

VOTE

DAN

for **PRESIDENT**

on 5th & 6th March



- **TACKLING THE ST ANDREWS HOUSING CRISIS**
- **RED GOWN RENTAL SCHEME**
- **AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION**
- **EMPOWERING STUDENT VOICES**
- **PROTECTING YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK**

Please recycle me!

Dan Marshall for President – One Page Manifesto

Hi, I'm Dan and I would love to represent you as Association President next year. Over the past few years, I've represented you on the Community Council, set up the Campaign for Affordable Student Housing (C.A.S.H.), and sat on accommodation subcommittee. I love St Andrews, but I know it doesn't work for everyone and that needs to change. Here are just a few of the ideas I have to make St Andrews work for you. You can explore the rest of my ideas in my full manifesto or on my website!

- Push the University away from building expensive ensuite rooms, increase transparency on residence fees, and ensure thorough student consultation on future accommodation developments.
- Accreditation scheme for landlords to reward good landlords and encourage others to improve
- Rental scheme for red gowns so you don't need to pay £159 to buy a gown you only use once.
- Providing information about your rights at work and signposting places to get help
- Supporting and encouraging student campaigns like C.A.S.H and the Washstation and Kenly Wind Farm campaigns through training and opportunities to be heard.
- Implementing automatic voter registration through the University will give students their voice in local and national elections, ensuring politicians know that we matter and can vote them out.

The challenges we face as a community are huge and easy short-term solutions are no longer enough. I want to use my experience as a campaigner and Community Councillor to find real long-term solutions to make sure St Andrews works for all of us. No candidate can do that alone; we all need to step up and fight for change.

Get in touch or find out more!

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Dan Marshall for Association President – Full Manifesto

Why am I standing?

Simply put I'm standing because I love St Andrews but it just isn't working for a lot of people. Finding somewhere affordable to live seems to get harder and more stressful each year and for many, a St Andrews education isn't an option purely due to their social or economic background. That problem extends to many people who make it to St Andrews but find themselves shut out of our traditions due to high costs or pressure to work. On top of this, relationships with our wider community can still be tense and that has been seen pretty clearly in recent attacks on students.

Many of the issues are the same in this election as they were when I first came here in 2016 and I have spent the time since trying to understand their causes and working to fix them. Having worked behind the scenes on issues around accommodation, student representation and community relations for a long time, I think it's now time for me to step up and use my experience to help make sure St Andrews is working for everyone.

Why am I qualified?

My time as a **Community Councillor** has given me an incredible opportunity to see the bigger picture of what goes on in St Andrews. Many of the biggest issues that affect students are also the biggest issues facing local people and we have a real opportunity in the coming years to build consensus around solutions that work for everyone. We have seen how this can happen through recent campaigns around the increase in HMO fees and the NHS out of hours service and we should continue and expand upon that work.

As someone that has **worked with the Union on a range of issues and has lead and been part of student campaigns**, I know how hard it can be to get involved. Having had the opportunity to see how the Union works both from the outside and more recently seeing it from the inside as a **member of accommodation subcommittee**, I am well placed to open up the Union to greater participation from students.

The role of Association President is by nature political but it must never be partisan. As a **political activist**, I have a passion for good policy and a lot of experience interacting with politicians and political structures at both a local and national level. I have **worked constructively on campaigns and issues with people of all political stripes** and hope that I can be effective in bringing together people in St Andrews to improve political education and engagement.

In recent years, the Students Association has run a campaign in collaboration with other Students Unions and NUS Scotland to change the way students are treated under Universal Credit. I have been able to raise that at a national level with politicians and hope to continue that collaboration going forward.

A far back as 2018, I **helped reform the way we register students to vote** in St Andrews and through the **Campaign for Affordable Student Housing (C.A.S.H.)** that I founded, we have already made progress on improving the long term accommodation situation for students. I hope that by electing

me, students will allow me to continue that work and will join me in trying to make St Andrews work for everyone.

Policy

Transforming Accommodation

The University for a number of years has held a policy that saw it expand its supply of expensive ensuite rooms and offset that with increased bursaries which was agreed with the Students Association many years ago. As the private housing market in St Andrews has become more competitive, this policy has failed to meet the needs of students as the bursaries are not sufficient and there will never be enough of them.

For over a year, I have been gathering information and testimony about the specific failings of the University's policy eventually culminating in the founding of Campaign for Affordable Student Housing (C.A.S.H.). As a result of the work we have done with C.A.S.H. alongside the Association President and Rector's Assessor, the University is going to review that policy and sign a new agreement on a long term vision for accommodation with the next Association President. We need that agreement to include **providing more affordable rooms, increasing transparency on what hall fees are spent on and putting student consultation at the heart of decision making**. These are all areas where there is growing consensus and I hope this will be strengthened by the results of the upcoming accommodation survey that C.A.S.H. has pushed for beginning in week 7.

The private rental market in St Andrews is highly competitive and while most letting agents and landlords are good, others are not. Working with the Accommodation Officer, I will **set up an accreditation scheme that would see letting agents sign up to place wellbeing information in student houses, agree not to charge fees for references and other examples of good practice** in return for access to the accommodation fayre, online publicity through the SRC accommodation Facebook page and webpage and an accreditation mark in the "How to Rent" guide. Many letting agents could comfortably fulfil these criteria and it would build on our work with "Marks out of Tenancy" to reward good landlords and encourage others to improve.

For many students, hall committees are an enormous part of what makes their St Andrews experience what it is but many feel they do not get enough support. I will work with the Accommodation Officer to **carry out a review of the hall committee system to formalise the relationship between hall committees, wardens and RSMs so everyone has clear boundaries of responsibility, ensure that hall committee budgets are correctly distributed and address other concerns raised**. I will also work with the Accommodation Officer and the Societies Committee to **improve the training provided to hall committee members, particularly Senior Students and Treasurers**.

The affordable housing crisis St Andrews has is not a student-specific issue. Local people are also struggling to find a place to live and many lifelong St Andreans and members of University staff are being forced out of our town. I will **encourage our local councillors to consider solutions to this problem that benefit everyone such as building more affordable housing for local people at the Kilrymont site of Madras College and tackling second homeownership as well as moving away from ineffective policies that have negatively impacted students**.

Widening Access to All

St Andrews is elite in its reputation but we must never be elitist in our outlook. We must, therefore, strive to make sure that people of all background have access to St Andrews. The University talks a lot about widening access but we need to make sure they deliver. Often some parts of the University are working hard to recruit students from a diverse range of backgrounds while others have policies that make it very difficult for students on low incomes to survive in St Andrews. I will work with the SRC Member for Widening Access to **hold the University to account on its commitments to widening access and make sure they are actively taking measures to remove barriers to access as well as recruiting students from all backgrounds.**

Widening access cannot just be about admissions, however, we need to ensure that all students are able to make the most of their St Andrews experience. I will work with the University to **create a short term rental scheme for red gowns** so that every student can participate in one of our most ancient traditions if they want to without having to find £159 only to use the gown once. Additionally, we need to look for ways to **reduce the cost of graduation** so that we do not have a situation where low-income students are priced out of their own graduation.

We also need to acknowledge that many students struggle to participate in University life outside studies due to the fact that they work long hours, commute from outside of town or have families. I will **build on ongoing discussions about letting students stay in empty rooms in halls for a night** for a small fee in the same way that staff can to allow students from outwith St Andrews to easily attend occasional nighttime events, **lobby for an additional commuter room at the North Haugh** and **explore the possibility of creating the role of "SRC Member for Students in Work"** to further explore these issues and put forward solutions.

For many students, the bursaries they receive are vital but they are often not sufficient and do not reach enough people. I will **continue the work of the current Association President to increase the number and size of bursaries and ensure that they increase in line with the increasing cost of living in St Andrews.** We also need to better highlight our bursaries to make sure that everyone eligible can apply and so that prospective students know the kind of support they can expect. I will work with the University to **ensure that bursary information is clearly available in materials provided for potential future students and include more information on financial support in the "How to Rent" guide.**

Strengthening Community Relations

The relationship with our wider St Andrews community can sometimes be rocky but it is vital to ensure that our lines of communication remain open. I will use my experience as a Community Councillor to continue to **build close relationships with leaders in our town and make sure issues can be raised easily before they escalate.**

It is important to remember that community relations are often about seemingly small things. The biggest issue driving a wedge between students and local people is the housing crisis but other key issues are students doing bins and recycling incorrectly, poor road safety and littering! I will ensure that we **continue to provide students with information on being good neighbours and make sure that we don't let the little things get forgotten about.**

In recent months, I and a number of other students have been physically assaulted by teenagers whilst walking home. Countless others have experienced threatening behaviour and have for the first time felt unsafe in our town. I will **liaise with the police to ensure that all students know how**

to report incidents and keep themselves safe. We also need to recognise however that many young people grow up in St Andrews in poverty whilst surrounded by students from outside of their town who seem to have every opportunity imaginable available to them. The Child Poverty Action Group estimates that the child poverty rate in our town is 27%. I will work with the Community Relations Officer, the University, other sabbatical officers and community groups to **explore how we can provide more opportunities to young people in our town** by finding ways to share the breadth of skills and spaces that we have at our disposal as students.

Defending your Rights and Advocacy

Our Union does a lot of things well but historically it has let down students who work. Neither the Careers Centre nor the Students Association provides any information to students about the rights they have in the workplace. Many students experience harassment, bullying and poor conditions at work and don't know where to turn. Whilst the Students Association cannot directly intervene in these matters, it absolutely must have a role in educating students about their rights and signposting them to places to get help. I will work with the DOSDA and the Careers Centre **to create a booklet similar to the "How to Rent" guide that covers how to get a job in St Andrews, your rights at work and resources to get help and explore the possibility of creating the role of "SRC Member for Students in Work"**.

The advocacy service provided by the Union provides independent advice and practical support. This is great but very few students know it exists. This leads to confusion about where to go for support with different issues. I will work with the Student Advocate, Student Services and SRC and Association Officers **to create an improved "triage" system in the form of an online tool or flowchart graphic to more clearly direct them to the most appropriate support and raise the profile of the Student Advocate.**

The current Association President has worked with student groups to tackle a range of issues including those around Washstation Laundry and Universal Credit. I will **continue to push for more concessions from Washstation and for a change in the law to support students receiving Universal Credit. I will also work with Amnesty International on their campaign with the University to get the Kenly Wind Farm built.**

In light of our departure from the European Union, it is important that we protect our international reputation and increase our collaboration with universities across the world. I will work with the University to **ensure that international students are protected and receive the necessary information and advice over the next few months** and I will work with other students associations to lobby national politicians to **protect the ability of international students and academics to come to study and work in the UK.**

It is important also for St Andrews students to continue to have the opportunity to study across the world including in Europe. I will make sure that St Andrews joins with other Students Associations and the NUS to **lobby for our continued membership of the ERASMUS program.**

Recent industrial action has highlighted issues around the pay, wellbeing and workload of postgraduate students who teach. These students are members of the Students Association and deserve the same level of support and advocacy offered to undergraduate students. I will **reach out to the UCU Postgraduate Representative to find ways the Students Association can help to improve conditions for these students.**

Empowering Student Voices

It can sometimes feel like our St Andrews Councillors are not really listening to student voices. Imagine how that might change if they knew that half of the people electing them were students! At the moment, many students find themselves unable to vote as they don't realise they can register in St Andrews as well as at home; registered to vote too late; or changed address since they registered last year. Nearly 2 years ago, I worked with the previous Association President to increase collaboration with Fife Council to make voter registration easier for students. Following the lead of the University of Sheffield, I will finish the work I started to **make voter registration automatic for all eligible students that opt-in as part of the annual matriculation process.**

No Association President can change much on their own. They can, however, be effective when they can speak for a large number of students and lead movements of students. This year we have seen the difference student campaigns can make when given the chance: housing, wind farms, lecture capture, and laundry. I will work to **provide training for student activists to ensure that people have the skills they need to fight for the change they want to see.**

We also need to give people the opportunities they need to raise issues and get involved in delivering change. I will **encourage Union subcommittees open to anyone to publish the dates and times of meetings** so people can actually attend and I will **encourage the publication of SRC and SSC agendas ahead of time** so people have the opportunity to attend councils when it is relevant to them. We also need to **make the minutes of all meetings accessible and easy to find** where appropriate so that students can see what the Union is doing for them and where it is falling short.

The sabbatical team are your representatives and they are accountable to you. For that reason, I commit to making myself accessible to you **through regular office hours around town including at the North Haugh** so that students can raise issues and maybe even steal a biscuit!

Some time ago, a committee of political societies was convened under the title POLIS to encourage cross-party working on political education and common causes such as voter registration. It has struggled to get off the ground due to a lack of clearly defined purpose and structure. I will work with the Community Relations Officer to **formalise POLIS and provide a budget for nonpartisan political education events.**

The current Strategic Plan for the Students Association runs from 2017-2020. When developing the next plan, I **will hold a deliberative Students' Assembly to allow student views to be heard on the big picture of the purpose and mission of the Students Association.** Alongside open meetings/focus groups and the review that is currently underway, this will enable us to better understand what students want and expect from their Union to **make sure that the future direction of the Association is in line with the priorities of students.**

Summary

We need long term thinking and vision for what our Union could be not in one years time but in five and sometimes that means being ambitious. I promise that I will work every hour to complete everything in this manifesto but it is not going to be easy. Our success will depend on how well we all come together to build a better St Andrews that works for everyone.