

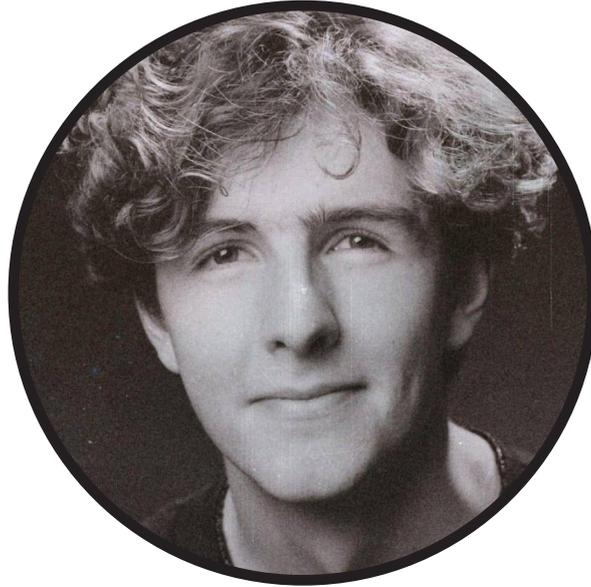
# **FELIX EDITOR**

## **COUNCIL REPORT**

**Calum Drysdale**

14th March 2021

14<sup>th</sup> March 2021



## Foreword by the Editor-in-Chief

The past year has been a difficult time for the newspaper. No one who has been involved would deny that. However, and often despite the trying circumstances the Felix team has worked incredibly hard to keep producing newspapers that the student body would want to read. In this I think they have succeeded.

This year, the paper has struggled to deal with the double blow of COVID-19 and the changing patterns of engagement by students with media and news. These two impelling forces have driven many of the changes and policy decisions that have occurred this year.

The new website is the most visible manifestation of this change in direction. Commissioned over the summer, it is a custom designed page that is built to suit Felix's requirements for the medium (5-10 years) with lots of flexibility built in to allow future generations of Felix teams to make

their own mark on the paper and the look.

The other major change taking place is the culmination of the Felix review process that is also being voted on at this meeting.

It has been acknowledged that structural issues played a role in the editorial difficulties that the paper experienced last year and the current process is intended to establish how the role of the Editor can be better defined, supported and trained to prevent repeats of what occurred.

Running through these two projects is the omnipresent awareness of the importance of preserving Felix's legacy and tradition of strict editorial independence laid out in the motto, *Keep the Cat Free*.

Progress made since the last Council meeting, however, will I hope provide comfort to Council members who have had concerns about Felix in recent times.

# Layout of the report

<b>Foreword by the Editor</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Actions taken since last Council</b>	<b>4-6</b>
<b>New website</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Felix consultation and restructure</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The outcome of the Felix review</b>	<b>6-7</b>
<b>The Felix team</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Aims going forward into the Spring and Summer Terms</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Drive social media engagement</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Improve my accessibility to students</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>9-11</b>

# **Actions taken since the last Council meeting (1<sup>st</sup> December 2020)**

## **► New website**

The website was commissioned from a former Imperial student (Pete Bridgman) for £5,159.70 which included a 30% discount making the total value of the work £7,371.

The quote and design document can be found in the Appendix.

The building of the website was planned to take place in two phases. The first phase was intended to produce a website minimum viable product (MVP) that the society and paper could use to build the brand going forward and keep up student engagement even without the physical copies of the paper.

The second phase of the project includes a custom ingestion software that will allow a melding of the online and physical workflows.

The first phase of the project is now complete and section editors have been trained to use the software and are now deploying it each week to put out articles.

The other development has been the hosting of the website independently of the Union servers. This will allow the Felix web-master team to be much more agile, responding

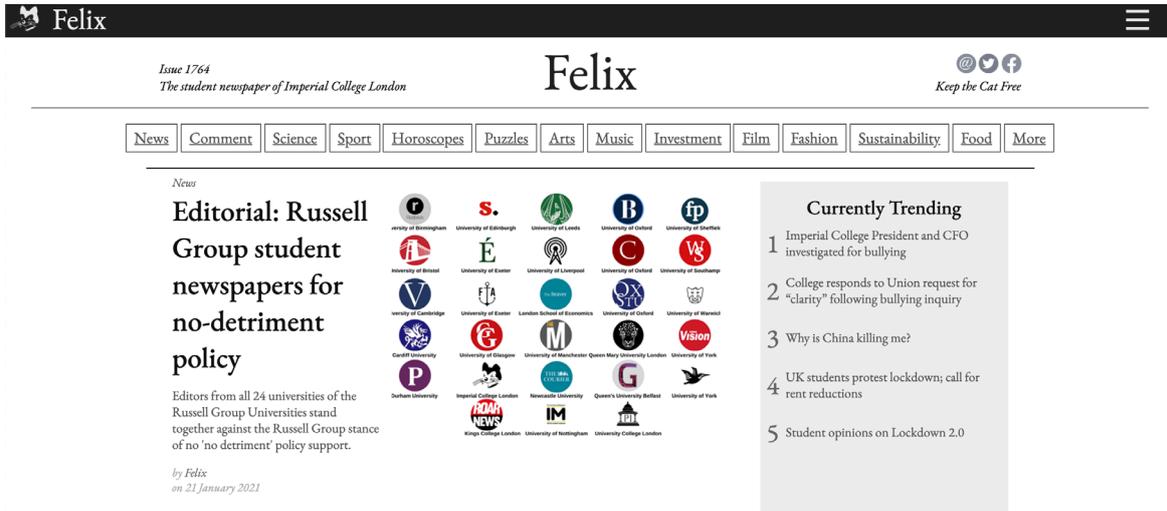
to bugs and developing new features.

The reason for this move was the restrictions of student web-masters having admin privileges on the Union servers which required our web-master team to route all requests through the Union systems team.

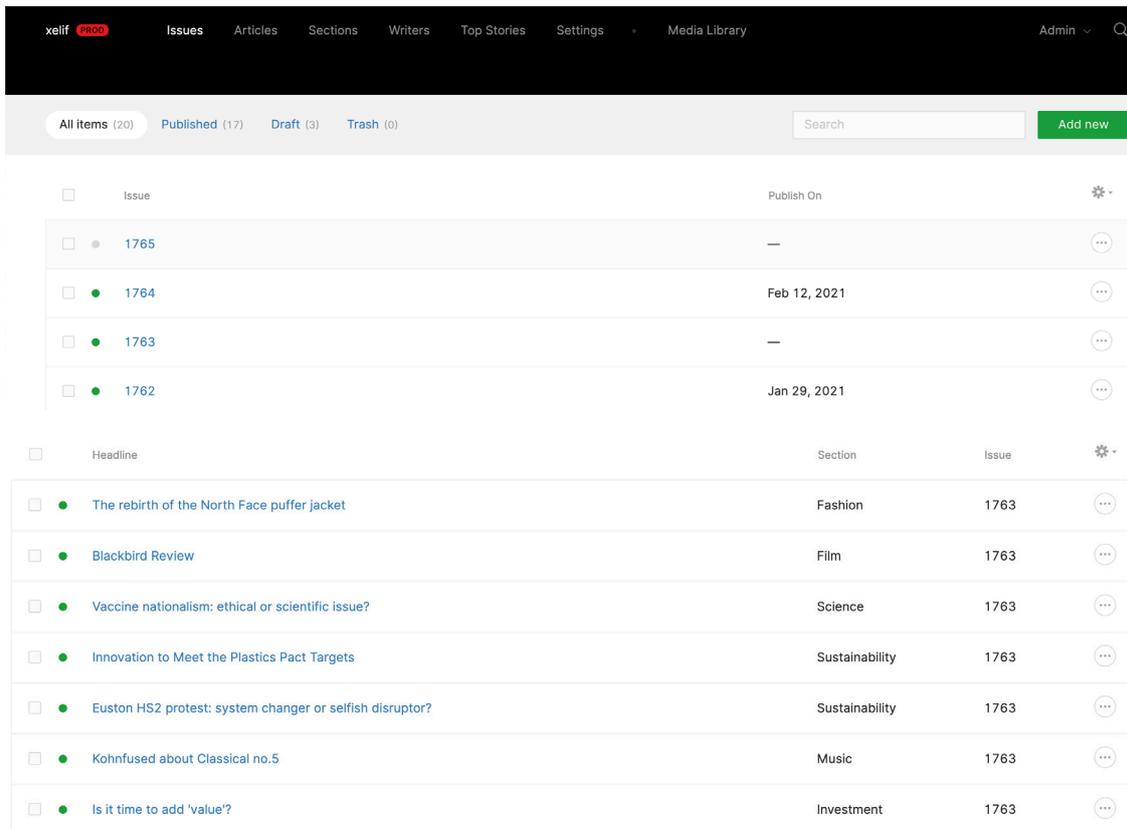
The Union has agreed to this independent hosting on the condition that they are given admin privileges. This is a model similar to that of DramSoc or DocSoc and so we are happy to accept the conditions. However, further work will be required to clarify when intervention by the Union is acceptable and does not imperil the editorial independence of the paper. This will occur during the ongoing Felix consultation and review.

A major part of this effort was the return of the domain to the Felix team's possession. The felixonline.co.uk domain has long been part of the Felix brand, however, it was found to not owned by any member of the Union or Felix team. Possession was tracked to Ravi Pall, a former DPFS (2010-2011). Contact has been made with Mr Pall and the negotiation of the return of the domain has begun.

# ► New website (cont.)



The new website is professionally designed to be future proof and include all the elements that a major newspaper would require



Two screenshots of the website backend that is intuitive to use and easy to pick up while also allowing editors significant flexibility in their design and layout

## ► Felix consultation and restructure

Having met with senior members of leadership in the Union both last year and this year, it was acknowledged that the performance of Felix was not at the level that it should be. This was agreed to be a combination of factors including my own struggles with the role, the structural issues surrounding the role and the society and the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was agreed that a joint Union-Felix consultation and review into the workings of Felix was a solution to address many of these issues in one go. It was also felt that doing it now with a supportive Union administration to help codify and strengthen the paper's

position was in the interests of the paper.

This process has begun with a team recruited, a project plan having been produced and a road map for the project having been laid out. This road map identified the stakeholders that should be consulted, how they should be consulted and began producing the questions that they should be asked. This work is still ongoing.

The aim of this work is to examine the role of the Felix editor, the structure of the Felix society and nature and quantity of the paper's output.

## ► The outcome of the Felix Review

The Felix Review is now near completion. The consultation was successful in engaging stakeholders from across the student body. These stakeholders included engaged student volunteers, members of the committee, nonengaged members of the student body and former editors of the paper. These concerns were taken on board and the points raised were weighted in regards to the relevance of the stakeholders knowledge (eg Felix committee members' views on the structure of a future committee). Several points emerged from the consultation and have been incorporated into the Review.

The Review found that there was still strong support for the full-time

editor role and that current selection methods should continue. There were also interesting clarifying points made about what role Felix should serve and what sort of content it should print. Key points were the importance of local news and that while global events should be published, these should be clearly marked as opinion pieces. The recommendations can be viewed in Appendix 2.

The importance of providing the Editor with a greater level of Union support was also raised. This will be achieved in a number of ways. Firstly, the Editor's contract will be amended to be a 12 month contract. However, remuneration will be at 0.83 of the full time contract. The

contract will recognise the changeable workloads of the Editor but will allow them the time in the summer to do preparation work rather than the 2 weeks previously provided.

Greater support will also take the form of increased contact with the Union. Personal calls between the MD and more operational calls between the President and the DoMS this year have been successful and we feel this model should be continued. A change to the line of reporting with the DoMS taking over line manager responsibilities will prevent conflicts of interest with the more political role of the President.

The Felix committee, which has in recent years struggled to remain relevant. The Review makes recommendations as to how to strengthen the committee by laying out more precisely who may vote as

part of the committee and measures that the committee make use to hold the editor to account in the case of substandard performance.

The committee and the Felix Editor role will be reformed. The committee will be reformed to make the roles more relevant to the on going running of the paper. A new role, of Felix Chair, will be created which will take over the running of the society allowing the Editor to focus on the operational running of the paper.

Sustainability was also a concern raised by the consultation. While a print edition was felt to be important, we will print fewer issues and begin an ongoing and rolling review of where papers are picked up and how they could be better distributed. Sustainability will also be considered when choosing a printing company going forward.

## ► The Felix team

I, in my role as Editor, have had difficulties with working remotely and keeping in touch with my team. This was brought up to me by members of the Felix editorial team and identified as one of the reasons for the delayed release of some of the issues last year. I have been working with members of the Union administration to improve the Felix comms effort. This was done through meetings and discussions with members of the Felix team, with the Union president present where concerns were raised and addressed and a roadmap and list of targets and actions were established. These targets

have been met and I continue to work with the Union team to maintain a better quality of comms with my team.

The paper has also benefited from an influx of new members. Once they are comfortable, they will then choose whether they would like to be involved more closely with a specific section and work as an editor. This is intended to build a greater depth of institutional knowledge in the Felix team by creating deliberate knowledge redundancy. This means that the loss of a single important member will be less of a blow to the society.

# Aims going forward into the Spring and Summer terms

## ► Drive social media engagement

While very aware of the dangers of setting a single metric as the yardstick by which to judge the success or failure of the paper, I have identified social media engagement as a key target of the ongoing Felix pivot toward a more digital offering.

As a historically print focused paper (the Felix office contains bound editions of paper newspapers reach back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century) it is essential that to remain relevant to modern students, Felix adjusts the nature of its offering.

A key element of this pivot is the creation of a new committee position that emerged out of splitting apart the former publicity officer role to create a new publicity officer role and a

separate web-master position.

These changes reflect the reality that each of those jobs require a person's full attention.

There have already been some notable successes with social media posts on Instagram, produced by our new publicity officer Ahmad Danesh, in collaboration with the Imperial College SikhSoc were seen by over 30,000 people.

Another foray by the Felix team into non traditional forms of media has been the production and publishing of the Felix Lockdown Documentary, in collaboration with ICTV and the successful Felix Hustings that has been viewed by over 2000 people.

## ► Improve my accessibility to students

I have begun a daily hour long "Office hours" call that any Felix member may join. This is an attempt to fix the feeling among members that I am difficult to get hold of. I am also working with the Union to improve the comms aspect of

my role. This is a work in progress and will be something that I must continue to priorities going forward. I have also understood better the important of making my work clearer to Union Council and will work to elevate the quality of any future submissions.

# Appendix

*Peter H. A. Bridgman*

7 Wetherby Gardens  
London  
SW5 0JN

28<sup>th</sup> of August, 2020

**C. Drysdale**

*Felix Editor-in-Chief*  
Imperial College Union  
Beit Quadrangle  
Prince Consort Road  
SW7 2BB

Dear Calum,

It has been very exciting to discuss with you the project to create a Felix website fit to take the paper into a new decade. Whilst both the technical and chronological challenges involved in this project are great, I am confident that with an *agile* approach to both requirements and scheduling, as discussed, we can deliver a series of marked improvements on the paper's current technological position within the necessary timescale.

It gives me great pleasure to enclose a quotation based on the phased approach we have discussed. In the first phase, we will deliver functionality to support the majority of the user stories we ranked *must*. This phase is time-bound by the beginning of term, targeting a go-live in week zero of term. In the second phase, we will deliver additional functionality and documentation to support the longevity of the investment made in the website.

In order to achieve the project within the time constraints, this quotation is based on the relocation of functionality relating to the *Issue Archive* and full-text-search to *Phase II* of the project. Conscious of your cost constraints, I have also separated out the costs relating to these elements of the project for your consideration.

As discussed, I am keen to ensure that as the realities of the project inevitably change over time (as all software projects do), we are able to change our deliverables to match. As such, this quotation is best viewed as a guide for the expected scope of the project; should we wish to change the scope of the project during the development process, we can agree a path that adjusts the course of the work remaining in the project to redirect effort yet to be expended accordingly.

I do very much hope this quotation meets with your approval and look forward to working with you on this very exciting project.

Kindest regards,



Peter Bridgman

# Quotation

*Felix Online – 2020 – Rev. A*

## Phase I

Delivery of a public-facing website and management infrastructure to support the following user stories:

#	As a...	I want...	So that...
1	Reader	to be able to read articles from the paper online	
2	Reader	to be able to navigate around available articles by type/section	
3	Reader	to be able to see the headline, byline, date, issue and copy & image(s) of each article	
8	Writer	to be able to include images in my article	articles can be made more engaging
9	Writer	to be able to include sidebars and other devices in my article	articles can be made more engaging
12	Reader	the site to mirror the design language of the paper	the Felix brand feels cohesive
14	Editor	to be able to edit articles after they have been ingested	
17	Reader	to be able to navigate continuously / laterally through articles in a paper	
29	Reader	to be able to read articles using a mobile device	
30	Editor	to be able to lay out the front page of the site according to what content is current	the front page looks engaging even when some sections have no content
50	Editor	to be able to preview articles and key pages from an upcoming issue before it goes live	necessary tweaks can be made before it is public
35	Editor	to be able to add content from SquareSpace	the summer site content can be included in the new site
36	Reader	to be able to find the e-mail address of the correct editor for a given section of the site	I can submit content to the editor for inclusion in the paper
44	Editor	to be able to assign feature colours to specific sections of the website	
47	Reader	to be able to share articles with social-media-friendly metadata tagging	I can see useful preview summaries when sharing an article via social media

- To be deployed onto the union's CSP servers and using the *felixonline.co.uk* domain, in consultation with ICU systems team as necessary.
- To be delivered in time for deployment prior to Week Zero of Autumn Term, 2020, except as may be impacted by technical and project constraints outside of our control.

## Phase II(a)

Expansion of functionality delivered in Phase I, and delivery of necessary documentation, to support the following user stories:

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#	<i>As a...</i>	<i>I want...</i>	<i>So that...</i>
6	Editor	to be able to ingest specific stories from InDesign	the site can be updated with minimal manual intervention
51	Editor	to be able to ingest content in a fast drag-and-drop fashion	
10	Writer	to be able to include videos and other digital-first content in my article	articles can be made more engaging
31	Editor	to be able to embed external content such as livestreams or surveys	
13	Writer	to be able to ingest data specific to specialised types of article on a per-section basis	articles can display specialised layouts for particular types of article correctly
32	Editor	to be able to specify a publication schedule for an article	so that digital-only content can be scheduled to be seen with the rest of the paper
24	Reader	to be able to see a list of "most read" articles	
26	Editor	to be able to obtain page-hit statistics on a per-article basis	
27	Reader	to be able to find all articles by a given writer	
48	Reader	to be able to see an "issue overview" homepage for a previous issue	
41	Reader	to see a "What's On" calendar of events	
15	Webmaster	to be able to change the typography & visual style of the site en-masse	the website can remain cohesive with the paper's design over time
4	Webmaster	technical documentation for the system	I can understand how it works technically
5	Editor	user documentation for the system	I can understand how to use the site in an ongoing fashion

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## Summary

I am pleased to be able to quote for a project incorporating the above scope at the following costs:

	<i>Est. Scope (days)</i>	<i>Total @ £250/day</i>
<b>Phase I</b>		
- <i>Public facing site</i>		
- <i>Administration interface</i>	14.25	£3,562 <sup>.50</sup>
- <i>Deployment, working with ICU Systems team</i>		
<b>Phase II(a)</b>		
- <i>InDesign Content Ingestion</i>	13.75	£3,437 <sup>.50</sup>
- <i>Additional site functionality</i>		
CoCoMo Effort Adjustment Factor (@1.053)	1.484	£371 <sup>.00</sup>
In-person support & training; 6 hours		£0 <sup>.00</sup>
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>£7,371<sup>.00</sup></b>
<i>Less discount (30%)</i>		<i>(£2,211<sup>.30</sup>)</i>
<b>Total</b>		<b>£5,159<sup>.70</sup></b>

This quotation is valid for 5 days from the date of issue. Additional development work beyond the agreed scope or site maintenance can be undertaken at cost in line with the above pricing. Additional support can be provided at a cost of £50<sup>.00</sup>/hour.

25% of project total cost is payable on commencement, with the balance for each phase becoming due upon delivery. Payment terms are 14 days from date of invoice.

# Appendix 2

News	3.53	2.08
Science (including Sustainability and Tech)	4.11	1.88
Clubs and Societies	4.20	1.97
Comment	4.23	2.22
Puzzles	4.26	2.25
Culture & Society (Arts, Music, Books, Film, Food)	4.49	2.11
Hangman	4.61	2.48
Sport	6.56	2.03

## Students' comparative interest in the various sections of the paper

Holding the College to account	2.60	1.72
Reporting on College life	2.62	1.55
Holding the Union to account	3.33	1.63
Providing a platform for student writers	3.51	1.79
Providing experience for student editors	5.09	1.93
Local news	5.92	1.59
Opinion pieces on national and international affairs	6.36	1.61
Reporting on national and international affairs	6.57	1.51

## Students' ranking of the various priorities that Felix should have according to students