



Imperial College London

Silwood Park Students' Union Report

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1 Background

1.1 The Silwood Park Campus

The Silwood Park campus has been part of Imperial College London since 1947, when it was purchased as a field station largely to conduct large-scale agricultural studies that could not be done at the crowded South Kensington campus. Many of Silwood's older field experiments have been running continuously for more than 30 years, and Silwood is a globally important research site in the fields of ecology and conservation. Silwood has also been involved in other fields of research too, with the campus housing a small nuclear reactor from 1967 until its removal in 2021. Silwood is a research-intensive campus with around 20 PhD candidates and 90 master's students based on site. There are no undergraduate courses delivered at Silwood, and around half of the master's students at Silwood are international students.

Historically, the students at Silwood have been represented by the Silwood Park Students' Union (SPSU), which has historically acted independently of the Imperial College Union (ICU). The SPSU became a constituent union of the ICU in 2012, following a governance review. Clubs, societies and projects (CSPs) at Silwood are typically organized independently of any pre-existing CSPs at the ICU by both students and faculty members alike. Funding for these usually comes from ICU grants, with some additional faculty funding.



1.2 SPSU Committee 2023/24

The elections for the SPSU committee for 2023/2024 were held on October 16, 2023 – roughly two weeks after the start of the Silwood academic term. Positions for election were: Chair, Vice Chair, Junior Treasurer, two Transport Officers, six Entertainment Officers, and two Chancellors of the Fur in charge of caring for the unofficial campus cat (Mr. Tinkles). Initially, all positions were filled apart from the Entertainment Officer team (four of the six positions were filled), and we allowed four Chancellors of the Fur due to high interest in the role and its honorary position. We have subsequently been able to recruit one International Officer, and two additional Entertainment Officers. The contact information for this years' committee members can be found on the Silwood Union web page (<https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/representation/a-to-z/silwood-park-students-union>).

Current SPSU committee:

Chair: Jack Arthur. **Vice-Chair:** George Kalogiannis. **Jr. Treasurer:** Jean Moorkens. **Transportation Officers:** Sinead Moss, Eimear Loughlin, **Entertainment Officers:** Daisy Mitchell, Ben Bennett, Emma Arulanantham, Tianle Shao, Sayuan Wang. **International Officer:** Feihui Yu. **Chancellors of the Fur:** Jemima Frame, Isobel Bender, Emmanuel Tibok, Sunny Gao.

2 CSPs and Union Services

Rolling and sporting societies have been allocated their annual budgets over the past few weeks. The permanent societies and Union Services budgets were allocated by the previous committee, and typically do not change year on year.

Rolling Societies

- **Performing Arts:** The Performing Arts society has been thriving and meeting every Tuesday at the Unit-A building after the weekly pub quizzes. There are usually around 8 people participating, although it varies. The meetings usually consist of playing instruments as well as all sorts of games and karaoke's. Funds have been allocated and used for instrument maintenance and repairs.
- **Birdwatching:** The birdwatching society has been running Friday morning bird-watching walks on which they plan to continue. They also plan to hold one-off trips to local nature reserves and may organise a residential trip in the summer. The society currently has 9 regular members.
- **ICOTK:** The society organised a group trip to MCM comic con in October. The society has been organising movie night on Sundays. They are planning to do it once every two weeks. They will organise another comic con trip May next year.
- **Dungeons and Dragons:** The society has had semi-regular meetings with approximately 4-5 students attending. The society is predominantly made up of PhD students.

Sports Societies

- **Badminton:** The badminton society has been having weekly meetups on Wednesdays to play at Bracknell Leisure center. The meetings tend to be of around 5-10 people due to vehicle constraints.
- **Climbing:** The climbing society has been doing well with many recurrent members that have been going to Oakwood Climbing Center every week, depending on driver availability for the mini-bus. Chalk bags and chalk were purchased using Union funds this term.
- **Tennis:** Since Christmas the most important news is that as a society we have been able to negotiate a permanent time slot with the council at the broomhall tennis courts for Monday 2x courts 5-6pm weekly which previously we had not. This allows for a max of 8 players each week, with the possibility of purchasing a further court to allow for 12 players. Most weeks we average 7 or 8 players. The society as a whole growing from 14 to 20 members this year, ranging from all abilities. The last of the budget has been spent on tennis balls for the summer, new grips, allowing to regrip 6 rackets and buying Silwood 2 new HEAD rackets which will have at least a 5 year lifespan.

Permanent Societies

- **Chickens:** The chicken society has been running as normal, with twice-daily chicken work shifts, and weekly cleanups. The funding given has been used to buy feed, bedding and some medicine for the chickens, and is crucial to supplement earnings from selling eggs, especially in the colder months when egg production was much lower. The remaining funding will be used for buying additional feed etc. Now that egg production is much

higher, it is at least breaking even with basic spending on food/bedding with just egg sales alone. However, additional funding will still be desired to buy quality of life upgrades for the chickens such as medicine, heating, and additional supplies.

- **LGBTQ+:** The society purchased decorations for Pride-History month and LGBTQ+ movie screenings were made during that time. A tie dye event is going to be scheduled, and they will be hosting regular catch ups and events during the spring and summer.

Union Services

- **Minibus:** The requirement to have a UK license with 2 years of driving experience has presented a problem with our limited, largely international, student pool. We now have enough drivers for society-related events, however issues still present with regards to transport to and from Silwood, especially for grocery shopping.
- **Mr. Tinkles:** Mr. Tinkles, the campus cat and living legend (with honorary life meowmembership of the ICU), has been doing great! Despite his great age and bad habit of terrorising the local rabbit population, he has been staying healthy thanks to our chancellors of the fur who manage his care.

3 Silfest

Silfest is the annual music festival/celebration that occurs on the grounds of Silwood park during the summer. The summer 2023 Silfest was cancelled for a number of reasons, and we are determined to work with the ICU to ensure that Silfest 2024 is able to go ahead as planned. Silfest is run by a SPSU subcommittee, consisting of volunteers from the student population.

So far, the Silfest subcommittee consists of 8 people and they are having regular meetings with the student activities manager, and other relevant personnel in the ICU, to ensure the success of this event. Silfest has been scheduled to take place on July 13th. There has been progress in organising the event with multiple performers interested, and safety and security planning is underway.

4 Conclusion

The SPSU faces unique challenges, and we are confident that long-term solutions can be found. We pleased to say that some troubles faced in the first term have since been resolved through communication with the ICU, and progress has been made regarding access to the mini-bus and other facilities. We look forward to supporting the Silwood societies in the coming summer months.