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<b>LOCATION</b>	Online via Teams Town Hall
<b>CHAIR</b>	<b>Kieran Robson Renner</b> - President, The Watt Club
<b>SPEAKERS</b>	<b>Axel Klafstad</b> - Vice-President, The Watt Club <b>Professor Richard A. Williams</b> , Principal and Vice-Chancellor <b>Alex MacLaren</b> – Associate Professor in Architecture and Associate Executive Dean for Education and Student Life, in the School of Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society (EGIS) <b>Adam Gillies</b> – Alumni Engagement Manager, Development and Alumni Office
<b>ATTENDEES</b>	567 registrations and 68 attendees

### Meeting Summary

This meeting was the 2024 Annual General Meeting of The Watt Club. These minutes should be read in conjunction with the Teams Live recording of the meeting - [The Watt Club AGM - 16 January 2025](#).

#### 1. Welcome

The meeting was deemed quorate. The President of The Watt Club, Kieran Robson Renner, welcomed members to the 2024 Annual General Meeting. A short highlight reel was shown - wrapping up all the alumni events and meaningful engagement that happened throughout 2024. Video available online at [Our alumni](#).

#### 2. Introduction

Professor Richard A. Williams, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, presented a global update on behalf of the University.

- **Acknowledgements:** Professor Williams expressed gratitude for the highlight reel and congratulated The Watt Club on its achievements over the past year.
- **Recognition of Sir Geoff Palmer, Chancellor of the University:** Highlighted that Sir Geoff Palmer has been awarded the Order of the Thistle, one of only 16 people to hold this honour.
- **New Appointments:** Welcomed Dr. Nicol David as the new Pro-Chancellor of Heriot-Watt Malaysia.
- **Campus Developments:**
  - Opened a new campus location in Dubai in late 2023 and now have plans to expand it by 35%.
  - Celebrated 20 years in the UAE, noting the University's status as the largest independent university in this region.
- **Tributes:** Remembered the late Cameron Millar, Deputy Chair of University Court and valued alumnus. [Community and connection - The Watt Magazine 2024](#).
- **Global Engagement:**
  - Met alumni in the USA, Norway, China, Malaysia, and South Africa.
  - Welcomed the President of the Republic of Zambia, Mr Hakainde Hichilema, to the Edinburgh campus and awarded him with an Honorary Doctorate of the University.
- **University Achievements:**
  - Maintained position in the 250s in the QS World Ranking Table.
  - Secured over £65 million in new research grants.
  - Participated in over 10% of the UK's doctoral training centres.
  - Achieved high graduate employment rates, first in Scotland and fourth in the UK.
- **Shaping Futures Campaign:** The University launched a campaign in 2024 to raise £80 million for projects focused on education, sustainability, healthcare, and innovation. [Together, we shape the future | Heriot-Watt University](#) and [Campaign Global Council | Heriot-Watt University](#).

- **Closing Remarks:** Professor Williams wished everyone a Happy New Year and Lunar New Year. Highlighted Global Watt Day on 19 January 2025 on which a new podcast series is being launched called "Shaping Futures". He thanked alumni and the wider community for all their advocacy and support.

[Podcasts | Heriot-Watt University](#)

### 3. Keynote Speaker

Alex MacLaren, Associate Professor in Architecture and Associate Executive Dean for Education and Student Life, in the School of Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society (EGIS) gave a presentation on transition education.

#### Transition Education and Civic Projects

- **Global and Research Links:** Emphasised the extraordinary benefits of global and research connections, particularly in transition education.
- **Solar Decathlon, Middle East Project:**
  - **Project Overview:** Team ESTEEM, a group of students, created a solar-powered house from raw spruce trees in Scotland, showcased at the Dubai World Expo 2021. [Team ESTEEM](#)
  - **Challenges and Achievements:** Despite starting in 2018 and facing the pandemic, the team performed well in the competition.
  - **Student Involvement:** Included undergraduates, postgraduates, and research students from various campuses (Edinburgh, Orkney, Malaysia, Dubai).
  - **Industry Links:** Collaborated with industry partners and involved students in hands-on construction, branding, and social media campaigns.
  - **Innovations:** Used 3D printed concrete, K bricks (low energy bricks from recycled materials), and a digital app for construction.
- **Educational Impact:**
  - **Hands-On Learning:** Students gained practical experience and developed skills across disciplines.
  - **Outreach and Engagement:** Engaged with local schools, industry partners, and the public through social media and educational events.
  - **New Industry for Scotland:** Involved in creating Scottish laminated timber, promoting low carbon construction.
- **Digital and Physical Integration:**
  - **Digital Models:** Used digital tools like the Boston Robotics dog and Bentley software for campus modelling.
  - **Logistics and Export:** Managed logistics for exporting materials to Dubai, including navigating import regulations.
  - **Interactive Learning:** Developed digital twins and interactive models for educational purposes.
- **Sustainability and Biodiversity:**
  - **Energy Models:** Created energy models for campuses to drive sustainability and research.
  - **Biodiversity Projects:** Conducted research on campus biodiversity and flood risk management.
- **Outreach and Science Communication:**
  - **Local School Engagement:** Organised science fairs and educational programs for local schools.
  - **Global Infrastructure Qualification:** Collaborated with local schools on a new qualification related to the built environment.
- **Conclusion:**
  - **Unique Opportunities:** Highlighted the unique opportunities provided by the University's global links and industry connections.
  - **Passion for Education and Research:** Expressed passion for linking education with research and outreach.
  - **Shaping Futures Campaign:** Excitement about the campaign focused on sustainability and empowering education.

**4. Looking back – Kieran Robson Renner, Watt Club President**

**a. 2023 AGM Minutes**

A copy of the 2023 AGM minutes was circulated to all registrants prior to the meeting. There were no matters or questions arising and the President deemed them as approved.

**b. Watt Club Council Report**

- **Introduction:** The Watt Club, Heriot-Watt University's Alumni Association, supports over 166,000 alumni globally. The club is led by a council of elected and appointed alumni with diverse industry knowledge and experience.
- **Constitutional Changes:** In early 2024, significant constitutional changes were made to refresh the council. Chairs of global branches now have a seat at the table, enhancing direct communication and representation.
- **Communications Update:** Collaborated with the University's marketing team to align the club's brand while retaining its unique identity.
- **Tribute to Cameron Millar:** Remembered Cameron Millar, a third-generation alumnus and former Deputy Chair of University Court, who passed away in February 2024. A new award, the Watt Club Award for Outstanding Contribution, has been established in his honour.
- **Strategic Working Groups:** Four groups focused on:
  - **Governance:** Reviewing bylaws and updating the appointments process.
  - **Student Support:** Enhancing support for current students and developing connections with student societies and sports clubs.
  - **Volunteering Opportunities:** Expanding alumni volunteering opportunities beyond committee meetings.
  - **Branch Support:** Improving guidance and support for branches, including easier funding applications and establishing official email addresses.

**c. Watt Club Branch Report**

- **Global Branches:** The Watt Club has 15 affiliated branches worldwide, led by dedicated volunteers, with four new branches or smaller groups established this year.
- **Branch Highlights:**
  - **Houston, South Africa, Toronto, and London:** These branches, hosted successful events funded by the Council in 2024.
  - **Toronto:** Held a social meet-up in October with over 20 alumni attending and plans for two events in 2025.
  - **South Africa:** Hosted an alumni reception in Cape Town with Professor Williams and has a plan of activities for 2025.
  - **Norway:** Continued to build connections, hosting events with the British Norwegian Chamber of Commerce and the British Embassy, including a homecoming event for recent graduates.
  - **Malaysia:** Strengthened connections with the campus and students, supported the 10th year of the Heriot-Watt University Students Association (HUMSA), and hosted fringe events around student graduations.
- **Acknowledgements:** Public thanks to all chairs, committees, volunteers, and members for their efforts in building and supporting the global alumni community.

**d. Accounts/Budgets**

- **Financial Year:** Runs from September 2023 to September 2024.
- **Subvention Grant:** The Council receives £15,000 annually from the University for operations and projects.
- **Spending Challenges:** Historically struggled to spend the full grant, but this year saw significant use due to increased branch activity.

- **Personnel Budget:** Previously allocated £2,000 for treasurer/secretary stipends, now managed from the Development and Alumni team, freeing up funds for other activities.
- **Branch Funding:** Allocated nearly £6,400 to branches for events, setup, and legal costs for new branches.
- **End-of-Year Spending:** Supported a major alumni event hosted by the Development Alumni Office and funded marketing for a Malaysia branch event.
- **Trophies Purchase:** Spent close to £900 on trophies for the inaugural alumni awards to be launched later this year.

**5. Development and Alumni Office (DAO) Update – Adam Gillies, Alumni Engagement Manager**

- **Role and Mission:** The Alumni Engagement Manager leads the team supporting Watt Club members globally, engaging alumni in university life, supporting strategic goals, and aiding current students.
- **Global Alumni Community:** Over 166,000 alumni in 190+ countries, forming a flourishing community.
- **Tailored Services:** Offering benefits, services, events, and communications tailored to alumni based on age, career stage, and location.
- **2024 Highlights:**
  - **Events:** Hosted or supported 33 events with over 1,300 attendees.
  - **Communications:** Sent 245 tailored email campaigns, nearly 1 million emails, increased social media followers to 49,000, and received over 25,000 engagements.
  - **New Branch:** Launched Watt Club Uganda with a keynote speech by alumnus Henry Musasizi, State Minister for Finance.
  - **Shaping Futures Campaign:** Launched to engage alumni in the University's mission, focusing on empowering through education, driving sustainability, transforming healthcare, and innovating with business and industry.
  - **Honorary Degree:** Awarded to philanthropist Ian Campbell for his contributions to education, widening participation and support for the Maths Gym initiative.
  - **Graduate Outcomes:** Achieved high employability rankings, first in Scotland and second in the UK for undergraduate courses.
- **Digital Alumni Magazine:** Published the latest edition of "The Watt," sharing impactful alumni stories and research highlights. [The Watt Magazine 2024/2025](#)
- **New Graduates:** Welcomed over 6,900 new graduates to The Watt Club.
- **Feedback and Volunteering:** Encouraged alumni to provide feedback and get involved through mentoring, speaking, lecturing, advisory roles, and sharing success stories. [Volunteer today - Heriot-Watt University](#)
- **Upcoming Events:** Highlighted events in January, including Global Watt Day, a new podcast, and various alumni events in Saudi Arabia, London, Edinburgh, USA, and India. [Search Events - Heriot-Watt University](#)
- **Winter Newsletter:** Announced the upcoming newsletter and encouraged alumni to stay engaged and involved in 2025.

**6. Looking Forward – Axel Klafstad, The Watt Club Vice President and Chair of Norway Branch**

- **Introduction:** Axel expressed pleasure in being part of the AGM and shared his background as a 2011 graduate in business and finance from Heriot-Watt University.
- **Active Alumni Engagement:** Highlighted his involvement in setting up and chairing the Watt Club branch in Norway and welcomed his new role as Vice President of The Watt Club Council.
- **Importance of Alumni Network:** Emphasised the significance of relationship building and the value of the alumni network, especially for those living abroad.
- **Council's Purpose and Mission:**
  - **Encourage Support:** Enlist support for the University.
  - **Enhance Student Experience:** Improve the experience for current students.
  - **Recognise Achievements:** Award Watt Club medals and other prizes.
  - **Honour Legacy:** Honour the memory of James Watt and the University's founders.
- **Future Commitment:** Committed to mobilising the alumni community to deliver the mission and ensure alumni have a voice in the development of the University's 2035 strategy.

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- **Global Watt Day:** Announced the upcoming Global Watt Day on 19 January, encouraging alumni to participate and promote the University.
  - **Shaping Futures Campaign:** Focus on raising awareness and financial support for student access, enrichment initiatives, and research excellence.
  - **Call to Action:** Invited alumni to join in making education more inclusive, mitigating climate change, advancing healthcare, and transforming business and industry.
  - **Staying Connected:** Encouraged alumni to stay connected through The Watt Club LinkedIn page and keep up to date with news and events. [Social media - Heriot-Watt University](#)

**7. Closing Remarks – Kieran Robson Renner, The Watt Club President**

- **Acknowledgements:** Thanked Professor Williams, Professor McLaren, Adam and Axel for their presentations.
- **Reflection and Outlook:** Provided a positive reflection on 2024 and an optimistic outlook for 2025.
- **Attendance:** Noted this AGM had the highest attendance during his time on the Watt Club Council.
- **Global Watt Day Reminder:** Reminded attendees about Global Watt Day on 19 January, celebrating James Watt's birthday, and encouraged participation in the upcoming social media campaign.
- **Closing:** Thanked everyone for attending and looked forward to engaging over the next year.