

Esteemed members of the local council and fellow residents,

This is not the first time a concerned Students' Union President has sat in front of you.

With the right commitments emerging from this evening, it could be the last.

The concerning situation that students face in the private housing market in Bath, has yet again shocked us as student representatives to the point where I have chosen to come before you to, yet again, make a plea to action.

On our housing survey last year, on an open comment a student said, "I pay 130% of my maintenance loan in rent. This is before bills, food, transport, and other living expenses." This is by no means an isolated incident. In 2013, the average rent our students' reported paying was £350 pcm. In 2024, that number had gone up to £600 pcm. This is an increase of 71.43% in only nine years.

Equally, in 2013 67% of our students reported having problems with the conditions of their house. In 2024, 86% of our students reported this. This means it is only one in every ten students that doesn't have poor conditions in the space they are meant to call home. In that 86% of the student population, the issues are many. 12% of our students have reported developing new health issues because of the condition of their house. 35% of our students reported not having appropriate space within their accommodation to study – so to fulfil their most basic responsibility as a student.

Local landlords and letting agencies have been accomplices in what is, in our opinion, the biggest crisis students at Bath face. Not only are they irresponsible, taking months to respond to simple maintenance requests that their tenants are entitled to make, but these predatory organisations make the most out of the high demand for student accommodation in the city by charging extortionate prices.

Members of the council, the days of romanticising being a student unable to make ends meet, normalising having mould and damp inside your houses, and accepting that you will have worse conditions than the average resident – should by now be over. Students aren't paying prices that in any way justify poorer conditions. They are spending – in most cases - more than they can afford – an in extreme cases, all they have – in rent and bills. 1 in 5 of our students reported living in houses with gas or electrical hazards. This is an unacceptable number.

We do not expect the people in this room to fix all the issues within a national system that has been planned to fail students for years if not decades.

Our plea to you this evening, members of the council and fellow residents of this city, is that you recognise the issue for what it is. You have near a fifth of this city's population discontent

about their living conditions. Please, take this call to action seriously. The people in this room can begin the important conversations about placing essential council pressure and resource on raising the standards of local housing. You have the ability of demanding better conditions from landlords and letting agencies alike. You have, tonight, the chance to commit to making Bath a city where your own children and grandchildren would want to study and live.

We hope that you take this chance. We are more than willing to assist in whatever way we can.

Thank you.