

BA Society Open Meeting Minutes

2017-11-21

Members present

Esma Akkilic	Rory Little (Junior Treasurer)
Stephen Bayley	James Manton (Computing Officer)
Mark Burrell (President)	Prabhvir Marway
Trillium Chang	Pooneh Nazari
Sarah Crockford	Reece Oosterbeek (Liaison Officer)
Alejandro Fiocco	Amar Sarkar
Nick Gale	Olivia Tidswell (Ents Officer)
Liam Jolliffe	Isabel Vallina-Garcia (Catering Officer)
Natalie Jones (Women's Officer)	Olia Zadvorna (Ents Officer)
Drasko Kascelan	Annalise Higgins (Welfare Officer)
Kevin Lim	Sofia Taylor (Secretary)

Meeting opened at 20:16 by MB

Minutes from the last meeting are approved

There are no questions to the committee

New Standing Orders

MB: We have new standing orders (SO) to propose. We changed the constitution a lot at the end of last academic year. SO should be annually reviewed. SO details how hustings work and how BA Rooms bookings work, procedures for Open Meeting and AGM. This revision of the SO makes them consistent with the new constitution and removes bits that don't make sense.

MB: Does anyone wish to request a secret ballot?

There are no requests for a secret ballot.

The motion to accept new standing orders passes unanimously.

Letter to petition College Council to divest from fossil-fuel-related investments

NJ: ST and I have written an open letter to be sent to College Council. We apologise for not sending it out for consultation earlier. I work in international climate change law and politics and have just come back from UN talks in Bonn on climate change. 195 countries have signed up to the Paris agreement. A new study was released yesterday — climate has warmed by 1 degree Celsius from pre-industrial levels and this has caused 400,000 people to die annually. At the UN talks it was clear that everyone is acting on this, it's uncontroversial at this point. Countries, states, regions and churches all getting involved. At the moment, as a college, we are not part of this as we should be as we are investing at least (TC: 14 million GBP) in oil companies (~0.1 % of the endowment). This is the amount that is publicly known and is potentially more. We'd like a mandate from students and everyone else in the college to show that this is an issue and something that people care about. Talking to officials from college, we have heard "we've been talking about this for a few years but didn't really know that students cared". The proposed letter was sent out via email earlier — we would like to hear any alterations you'd like to be made before sending this to Council, having support from the BA Society and TCSU.

OT: Do you want individual signatures or for the BA Society to sign as a whole?

NJ: We want individual signatures, but also with general support of the entire BA Society.

TC: We are trying to keep the Bursar in the loop. Lots of Fellows are in favour already and we don't want to be confrontational. We mainly wanted to circulate the letter to talk about it and debate it, rather than getting signatures today.

NJ: It would be great to pass this motion today, but not necessary.

AH: What is the motion exactly? At the moment we have the letter but not what you want to do with it.

NJ: The motion is to support the letter, i.e. adding the BA Society as a signatory to the letter.

[AH and ST step out to collect pizzas for all present]

AS: Sometimes in the US when there are discussions of divestment, often what is impacted is the studentships that are offered. Has there been any discussion on impacts on student life that could come from divesting from these investments?

TC: The college's endowment is just reinvested, only a sliver of this is used for studentships and so I don't think there would be any effects. Investing the money elsewhere may even provide a greater return. Long-term investment funds in the US and Canada are already divesting, with a 25 or 50 year plan.

ST: We're also saying that it's just a bad investment. We already have too much oil being extracted. Could be a good investment in the next five or ten years, but not necessarily in the long run.

TC: A recent Kinsey report agrees.

NJ: The Bank of England agrees too.

NG: Are we just trying to get rid of our current oil investments or are we proposing an active climate portfolio?

NJ: As an aside, we don't want the college to invest in arms companies or tobacco companies. There appears to be no policy regarding what sort of things the college invests in. Such policies already exist in King's. We recently changed where we get our electricity from to a renewable energy mix.

TC: At the moment we're just asking to divest from the top 200 fossil fuel companies.

NJ: The letter is also aimed at starting a conversation that will have to go on for a bit longer.

RO: The bit that is typeset in bold is good in saying that the college should divest in direct investments now and indirect investments later, to avoid the problem of "oh, we don't know which investments are related or not". It is also good at avoiding the problem of "we should invest in these companies to push the direction that these companies are going in". Would it be good to include rebuttal to this point in the letter?

TC: If you want to be an activist investor you need to buy up the entire company — this is not possible for us. It's not our place to direct the board.

RO: I agree, I think we should put something mentioning this in the letter.

MB: Does anyone wish to request a secret ballot?

There are no requests for a secret ballot.

The motion to add the BA Society as a signatory to the letter passes: 2 abstaining, 18 for, 0 against.

Any other business

There is no other business.

AS: Freshers' Week was fantastic!

Open Meeting closes

Hustings start

MB: Aditya Pai has withdrawn. The order in which candidates speak has been randomised.

Amar Sarkar

AS: The last 51 days have really been a new experience for me. I expected to jump into the MPhil in Neuroscience and then jump out with the degree at the end a year later. I am used to not having many friends and didn't expect to have many in Trinity either. You can imagine my surprise when I was immersed in the culture here and have rediscovered how important and rewarding it is to be connected to the wider community. I would like to support this group as much as it has supported me. I am focussed on organising events on bringing our academic and social selves closer together. On the academic front, for example, I would like to host some seminars in which academics talk about the social impact of research. Research can become very insular very quickly. I've met many MPhil students who do not believe that their work has any social or public value. I would like BAs to vote on speakers that could inform on how their research is relevant to the public. Socially, I would like to organise a Bollywood dance night, which I would also like to combine with an Indian-themed formal hall. If people are feeling adventurous, then am happy to choreograph a Bollywood dance to kick off the evening as well. Furthermore, I would organise regular BA Movie Nights — only we know how much time we

spend on Netflix, and we may as spend some of that time together rather than alone. Finally, I would like to increase the interaction between members of the BA Society, particularly the first-years. I've noticed there appear to be two sub-groups of first years, those such as Trillium and I who have just arrived here, and those who were here earlier as undergraduates. With a few exceptions, the two sets of first years don't interact so much, and I think this is something that we can work to change. It is really a privilege to run for this position, and I thank you very much for your support.

RL: I think regardless of whether you are elected or not, we should make the Bollywood night happen! What would you suggest to increase interaction between Side F Freshers and other Freshers?

AS: Grad Bar Night is mainly Side F people going with a few 'old-timers' talking with their friends. If we explicitly say that we want people to mingle then there will be an increase in interaction.

OT: What do you mean by voting on academic speakers?

AS: I would come up with a preliminary list of people who are likely to talk and have a record of giving talks before. We could ask people to vote and then invite the most popular choices to speak. If we do a good job of choosing people who have a good track record of engaging with students in this way then we should be successful.

MB: In our experience the most popular Fellows are booked out months in advance.

OT: I wouldn't emphasise voting, just pick who you want.

NG: Why don't you just ask what people's favourite topics are and then pick using that?

AS: Good idea.

OT: You could ask about different forms of impact.

Prabhvir Marway

PM: I am a fourth-year medic but it's my first year as a BA. I am very impressed, definitely an upgrade. I think the committee has done a really good of making me feel like a Fresher again and have done a great job at putting everyone at ease and encouraging people to meet new people. I want to be a friendly face and enjoy putting on fun events. I think it's useful for a rep to have some experience of being at Trinity before — is easier for me to find my way around college.

[AH and ST return with pizzas]

OZ: What sort of events?

PM: Whisky tasting evening. Whisky is great and would be good to offer something different to wine. Another event is paintballing — an adrenaline-fueled couple of crazy hours is a nice break from the normal work day.

MB: As a point of information, we had a whisky tasting evening last year and there will be another tasting next term.

SB: I am wondering about bringing together Side F and other Sides and would like to know what your thoughts are on this?

PM: Groups have already formed for continuers. The best approach is just to run fun events and not force mingling, just encourage people to make new friends.

RL: I'd love to do the paintball. We already have 3 Ents Officer who already organise events, so

what do you think you could do for representing first-years?

PM: I think I could do a good job of relating to the associates and other people who aren't new to Trinity.

Trillium Chang

TC: I am studying for a Masters in Public Health. Around two weeks into term my parents were asking how things were going. I said that I think this may be the best year of my life! My parents laughed and said it was just a honeymoon period. I still stand by my statement despite the poor weather, etc. because of the people in the BA Society. Being able to talk to a wide variety of intellectual people is really good. On the experience and technical side I can say I have it down. I sat on the Faculty Board during undergrad and ran the largest student society. In terms of what I want to do, I definitely want to be your champion and advocate of your needs. There is a diverse group of people in the BA Society — I will be a non-judgemental set of ears and will listen to you. In terms of fun stuff to do: bar crawl (might be difficult logistically), club nights for grad students, potentially a day trip to Ely. We could get a professional photographer to come in to do headshots for applications, etc. A lot of us forget that we're part of a town here. There's a greater community and a greater ecosystem that we could do a better job of giving back to. There are some cool enterprises in town that we could fundraise for or partner with, providing our expertise. I will try and keep this honeymoon phase for as long as possible!

RL: Do you know how much a professional photographer would cost?

TC: In USA, a student could do it for 50 an hour, upto 200 an hour.

MB: What sort of fundraising events do you think would work? We have a particular requirement that we can't use our money on anyone else, but we can raise money specifically.

TC: A lot of these organisations take volunteers, so we could encourage people to join in. We could run a jazz night to raise money.

DK: With our funding body we do a day of service with various charities. We could set up something similar for the BA Society.

TC: Good idea. It doesn't have to be a charity per se.

MB: It's very easy to think of expensive events. Could you think of something to do for £100?

TC: Documentary Sundays, like the book club but without needing to read beforehand.

MB: Good idea, we wanted to do this before but weren't able to schedule it. We can't receive terrestrial TV upstairs but we have a Netflix and Now TV subscription that we could use. We run smaller events outside of term to fill in the gaps over the holidays — this could be a good idea for that.

Final remarks

MB thanks everyone for coming and all the candidates for standing.

Hustings closed