

TO: Assembly
FROM: Tom Pymer and Andrea Vismara
RE: The Environment: SU Core Position
DATE: 7 November 2019

The belief and its justifications

The primary belief of this policy is that the threats to the environment is the central problem and threat to the world at the present moment. Human exploitation of natural resources has led to the warming of the world, the pollution of the land, water and air, and the severe threatening of many lives (both human and non-human). Durham should be striving to do its bit. As a University, it is centrally positioned to offer utilisation of brainpower and resources to develop answers to the problems at hand. As a major builder and landowner in the city of Durham, it is the responsibility of both Durham SU and the University to assist the County Council in achieving their target of a reduction in carbon emissions and in making Durham a greener city

The definition of a better future

The ultimate purpose of this policy is to create a world in which this policy is no longer needed. The work of this policy shall aim to make Durham the greenest university in the country. Durham will become a university which relies on renewable resources of energy, recycles all available materials and buys new materials from renewable resources, cuts its food waste down to zero and ensures that all its buildings are sustainable and eco-friendly, along with numerous other projects which Durham SU or the University may adopt in time. This will involve an increase in funding for environmental projects and the provision of a team whose job it is to oversee the system. The same shall apply for the Students' Union, which will aim to make itself the most eco-friendly students' union there is. We shall also attempt to influence the National Union of Students to become more environmentally conscious in their activities, and adopt the same policies that we ourselves suggest.

The barriers

Our chief obstruction is the amount of change this will take. We are facing, amongst other things, completely changing our energy suppliers, our suppliers of various other resources such as paper and the menus we serve. The current way in which the University is set up does not lend itself kindly to the transfers we are suggesting, neither do the current popular building materials, which will need to change.

Some of the changes required, such as fitting solar panels to every University building, are expensive. This will require persuasion to ensure that the environment remains a top financial priority rather than one which needs to scabble for money along with everything else.

Apathy remains an issue; that is, lack of action on both the major issues and the small things that an individual can do which nonetheless will have a major impact. This apathy extends to the highest level of the National Union of Students, which currently restricts certain activities such as the purchase of paper from recycled stocks, and thus has a negative impact on the possibility of students' unions working together to solve this problem. This must be a matter of urgency.

The current University expansion plan, the scope of which is intended to last for the next decade, shall need radical rethinking in several areas if it is to become more ecologically sustainable.

Persuading change in this area shall be difficult as it will involve changing plans which have already been made.

Coordination between colleges, the university and the Students' Union will be vital to campaign properly towards this work. There shall need to be greater measures and groups in place where groups from all of these areas can work together, whereas historically this has been an area in which ecological campaigns have been lacking.

Belief about the change and the responsibilities

The belief of the Durham Students' Union is:

That it is absolutely vital to take all actions available to us to curb the impacts of climate change, in the academic, organisational and extracurricular spheres. Durham SU should exercise its influence through the relevant University decision-making bodies to embed the principles outlined in this paper and related motions passed in reference to it.

That discussion of environmental and ecological issues must form a key part of all discussions with the University hereafter, with every project being rigorously examined for its environmental impact and suggestions for improvement being made, whilst simultaneously making sure that no students are disadvantaged by the changes.

That supplies to the Durham SU should be, wherever possible, sourced from sustainable and eco-friendly resources, and got rid of through ecologically sustainable means such as recycling.

That the question of the environment must also form a key part of all future policies and projects adopted by the Durham SU, with the decisions being well-publicised and opportunities to work with other Students' Unions and organisations dedicated to fighting this problem being embraced.

TO: Assembly

FROM: Sam Johnson-Audini

RE: Amendment to The Environment: SU Core Position
Acknowledging the colonial dynamics present in climate crisis

DATE: 7 November 2019

The belief and its justifications

- **Insert:** 'crisis disproportionately affects those who live in the Global South; predominantly people of colour.' Between '*present moment.*' And '*Human exploitation*'
- **Insert and amend:** '*As a University, it is centrally positioned to offer utilisation of brainpower and resources to develop answers to the problems at hand.*'
To '*As a university, Durham is inextricably linked to the colonial past and present and has historically profited from exploitation of natural resources, particularly those in the Global South. Durham as a University, is centrally positioned*'

The definition of a better future

- **Insert:** 'Whilst seeking to change the university's structures, climate activism must engage with the colonial structures causing climate change – in the university and beyond. Climate activism must centre the voices of those most affected in the Global South.' between '*oversee the system*' and '*the same shall apply for the Students' Union*'