

Scottish Liberal Democrats

Spring Conference 2024

Preliminary Agenda

18th & 19th May 2024

Hamilton Town House

#sldconf

General Information

Provisional Timings:

Saturday: 10:00 - 18:30 (Evening Fringes 17:30 - 18:30)

Sunday: 09:30 - 15:30

Conference Dinner: 19:30 until Late

(Conference Dinner ticket holders only)

Accessibility:

The venue is fully accessible to disabled visitors, and has dedicated disabled parking bays.

Catering:

There is a bar/cafe available at the venue.

Lunchtime events are also being catered.

Transportation:

Hamilton Central (Bus and Train): 14 minute walk

Car Parking: Multiple parking locations including:

- Dazzle Car Park (1 minute walk)
- Church Street Car Park (4 minute walk)
- Keith Street Car Park (8 minute walk)



Training

There are a range of training opportunities situated throughout the venue over the two days, including:

- Membership Training
- A Winning Plan for the General Election
- Are You Election Ready?
- Media Training
- Social Media/Website Training
- Preparing for the General Election for Development and Start-Up Seats
- Future Leaders Interview Training (Future Leaders Members only)



Mini Motions are back!

These are quick, theme-based debates designed to foster dynamic discussions on a wide range of topics. They offer an avenue for real-time interventions and an exploration of experimental policy ideas.

How does it work?

Members have been invited to submit succinct policy ideas, no more than 150 words, for inclusion in a series of brief, thematic debates. The conference committee has chosen these subjects:

A Vote to Gauge Sentiment

An essential feature of these mini debates is the indicative vote taken at their close. Although this vote doesn't directly influence party policy, it provides a valuable insight into the idea's appeal amongst members.

Why this new approach?

We believe this format will encourage spirited discussions, ensure a wider range of voices are heard, and stimulate innovative policy suggestions. It's a step in our constant endeavour to democratise policy debates, making them more accessible and engaging for all members.

Join the Debate!

If you're passionate about a policy idea or keen to engage in these concise yet significant debates, we wholeheartedly invite you to participate. Let's use this platform to mould our future policies and share views that could redefine our discourse.

Our Mini Motions subjects are:

Cost of Living, Justice and Pot Luck (free reign!)

The deadline for submission is 23rd April at 5pm.



Saturday - Whats Going On?

Welcome

SC1: National Care Service

Emergency Motion Ballot

Mini Motions: Cost of Living

SPEECH: Kellie Armstrong MLA

LUNCH

FRINGES

SC2: Supporting Bereaved Children and Young People

Mini Motions: Justice

SPEECH: Sir Ed Davey MP

SC3: North Sea Power Superhighway

Mark Pack: A President's Update

Liam McArthur MSP: Assisted Dying Bill Q&A

EM1: Emergency Motion

EVENING FRINGES



Sunday - What's Going On?

AGM

SC4: A Fair Deal for Scottish Sport

Mini Motions: Pot Luck

SC5: Policy Committee Reference Back: 'Creating a New Approach to Solving the Housing Crisis'

LUNCH

FRINGES

SC6: Supporting Scotland's Flood-Risk Communities

Lord Jim Wallace: 25 Years of Holyrood

SC7: Boosting Literacy to Lift Attainment

Thank yous and Awards

Financial Appeal

LEADER'S SPEECH: Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP



SC1: National Care Service

Mover: Cllr Sally Pattle

Summator: Jacquie Bell

1 Conference notes that:

- 2 1. The National Care Service (Scotland) Bill was introduced by the Scottish
3 Government in June 2022 with the intention of reforming how social care,
4 social work and community health services are delivered in Scotland.
- 5 2. It has been described by the Scottish Government as the most significant
6 reform to public services since the creation of the NHS because it proposes
7 moving responsibility for children's services, justice social work and mental
8 health services, as well as adult social care, into a newly created National
9 Care Service, all of which will be overseen by Scottish Ministers.
- 10 3. Plans to transfer up to 75,000 local authority workers into the National Care
11 Service have since been abandoned as too costly.
- 12 4. The Bill is referred to as framework legislation because it proposes general
13 principles of the National Care Service, but leaves considerable detail to be
14 laid out in future secondary legislation.
- 15 5. The Scottish Government is proposing that the National Care Service sits as
16 a directorate within their governance structure rather than becoming a
17 stand-alone body.
- 18 6. Following repeated delays, the National Care Service is expected to be
19 implemented by 2028/9.

20 Conference further notes that:

- 21 1. Local Government (through COSLA), the NHS and the Scottish Government
22 reached an initial agreement regarding accountability for the National Care
23 Service in summer 2023.



- 24 2. When estimated costs of implementing the original scheme rose to £2.2bn,
25 the Scottish Government announced its intention to scale back the plans in
26 December 2023.
- 27 3. Costs for the scaled back version of the National Care Service are still
28 estimated to be in the region of £1bn.
- 29 4. It is still unclear from the Bill how the National Care Service will be governed
30 and who will be represented on local care boards and special care boards.

31 Conference believes that:

- 32 1. Introducing a new layer of centralised bureaucracy by wrenching away
33 control of local services by Local Government will only impede service
34 delivery on the frontline of care across Scotland.
- 35 2. Funnelling £1bn of public money towards a National Care Service is
36 particularly unjustified in the face of rising inflation and wage costs and
37 increased demand for Council services – it is noteworthy that £1bn is also
38 the size of the budget black hole that the SNP and Green Scottish
39 Government has passed onto Councils.

40 Conference calls for the Scottish Government to:

- 41 1. Immediately dismantle, rather than simply delay, plans for the new
42 National Care Service.
- 43 2. Give any money that was earmarked for the creation of a National Care
44 Service directly to local authorities and Health and Social Care Partnerships,
45 so that it can be invested into front line care, including improved pay and
46 conditions for staff.



SC2: Supporting Bereaved Children and Young People

Mover: Christine Jardine MP

Summator: Amanda Clark

1 Conference notes that:

- 2 1. According to research from the Childhood Bereavement Network, every
3 three hours a child in Scotland will lose a parent, with 2,800 children
4 bereaved each year.
- 5 2. The impact of a bereavement during childhood is not confined to losing a
6 parent, and many more children lose grandparents, siblings or friends.
- 7 3. Specialist charities such as Richmond's Hope, Winston's Wish, the Childhood
8 Bereavement Network and Child Bereavement UK provide tailored support
9 services, including phonelines, online resources, live webchats and email
10 support.
- 11 4. The lack of official data on the number of children suffering bereavement
12 creates challenges for charities, making it more difficult to plan or scale up
13 service provision, and a petition organised by these charities to call for
14 improved data collection earned over 11,000 signatures.
- 15 5. Schools and colleges will often be the main point of contact for children after
16 a bereavement, but 90% of teachers say they have received no bereavement
17 support training, and it is not currently part of the curriculum for teacher
18 training in Scotland.
- 19 6. While teacher support is valuable, it is not always sufficient or appropriate
20 for a child or family, whereas independent peer support is seen by many as
21 the missing link, which is something national charities can offer.
- 22 7. The biggest challenge is the lack of a protocol linking the charities with
23 children and families who may want their help.
- 24 8. Research from Winston's Wish shows that children in lower-income
25 households are at greater risk of losing a parent.



26 9. The Bereavement Support (Children and Young People) Bill, presented to
27 Parliament by Christine Jardine MP, Member of Parliament for Edinburgh
28 West, on March 12th 2024.

29 Conference believes that:

- 30 1. Every child has the right to be offered specialist support upon the death of a
31 parent, close relative, or friend, with service providers ready and resourced
32 to deliver it.
- 33 2. A protocol is needed to ensure that every bereaved family is aware of the
34 support available and that it is offered to them.
- 35 3. Bereaved children and young people should be able to make an informed
36 decision on the most appropriate decision for them and should be informed
37 of available services.
- 38 4. Cuts to local government funding and service provision has had a negative
39 impact on the ability of schools, social services and other local bodies to
40 provide the best possible support for bereaved children.

41 Conference reaffirms:

- 42 1. The Scottish Liberal Democrat commitment to improving access to mental
43 health and wellbeing services for children and young people as outlined in
44 the policy “New Hope - A Blueprint for CAMHS & Psychological Therapies”,
45 passed at Spring Conference 2023.
- 46 2. Support for the content of the mini motion “Childhood Bereavement”,
47 passed at Scottish Liberal Democrat Autumn Conference 2023.

48 Conference calls for the Scottish Government to develop a protocol for the
49 collation and dissemination of information to bereaved children about
50 relevant support services, that:

- 51 1. covers services that are provided by:
 - 52 a. local authorities,
 - 53 b. publicly funded bodies, including NHS regions,
 - 54 c. charities and other third sector organisations.
- 55 2. creates a new Duty to Inform to ensure that any dependent or affected



- 56 children are made aware of these services, which would apply to individuals
57 such as:
- 58 a. registrars who are involved in the process of registering a death,
 - 59 b. teachers and other education professionals,
 - 60 c. social workers and relevant local government staff,
 - 61 d. GPs, nurses and other relevant healthcare workers,
 - 62 e. any other professional where appropriate.
- 63 3. includes mandatory bereavement support training for anyone to whom a
64 new Duty to Inform applies, ensuring that bereaved children and young
65 people are treated with appropriate care and respect.



SC3: North Sea Power Superhighway: A Credible Plan for Offshore Wind Power Distribution

Mover: Michael Turvey

Summator: TBC

1 Conference notes that:

- 2 1. The UK Government has set out an ambition to deliver 50GW of offshore
3 wind generation capacity by 2030. The Committee on Climate Change (CCC)
4 has also indicated that to become a net zero economy could require 75GW
5 of Offshore wind by 2050.
- 6 2. The Scotwind and INTOG licensing rounds awarded licenses for
7 approximately 32GW of offshore wind capacity. This award was three times
8 the supply anticipated in the National Grid ESO's pathway to 2030 "Holistic
9 Network Design". The award of these licenses has not been matched by a
10 credible plan for the provision of grid connections. Grid connections are not
11 available until the 2030s.
- 12 3. In the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany an order for 14 offshore
13 substations has been placed. This "energy Island" concept will simplify
14 offshore wind developers' ability to tie into the network providing certainty
15 and improved economics for offshore wind projects. Germany is burying
16 three major transmission lines avoiding unnecessary local challenges.
- 17 4. In the UK the current holistic network design relies heavily on onshore
18 substations and overhead line transmission failing to take advantage of
19 Scotland's vast expertise in subsea and offshore technology.
- 20 5. This onshore overhead line approach represents the path of maximum
21 resistance for residents. Significant local resistance has arisen in Scotland on
22 the Spittal to Beaulay overhead line in the Highlands and the Kintore to Tealing
23 overhead line in Aberdeenshire and Angus.



- 24 6. Delays to the delivery of vital transmission infrastructure will be the
25 inevitable consequence of these poor choices that fail to show respect for
26 the environment, cultural history, health, wellbeing, livelihoods and property
27 rights of local people.
- 28 7. According to the Energy System Operator, their current Holistic Network
29 design will deliver a saving of £2.18 per year on the average (currently
30 approximately £2,000).

31 Conference believes that:

- 32 1. Investing more money in less invasive transmission techniques: offshore
33 substations, subsea cables, and onshore buried cables will have less impact
34 on the local environment and maintain the societal consensus needed for
35 the energy transition and net zero.
- 36 2. Delays to infrastructure delivery will have the effect of driving investment
37 away from Scotland and the UK to more attractive locations and leave a long
38 legacy of unwanted infrastructure in our countryside.
- 39 3. Power should be delivered via a subsea power superhighway direct to
40 centres of demand in England. the Central Belt and continental
41 interconnectors minimising onshore infrastructure. That onshore
42 infrastructure should be buried where possible, minimising public
43 opposition and maximising reliability by reducing storm damage.

44 Conference calls for:

- 45 1. the UK Government and National Grid Energy System Operator to review, as
46 a matter of urgency, their plans for network delivery taking full account of
47 new wind licenses and learning from international best practice.
- 48 2. the Scottish and UK Governments to encourage transmission owners to
49 continue with upgrades to existing lines, but allow a pause on new lines while
50 the review takes place.
- 51 3. the Scottish Government to embed in planning regulations the principle that
52 impact of power distribution infrastructure on people, the environment and



53 landscape should be kept as low as reasonably possible favouring subsea
54 and subterranean routes where possible.
55 4. the Scottish Government to oppose the construction of the Spittal to Beaully
56 overhead line in the Highlands and the Kintore to Tealing overhead line in
57 the planning process, unless the current proposals are amended to the
58 satisfaction of residents.



SC4: A Fair Deal for Scottish Sport

Mover: Cllr Sally Pattle

Summator: Neil Alexander

1 Conference believes that:

- 2 1. Being active isn't just good for a person's physical health, it's also proven to
3 have a positive mental health and wellbeing impact, as stated in SAMH's
4 Mental Health Charter for Physical Activity and Sport.
- 5 2. Scotland has a rich and unique heritage of sport, which should be celebrated
6 and any success built on to encourage participation.
- 7 3. Anyone participating in sport, be it as a competitor or fan, should always feel
8 like they are listened to, respected, safe and able to reach out for support
9 wherever possible.

10 Conference notes with concern that:

- 11 1. Scottish Government budget cuts and restrictions on how the money it
12 provides can be spent, combined with the cost of living crisis, mean local
13 authorities across the country are facing difficult decisions about where to
14 allocate funding.
- 15 2. As a consequence, some local authorities may end up closing sports facilities,
16 meaning sports clubs and local communities are losing access to much
17 needed facilities.
- 18 3. The freeze in the Scottish Government's mental health budget has meant
19 real-terms cuts to the funding available for mental health which can have an
20 impact on access to support in the community, including through local sports
21 clubs.
- 22 4. Physical activity and sport is a massive gap in the new Scottish Government
23 strategy for Mental Health and Wellbeing



- 24 Conference calls for:
- 25 1. the Scottish Government to protect both the mental health and Sport
26 Scotland budgets in real terms, such as protecting these budgets in line with
27 inflation.
 - 28 2. the Scottish Government to further support the partnership between
29 SportScotland and SAMH as well as SAMH's Mental Health Charter for
30 Physical Activity and Sport, by making more funding available for mental
31 health first aid training for sports clubs and governing bodies.
 - 32 3. Scottish local authorities to work in partnership with local sports clubs to
33 explore, where possible, alternative models of ownership of community
34 assets - particularly where publicly-owned facilities may be at risk of closure
 - 35 4. the Scottish Government to promote more widely their guidance on
36 community asset transfers, and make this a more accessible process as
37 possible so that local sports clubs know their options if the publicly-owned
38 facility they use is at risk of closure.
 - 39 5. the UK Government to conduct a review of the sporting events currently
40 listed in the Ofcom Code on Sports and Other Listed and Designated Events,
41 to discuss which sporting events are free-to-air nationally
 - 42 6. the governing bodies of Scottish sports to introduce appropriate misconduct
43 policies to protect vulnerable groups, tackle misogyny, ensure clear
44 protocols around sexual misconduct, and guarantee that there are cultures
45 where everyone feels safe and supported to participate.
 - 46 7. SportScotland to create a new funding stream specifically targeted at
47 increasing participation in sport, which clubs could apply for to increase the
48 number of people actively taking part in sport in Scotland.
 - 49 8. professional sport governing bodies to support fan-led reviews such as that
50 proposed by the Scottish Football Alliance, and to accept recommendations
51 where possible.



SC5: Report of the Policy Committee on a Reference Back of 'Creating a New Approach to solving the Housing Crisis.

Mover: Neil Casey

Summator: Neil Casey

1 Conference notes that:

- 2 1. There is currently a housing crisis in Scotland with Glasgow, Edinburgh, and
3 Argyll and Bute Councils all having declared housing emergencies and a
4 recent YouGov poll finding that 80% of adults in Scotland now think there is
5 a housing crisis.
- 6 2. Housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable for young people in Scotland.
7 The median home in Scotland is now 5.3 times the typical household income.
8 Young people in Scotland live in HMOs longer, remain living with their
9 parents, and buy their first home, later than ever.
- 10 3. There are currently 30,000 people homeless in Scotland. Every 16 minutes, a
11 household becomes homeless in Scotland. In addition, 15,625 households
12 are in temporary accommodation in Scotland, including just under 10,000
13 children.
- 14 4. In February 2024, the SNP Government reduced its budget for the supply of
15 affordable housing by £196 million.
- 16 5. Year-on-year homebuilding declined in Scotland in 2023, with 6% fewer
17 homes completed and 24% fewer homes started in the year to end
18 September 2023. In Glasgow, new homes started in 2023 were 46% down on
19 2022. Demand for housing in Scotland continues to increase.
- 20 6. Following a Reference back from the 2022 Autumn Conference on motion
21 SC8, the Policy Committee Working Group developed a report into the state
22 of the housing market in Scotland.

23 Conference believes that:



- 24 1. The Scottish housing emergency requires radical, comprehensive, and
25 integrated solutions; there is no single panacea, nor any viable solution that
26 does not include multiple stakeholders being engaged and encouraged to
27 enact bold solutions.
- 28 2. The UK and Scottish governments have not only failed to adequately address
29 the emergency, but continue to make matters worse. Both have failed to
30 meet their limited housebuilding targets. Furthermore, the Conservative
31 government's focus on demand-side reforms serve only to exacerbate the
32 problem. The SNP government's cut in funding for affordable housing will
33 further diminish the housing supply.
- 34 3. The solution to the Scottish housing emergency should look primarily at
35 increasing the supply of homes. In addition, any meaningful policy must have
36 community building at its heart, rather than relying solely on housebuilding
37 targets.
- 38 4. The 'Help to Build' model identified in the Policy Committee Report
39 represents a plausible means of addressing the funding issues that drive
40 small and medium size housebuilders out of the Scottish market, and places
41 the burden of building new homes on the larger builders who have bank
42 balances large enough to shoulder the risk.
- 43 5. Scotland is in dire need of a national housing plan that engages all relevant
44 stakeholders and explores bold solutions to the challenges outlined in the
45 report, ensuring community-building is prioritised alongside housebuilding
46 targets. The Help to Build model can be the foundation stone of such a plan.
47 Conference accepts the Policy Committee Housing Report as a response to the
48 reference back.
49 Conference calls for the Scottish Liberal Democrats to develop a radical and
50 multi-pronged National Housing Plan to truly address the housing emergency,
51 with Help to Build playing a significant role alongside other key initiatives.



SC6: Supporting Scotland's Flood-Risk Communities

Mover: Willie Rennie MSP

Summator: Willie Rennie MSP

1 Conference notes that:

- 2 1. The changing climate of Scotland has meant the frequency of severe storms
3 has increased, meaning more and more areas are at high risk of flooding.
- 4 2. It is estimated that 284,000 homes and premises are already at risk of
5 flooding in Scotland, with an additional 110,000 properties at risk by 2080.
- 6 3. Communities like Cupar and Brechin have already been severely impacted
7 by flooding events caused by Storm Babet and Storm Gerritt. These
8 communities have had to evacuate homes and close their businesses with
9 no real timescales of when they can return.
- 10 4. The Bellwin Scheme can provide local authorities extra funding for
11 emergency situations, such as flooding or storm damage, but despite it being
12 activated by the Scottish Government 17 times over the last four years, it has
13 only provided local authorities with funding twice.

14 Conference believes that:

- 15 1. More and more communities are at risk of being severely impacted by flood
16 and it is vital that both local and national governments have strategies in
17 place for when these incidents occur.
- 18 2. Local government cannot shoulder the financial burden of protecting our
19 communities alone. The Scottish Government must do much more to ensure
20 there is adequate funding in place should it be needed.
- 21 3. Landowners and farmers can also play a role, as they can often be best
22 placed to understand what is needed to manage the burns and rivers on
23 their land.

24 Conference calls for the Scottish Government to:

- 25 1. conduct an immediate audit of the Bellwin Scheme, to ensure it is fit for
26 purpose.



SC7: Boosting Literacy to Lift Attainment

Mover: Kirsten Herbst-Taylor

Summator: Kirsten Herbst-Taylor

1 Conference notes with concern that:

- 2 1. The final Scottish Survey of Literacy showed declining performance in
3 reading and writing and no improvement in listening and talking, after which
4 the abrupt abolition of the survey by the SNP Government in 2016 created
5 gaps, inadequacies and inconsistencies in the measurement of progress in
6 Scottish education.
- 7 2. The Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Levels statistics,
8 published by the Scottish Government in December 2023, showed that:
 - 9 a. the poverty-related attainment gap for P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined
10 has narrowed by just 1.6% in literacy since 2016/17.
 - 11 b. the poverty-related attainment gap for S3 pupils achieving at least third
12 level literacy is actually 0.1% worse than it was in 2016/17.
- 13 3. Scotland recorded its worst ever score in reading in the recent PISA
14 international comparison of countries' education systems, published in
15 December 2023.
- 16 4. That first and foremost, schools are measured on reading and writing to the
17 neglect of listening and talking.

18 Conference reaffirms the Liberal Democrat commitment to:

- 19 1. High-quality education from early years to apprenticeships, colleges and
20 universities.
- 21 2. Promoting play-based learning until age 7 to give our children a flying start,
22 based on the Nordic model.
- 23 3. Ensuring that young children starting school are not held back by
24 communication barriers, providing effective early intervention and support.
- 25 4. Raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.



- 26 5. Making sure young people with additional support needs and those who
27 require the help of speech and language therapists get the help they need.
28 6. Extending the Pupil Equity Fund which has been the subject of SNP stealth
29 cuts worth more than £200 for every Scottish child from a poorer
30 background.

31 Conference calls for the Scottish Government to:

- 32 1. create a National Literacy Taskforce:
33 a. made up of a group of early years, primary and secondary classroom
34 practitioners empowered to continually inform and shape national
35 strategy and a common approach to teaching all aspects of literacy in
36 line with age and stage.
37 b. that will explore a teacher-led R.O.L.E. (Reading Out Loud Everyday)
38 initiative for early learning settings, primary and secondary schools, and
39 for the government to act upon any such recommendation.
- 40 2. properly support the implementation of a national literacy programme of
41 work in Scottish early years settings/a kindergarten stage, primary and
42 secondary schools, recognising and repairing the harm that has been done
43 to literacy by the cuts SNP ministers have overseen to in-class and specialist
44 support.
- 45 3. liaise with universities and teacher training providers to ensure
46 comprehensive training for all primary and secondary teachers on delivering
47 all aspects of learning and teaching literacy based on linguistic approaches
48 and the scientific nature of language.
- 49 4. fund an early intervention programme for pupils whose literacy knowledge
50 and skills fall below age and stage expectations.





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