

Progress in Aberystwyth

The impact made by Aberystwyth
University Centre



Briefing paper
By Torrin Wilkins, December 6th, 2023

Centre

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Director of Centre Think Tank

Torrin is the Director and Founder of Centre. He has written articles for multiple publications including a weekly column for Backbench. He has also been interviewed on both the BBC and LBC. Torrin has a Political Studies degree from Aberystwyth University.

About Centre

We are an independent non-profit foundation and cross-party think tank. Our mission is to rebuild the centre ground and to create a more centrist and moderate politics. We support better public services and a strong economy inspired by policies from the Nordic countries.

To achieve these goals, we work with people from across the UK and party politics. This includes engaging with politicians and our networks, which include academia, politics, and law.

Our work includes creating new conversations by hosting events and conducting interviews. We also produce new policy ideas to better inform debate, publish papers, and release articles. We aim to build consensus, shape public opinion, and work with policymakers to change policy.

Published by

Centre

Introduction

Centre Aberystwyth was a campaigning society that focused on finding solutions to issues that impact students. We then worked with other societies to change the policies of the Student Union, the university and the local council. We also ran events with guest speakers and socials. It was our first-ever student society and was created in 2021.

Chapter one

Stopping spiking and supporting survivors coalition



Just after the pandemic, we saw cases of spiking rise both nationally and within Aberystwyth. To tackle the issue we created a coalition of 19 university societies and submitted a motion to the Aberystwyth Student Union. This had over 300 supporting signatures and our coalition website page received over 100 visits.

The full motion

The motion said: "We note that there has been a substantial increase in spiking cases in Aberystwyth, with many of our students having experienced it. This has been confirmed by both the University and the police. Due to the dangers of spiking, and the number of incidents that have occurred, we believe that it is important that we take any measures we can to both avoid such incidents and support those who fall victim to such incidents.

The first section of this idea is around avoidance, with the Student's Union (SU) buying test strips that can detect common ingredients that are used to spike drinks. This will enable students to test their drinks on a night out if they are worried- meaning that they can stay safer and potentially reduce the chances of them consuming a spiked product. Additionally, test strips also provide a quick way to determine whether a drink was spiked if a person thinks they may have been, which will enable a person who's been spiked to seek medical help immediately and earlier on. Whilst these strips will not pick up every potential substance that could be used to spike someone, they at least increase the protection level that students have on a night out.

To ensure that students can access these products, they should be available at the SU for collection- with them also being advertised on the SU website, by email and digital channels. Moreover, these could be funded through grants from external organisations like the police or other alcohol awareness and sexual assault charities. If a funding source cannot be found, the meantime should be spent working with local bars, pubs, and clubs to try and get them to stock the strips. This will ensure that students are still safe no matter where they go out in town.

The second section of this idea is to ensure that when in town students are safe and can easily get help. A major part of this is making sure that students are aware of where to go if a spiking incident occurs. Therefore, the SU should also contact local bars, pubs and clubs and publish details of where to go and what to do in each of these venues on their website. This will make sure that students have somewhere that can easily reference if anything occurs, and that they are also able to read these before a night out so that they know what to do if something does happen. Moreover, the SU could also work with different venues and share good practices, with these hopefully improving the level of safety across Aberystwyth as a whole.

The last section of this idea concerns the support that victims of spiking receive. Under current academic procedures, in some departments, students who are victims of spiking may be penalised academically if they miss a class due to the incident. This is due to attendance being a contributing factor in some modules towards the total module grade. Therefore, we believe that the SU should work with the University to change these procedures and ensure that students are not ever given an unauthorised absence if they are spiked. This should be the case even without any proof, such as a police report, with this policy recognising that not all victims of spiking feel comfortable reporting an incident to the police or even anybody at all".

Women's Football

Women's Football

A friendly, successful club that embodies the term Work Hard, Play Hard! Everybody is welcome to become part of AUWFC.

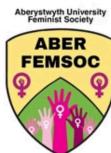


Aber Art Society

Aber Art Society is a friendly and creative society welcome to everyone, students and non students, no matter what art skills you have.

Harriers Athletics and Running Club

As one of the fastest growing sports clubs in Aber, they welcome all ranges of ability and experience.



Aberystwyth University Swimming and Water Polo Club
One of the largest Sports Clubs in Aber! Two sports! Training and Events for people of all abilities and interests! Check Out Our 'About' Section to Learn More!



Aberystwyth Conservation Volunteers

ACV is a practical conservation volunteer group run through the university.



Aberystwyth University Law Society

Aberystwyth University Law Society (AULS) is an academic society that wants to help our Law students get the best out of studying here in Aberystwyth.



Aberystwyth University Liberals

Aberystwyth University Liberals are campaigning for a brighter future for Wales and the United Kingdom!



Aerial Fitness

Aerial Fitness offer pole fitness, aerial hoop gymnastics, and strength and flexibility sessions for people of all abilities.



Aberystwyth Animal and Veterinary Society

We welcome all animal-loving prospective members and those who have an interest in the animal sector into the Animal and Veterinary Society (AAVS)!



Aberystwyth Business Society

The Aberystwyth Business Society aims to enhance students skills and to support students.



Tickled Pink

Tickled Pink is a CoppaFeel! Aberystwyth Uni Boob Team fundraising and awareness society for the charities CoppaFeel!



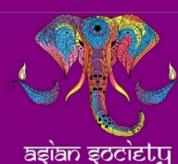
Wrestling Society

The Aberystwyth Wrestling Society is for all fans of wrestling, the casuals and the diehards.



Slovak and Czech Society

A community of students related to Slovak and Czech Republic and students interested in the culture and languages of these countries.



Asian Society

The Asian Society also known as ASOC celebrates South Asian culture and heritage.



Aber Fantasy and Science Fiction Society

Aber Fantasy and Science Fiction society is a friendly group who do weekly TV and film showings, along with games nights and low-key socials, and one-off events.



Tarannau Cheerleaders

Tarannau Cheerleaders is the club for everyone who wants to be part of a team that trains hard, has fun harder, and makes memories together. No experience is required- all are welcome to join!

Chapter two

Supporting students



Supporting students

When the cost of living crisis hit some of those worst affected were students. Our aim at this time was to support policies which would make life better for students and to support them through the crisis.

Our policies were:

Better access to food banks for students, allowing lecturers or SU staff to refer them if needed.

This is a measure that will help students who are living in town, as now they are often unable to access them as they do not meet the criteria. The Students' Union should work with local organisations to ensure that this is changed so that students are able to access these services if needed.

A rent freeze on university accommodation.

Currently, our university accommodation takes up more than some students receive in their student loans. This is a problem as it means that students are already in deficit before they even start the year. Putting a rent freeze on university accommodation will ensure that next year, students are not struggling with accommodation payments as other prices increase.

Transparency on costs of accommodation, the prices of electricity, water, upkeep etc.

Students need to know that they are getting a good deal.

As University accommodation rates are so large, we ask that the University publish their costs of running accommodation online. This will help students know that they are getting a fair deal and that the University is not making a profit at their expense.

Making University more accessible:

More disabled-friendly accommodation, with it being reasonably priced.

During the crisis, disabled students should not have their inequality further exacerbated. We have heard stories from disabled people who have had to take accommodation in higher tiers (hence also paying higher rates) solely because they are disabled, and their needs could not be met in cheaper alternatives. Nobody should be punished for having a disability, so we ask that the University either works to create more accessible accommodation or pay the difference in accommodation rates.

Mandatory lecture recordings and an end to penalising lower attendance.

Now, students are under intense pressure to make ends meet, which often means working. This means that they may end up needing to miss University to work. Students should not be punished for this and should receive the resources from the session if they are not present.

Working with the local council to secure a grant to help students with the crisis.

One solution that we would ask to be implemented is a one-off cost of living payment, which other Universities like York have done. Although their criteria were fairly strict, with it only supporting those who are in a student private house, it is something that we could model off here and provide to a wider number of students. This would give students more financial security.

Transparency on the hardship fund and how it is calculated.

Transparency around the hardship fund would ensure students know more about how much money they can receive. It would also allow societies and other groups to propose changes to the hardship fund.

No evidence is needed for extensions or special circumstances.

This was implemented during the pandemic and would reflect the exceptional stress that students are under as they try to make costs meet.

Supporting students coalition

To put pressure on the local council and the university we created a coalition of 12 university societies who agreed with our policy solutions. During this time our page on the issue and policy booklet received over 100 views.



Aber Crafts

Aber Crafts is a society for arts and crafts. It includes carving, crocheting, drawing and general DIY.



Aber Pride Society

Aber Pride is the university's LGBTQ+ Society. They are here to provide students with a safe space in which they can identify as whomever they feel comfortable, no matter where on the spectrum they fit.



Aber Fantasy and Science Fiction Society

Aber Fantasy and Science Fiction society is a friendly group who do weekly TV and film showings, along with games nights and low-key socials, and one-off events.



Knit 'n' Stitch Society

Knit 'n' Stitch is the society for knitters, crocheters and stitchers! Knit 'n' Stitch is open to anyone with an interest in needlework, whether you are an expert or an absolute beginner.



Aber Art Society

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Inter Pol

InterPol is the official society of the International Politics Department here at Aberystwyth, we run political events, academic support and weekly socials.



Bee Conservation Society

The Bee Conservation Society is dedicated to the preservation of bees, meeting other like-minded people and spreading awareness about the bee crisis.



Ornithological Society

Ornithological Society aims to get people into birding and pursue it as a hobby, whilst also socialising.



Aber Cats Society

Aber Cats Society fundraises for cat charities and plans trips.



Aber History Society

The History Society is a group of like-minded students with a desire to get the most out of their time at university.



Ultimate Frisbee Society

Ultimate Frisbee is a fun sport that is easy to learn, but difficult to master! We welcome everyone of all abilities, no matter your experience!



Physics and Astronomy Society

PhySoc is the Physics and Astronomy Society for Aberystwyth University, open for anyone who is studying or simply interested in physics or astronomy.

Chapter three

Coalition against sexual assault



We wanted the university to adopt a better complaints procedure to tackle sexual assault. Supporting this we created a coalition with 35 members and our page on the issue received over 1000 views.



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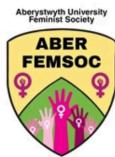
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Aberystwyth University Amnesty International Society

Freedom. Justice. Equality. We are campaigning for equal rights for everyone.



Aberystwyth University Feminist Society

Aberystwyth University Feminist Society is a society inclusive to all students, aiming to raise awareness and campaign for the gender equality. For anyone who believe in equal rights for all.



Aberystwyth University Swimming and Water Polo Club

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Aberystwyth Crisis and Model UN Society

The Aberystwyth Crisis and Model UN Society (ACMUN) run Crisis Games (modelled on the very successful InterPol Department Games), holds Model UN simulations, and competes in national conferences.



African Caribbean Society

Aber's ACS is a diverse student society with a goal to unite students of different backgrounds to appreciate, promote and celebrate the African and Caribbean cultures in its ethnicity.



SSAGO (Scouts and Guides)

MSAGM Aber SSAGO (Student Scout and Guide Organisation) has been running since 2004 and runs many activities: socials, walks, camping, BBQs, film nights and more! Many members help at the local groups.



Aberystwyth University Law Society

Aberystwyth University Law Society (AULS) is an academic society that wants to help our Law students get the best out of studying here in Aberystwyth.



Aber Phoenix

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Aerospace Society

To provide a gateway into the aerospace industry, to help people develop new skills, and to have fun.



Pirate Society

We aim to bring all pirate enthusiasts together to partake in pirate-themed events, such as movie nights, pub outings, treasure hunts, and more!



Aberystwyth Animal and Veterinary Society

We welcome all animal-loving prospective members and those who have an interest in the animal sector into the Animal and Veterinary Society (AAVS)!



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Showdance

A friendly, sociable club that welcomes dancers of all abilities to take part in modern, ballet, tap and contemporary dance.



Geography Society

For any one studying Geography, with an interest in Geography or just wanting to meet new people and have a good time. They have a number of socials, trips and other events running throughout the year.



Harriers Athletics and Running Club

As one of the fastest growing sports clubs in Aber, they welcome all ranges of ability and experience.



Aber Car Enthusiasts

This is a society dedicated to car enthusiasts from within and around Aberystwyth University.



Cocktail Society

A group of people who love cocktails and mocktails, with an aim to be welcoming to all.

Ornithological Society

Ornithological Society aims to get people into birding and pursue it as a hobby, whilst also socialising.

Company details

Centre is a registered company; our company number is 15477955, our D-U-N-S® Number is 231462215, and we are registered as CENTRE THINK TANK FOUNDATION LIMITED. Registered office address: 82 James Carter Road, Mildenhall, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, England, IP28 7DE.

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