

Report From Federation of Student Nationalists (SNP Students)

Julia Stachurska, National Convener

Since our last Conference, we have been quite busy, both 'traditionally' - and indeed in a new way.

At Annual National Conference in Aberdeen in October 2020, we successfully held our first annual Hustings for the position of SNP National Secretary which was highly attended by delegates from across Scotland, and was followed by our first Pub Quiz, with the now Stirling MP Alyn Smith as our host.

Conference was a chance for us to engage with NUS Scotland on their Free to Graduate campaign, in line with the successful resolution we passed during the 3 day conference, calling on Scotland's universities to scrap graduation fees for students. We were delighted at how warmly this resolution was received by members - and are proud of the change it helped influence, with a handful of universities scrapping their graduation fees for year 2020-21.

During the 2019 General Election campaign, we travelled across the country with our Student Action Days, and campaigned alongside SNP candidates to ensure that Scotland's voice was heard in Westminster.

Throughout the winter months, we welcomed two groups of students from Denmark, and a group of students from Norway to Glasgow and Edinburgh, to engage in conversations about the prospect of an independent Scotland, and inform them about the work of the SNP, and our position in Scottish politics.

Our International Women's Day event - 'IWD 2020 with SNP Students' took place in March at the University of Glasgow, and with over 100 attendees keen to listen to heartfelt contributions from our First Minister and SNP leader, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, Angela Crawley MP, SNP Women's Convener and Glasgow Councillor Rhiannon Spear, Councillor Michelle Campbell, and columnist Kirsty Strickland.

Our National Council was due to take place on March 14th, however due to the unprecedented situation around COVID-19 back in March, the National Executive decided that this event was to be postponed.

Since the end of March, lockdown saw members turn into an active and engaged membership as we brought our events online. We have hosted a vast number of online Q&As with NEC members, Parliamentarians and Councillors, and indeed virtual quizzes. I would like to thank all NEC members, elected representatives and Party members on their ongoing support and engagement with SNP Students over this trying time.

We have also however, kept busy with as always, pushing campaigns for the good of students in Scotland. We wrote to all universities across Scotland urging them to consider implementing a policy of no-detriment for their students, and we were delighted to see most Scottish universities share our view that all students across must be able to move forward confidently when this pandemic is over - and implement a policy of no-detriment.

We have kept in contact with the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science in regards to student funding over the summer months - and we are pleased to see such important funding be implemented to aid students who have been left without any means of funding as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As an Organisation, we co-published open letters on Summer SAAS, SQA results, the Equally Safe consultation, among others.

Throughout the past year, SNP Students have kept the interests of students at our heart, with the aforementioned actions, and publishing of statements of support on UCU strikes and paid work for nursing students - however, equality and human rights are also at the forefront of all we do. As an organisation, we published statements in support for Scotlands transgender community, World Aids Day, Human Rights Day, Holocaust Memorial Day 2020 and the Black Lives Matter movement. We also commented on concerning news emerging from home,

with the rise of anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes, but also those further afield, especially in Poland, with alarming action against the LGBTQ+ community, and reproductive rights of women being challenged with the decision of the Constitutional Tribunal to outlaw eugenic pregnancy terminations. SNP Students will always stand in solidarity with those facing discrimination both here in Scotland, and across the world.

Our Secretary and Communications Officer have launched an updated version of our website, with new content and our own Policy Base which includes policies we have passed at our National Conferences and National Council, as well as resolutions we brought to the floor of the Party National Conferences, and resolutions which we have been supporters of.

Our Societies have been working rigorously hosting virtual 'Freshers' events for their respective societies, in order to engage new members, and new students to get more involved on local level and nationally. I am pleased that thus far, all of those have been a massive success, and I am sure that membership and engagement with our Societies will continue to grow over the coming months.

On October 17th, we successfully conducted our Annual National Conference, where we elected a new National Executive Committee for 2020/21, and heard from SNP Business Convener and MP Kirsten Oswald in a keynote speech. I am absolutely positive that the SNP Students is fully ready to tackle the Scottish Parliamentary elections and campaign for candidates all across Scotland in whatever way we can.

We are grateful that the Party has implemented a steady rate of £12 for delegates passes, making a positive change to benefit our members who often do not have a steady income due to their student status, and we do hope that this will remain the case for future Conferences and National Assemblies.

As other Branches and affiliates, SNP Students have been preparing for Party Conference, and we are thoroughly looking forward to joining members from across Scotland in a new experience for us all.

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