Barclays' campaign[9], to lobby institutions to divest from Barclays in order to pressurise them into withdrawing their financial backing of the fossil fuel industry.
3. That NUS Wales liaises with other sector stakeholders (such as HEFCW and Welsh Government) to raise awareness of these issues within the wider sector, thus increasing pressure on Barclays and the fossil fuel industry from as many positions as possible.

References

- [1] <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jan/15/immediate-fossil-fuel-phaseout-could-arrest-climate-change-study>
- [2] <https://peopleandplanet.org/blog/2019-02-11/gogreen19-climate-change-racist-issue>
- [3] <https://psmag.com/environment/fixing-sexism-at-the-intergovernmental-panel-on-climate-change>
- [4] <https://www.damemagazine.com/2018/08/09/the-environmental-movement-has-a-classism-problem/>
- [5] <https://theecologist.org/2018/oct/16/boycott-barclays-while-it-fails-fracking>
- [6] <https://twitter.com/CarolineLucas/status/836553203567165441>
- [7] <https://frackfreeryedale.org/fracking-company-is-barclays-bank/>
- [8] <https://www.barclayscorporate.com/sector-expertise/public-sector/education.html>
- [9] <https://act.peopleandplanet.org/efforts/divest-barclays/lookup/new>

Stop Shutting the Student Voice out of the Brexit Debate!

Conference Believes

1. In June 2016, the permitted electorate within British public voted 52% to 48% to leave the European Union.[1]
2. Young people voted overwhelmingly to Remain, with most estimates around 70%.[2]
3. Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty was triggered in March 2017, which gives the default legal position of the UK leaving the EU on the 29th of March whether a Withdrawal Agreement is in place or not, unless an extension or revocation of Article 50 is agreed between the EU & UK.[3]
4. In Wales, a turnout of 71% saw the eligible electorate vote by 52.5% to leave the EU.[4]
5. There were and are many legitimate reasons that people chose to vote Leave or Remain in the 2016 referendum and that a large proportion of individuals voted accordingly.
6. Since the referendum a number of promises and pledges made by the Leave campaign (which includes several senior members of the UK government and cross-party politicians) have since been exposed to be inaccurate or outright lies.
7. EU students make significant economic, social and cultural contributions to life in the UK and Wales but continued uncertainty around Brexit is leaving many students without a clear answer on funding and support for EU students and applicants.[5]
8. The UK government's proposed Withdrawal Agreement seeks to end the freedom of movement previously enjoyed by students, academic and citizens alike, which would no doubt pose issues to freedom of movement for students and academics, especially the Erasmus+ programme. This is despite previous cabinet ministers indicating a preference for Erasmus+ to continue and does not factor in any associated costs due to an end of freedom of movement.[6]
9. That there is scope for this issue to affect 'students as students.' This is due to the complexity of the potential withdrawal scenarios having impacts on everything from freedom of movement to continued participation in Erasmus+, continued involvement in European Higher Education Area research and projects and grant associated with those.[7]

Conference further believes

1. Wales has been a key beneficiary of EU funds (particularly in deprived areas), with over £5bn reaching Wales between 2000-2017, creating over 36,000 jobs and contributing to a wide range of innovative developments, from education to infrastructure to leisure and health facilities and environmental protection.[8]
2. According to the Centre for Economic Performance, a Hard Brexit deal would leave Wales worse off by approximately £1.1bn.[9]
3. Data from the Home Office has shown a significant increase in hate crime since the referendum result in 2016.[10]
4. That since the referendum in 2016, a significant number of people have since turned 18 and as such are now viewed as eligible to vote in elections and referenda, which would have a significant impact on any 'final say' or 'people's vote' outcome.[11]
5. That a democracy has a right to change its mind, especially when circumstances change and that this is reflected within public opinion.[12]

Conference resolves

1. That the UK government must consult with and work in partnership with the Welsh Government in negotiation of any further Withdrawal Agreements and that Wales's unique and beneficial

relationship with the EU should be taken into consideration - no citizen or community in Wales should be disadvantaged under any Brexit scenario.

2. To call for any Withdrawal Agreement and/or future legal agreement to preserve the current student-facing rights enjoyed as members of the EU. These include, but are not limited to: Erasmus+, EU HEA opportunities, the Human Rights Charter and freedom of movement for students and academics. These must be enshrined in UK law, or suitable alternatives developed in partnership with NUS as the recognised voice of the UK student body.
3. That EU citizens, students and academics currently in the UK should have their right to remain protected and long-term future funding arrangements secured to allow them to continue contributing to the UK economy and society.
4. That NUS Wales will support a People's Vote or Final Say on any Brexit scenario and will lobby to ensure that Remain is an option on the ballot paper.

References

- [1] - https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/eu_referendum/results
- [2] - https://fullfact.org/europe/young-voters-and-eu-referendum/?gclid=CjwKCAjw7vraBRBbEiwA4WBO1RvDmm6mxilGWIXKIOcco69oI_zNsmTDI-zCIcNYN5ysf5yBGAsghoCeeIQAvD_BwE
- [3] - <http://ukandeu.ac.uk/multimedia/article-50-timeline/>
- [4] - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36612308>
- [5] - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-39670693>
- [6] - <https://britishineurope.org/where-does-the-march-agreement-leave-me/>
- [7] - <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/brexit>
- [8] - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-40105919>
- [9] - <https://walesforeurope.org/02-08-2017/>
- [10] - <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/oct/16/hate-crime-brexit-terrorist-attacks-england-wales>
- [11] - <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/final-say-brexit-latest-young-voters-second-referendum-remain-poll-a8467631.html>
- [12] - <https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/foreign-affairs/brexit/news/95085/majority-public-want-vote-final-brexit-deal-new-poll>

2nd floor, Cambrian Buildings
Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff CF10 5FL

t 029 2043 5390

e office@nus-wales.org.uk

www.nus.org.uk/en/nus-wales

nus *wales*
national union of **students**

2nd floor, Cambrian Buildings
Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff CF10 5FL

t 029 2043 5390

e office@nus-wales.org.uk

www.nus.org.uk/en/nus-wales

nus *wales*
national union of **students**