

# Autumn Scottish Liberal Democrat Conference 2013

## **Morning Session 0930 – 1245**

09.30-09.40 SC1 Welcome address  
09.40-10.10 SC2 Policy motion: Land reform  
10.10-10.40 SC3 Policy motion: Taxpayer support for business  
10.40-10.50 SC4 Speech: George Lyon MEP  
10.50-11.30 SC5 Policy motion: Corroboration  
11.30-11.45 SC6 Speech: Jo Swinson MP  
11.45-12.05 SC7 Emergency motion or topical issue  
12.05-12.45 SC8 Q&A session: TBC

13.00-14.00 Lunchtime fringe

## **Afternoon Session 1415-1515**

14.15-14.35 SC9 Policy motion: Sprinklers: protecting lives and homes  
14.35-15.05 SC10 Speech: Willie Rennie MSP  
15.05-15.15 SC11 Party business: Subscription rates for 2014

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2013

Morning Session 0930 – 1245

09.30 Welcome Address

Chair: Craig Harrow

Aide: Sheila Thomson

SC1 Formal opening of the 2013 Scottish Liberal Democrat Conference by Cllr Margot Clark, Baillie for Glasgow City Council

09.40 Policy Motion

Chair: Katy Gordon

Aide: Ross Stalker

## **SC2 Land Reform**

Policy Committee

Mover: Hugh Andrew

Summation: To be announced

Conference notes that Scotland has the most concentrated pattern of landownership in the developed world. Conference further notes that land values across urban and rural Scotland are the subject of speculative forces that render houses, farms and forests unaffordable for too many people.

Conference believes:

- (a) Scotland needs a coherent policy on the ownership and use of land which incorporates human rights, the public interest and the rule of law to provide widespread opportunities for ownership of land to individuals, co-ops, businesses and community organisations to be administered by locally based democratic governance structures.
- (b) A fair and proportionate fiscal regime would be designed to end speculation and stabilise land prices.
- (c) A transparent and accessible land information system would provide universal information about landownership and use.

The Liberal Democrats are committed to a transparent, egalitarian, modern and flexible system of land tenure, ownership and land governance and commits to review its policy to achieve these ends.

Conference deplores the SNP's actions on Raasay and commits itself to full consultation and where possible transfer of state land or land rights to local communities with suitable safeguards wherever feasible.

Conference calls on the party to make a new Land Reform Bill a major plank of our election manifesto. Areas that such a bill could consider amongst others would be:

(1) A statement on the abolition of crown rights and bringing Scotland's crown lands under the full control of Scottish local government (if the Westminster government has not already done so by repatriating the administration and revenues of Scottish crown lands). Conference thus reiterates the position of the Home Rule and Community Rule Commission on this matter.

- (2) Reviewing compulsory purchase powers to make them fit for purpose;
- (3) Simplifying the community right to buy legislation and extending its scope to urban land;
- (4) Reforming the law of succession to provide children with legal rights to inherit land;
- (5) Providing the communities within Scotland's 196 burghs that lost their control over Common Good land in 1975 with the power to take back title to Common Good land at no cost;
- (6) Reviewing the laws of prescription, adverse possession and the system of land registration;
- (7) Reviewing the use of the legal system to allow landed estates to be held in charitable trust;
- (8) Calling on the UK government to remove the tax reliefs which allow land to be bought and sold merely as a tax vehicle without any regard for the communities thereon.

Conference believes that breaking the concentration of ownership of land and the cycle of speculative pricing will be essential to creating a fairer Scottish society.

#### Amendment – Angus & Mearns Local Party

Add to line 3 after people:

“and that the Federal Party’s Tax Policy Paper *Fairer Taxes* to be debated here in Glasgow supports the introduction of a land value tax at UK level, while the Scottish Liberal Democrats agreed for their part at a recent conference to explore the feasibility and desirability of replacing Scottish business rates with a Land Value Tax.”

Add after line 31:

“9. Agreeing in conjunction with the Federal Party, including any appropriate exemptions or allowances, the most effective deployment of a land value tax in Scotland to end speculation, boost urban regeneration and new home building, and replace business rates.”

*The deadline for amendments to this motion is midday Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September.*

*Send to: [linda.wilson@scotlibdems.org.uk](mailto:linda.wilson@scotlibdems.org.uk)*

#### Cards:

Move – Hugh Andrew, Edinburgh South - called

Sum Up – Charles Kennedy MP, Ross, Skye & Lochaber - called

Amendment – Clive Sneddon, Angus & Mearns - called

George Lyon MEP, Argyll & Bute - called

Cllr Robert Brown, Glasgow Rutherglen - called

#### Votes:

Amendment – carried nem con

Motion – carried as amended

#### 10.10 Policy Motion

Chair: Sheila Thomson

Aide: Christine Jardine

#### **SC3 Taxpayer Support for Business**

Policy Committee

Mover: Hugh Andrew

Summation: Galen Milne

Conference notes the levels of public subsidy that the Scottish government has given to multinationals such as Amazon.

Conference notes that many of these companies use complex tax mechanisms to avoid or to minimise contributions to the UK tax system.

Conference recognises the inequity of this position and commits a future Liberal Democrat administration to the removal of any financial support, whether direct or indirect, from companies that use these procedures.

Conference calls on companies that use such techniques to be certified by HMRC thus enabling them to be clearly identified and calls on the policy above to be adopted by the Federal and Welsh parties in order that a consistent stand across the UK is taken on systemic tax avoidance by multinationals.

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**Cards:**

Move – Hugh Andrew, Edinburgh South - called  
Sum Up – Galen Milne, Stirling & Clackmannan – called  
Paul McGarry, Glasgow North – called  
Hamish McKenzie, ASLDC – called  
Christine Jardine, Aberdeen

**Votes:**

Motion - carried

10.40 Speech

Chair:

Aide:

**SC4 George Lyon, Liberal Democrat MEP for Scotland**

10.50 Policy Motion

Chair: Judy Hayman

Aide: Paul McGarry

**SC5 Corroboration**

Policy Committee

Mover: Alison McInnes MSP

Summation: Fred Mackintosh

Conference notes with concern the provisions within the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill to remove the requirement for corroboration in criminal cases.

Conference recognises that of respondents to the Scottish Government consultation '*Reforming Scots Law and Criminal Practice: The Carloway Review*,' who expressed a view on the proposal to abolish corroboration, most disagreed with this plan.

Conference further notes opposition to the government's plans from the Senators of the College of Justice, the Law Society of Scotland, the Faculty of Advocates, Justice Scotland, the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents and the Scottish Police Federation.

Conference shares the aspiration to increase the number of successful prosecutions in sexual offence and domestic abuse cases but notes the arguments from the Senators of the College of Justice that “It is our considered view that if corroboration were to be abolished, that would lead to decreasing confidence in the legal system, and to lower rates of conviction generally,” and from the Faculty of Advocates that while the number of prosecutions may increase it is "a fallacy" that the abolition of corroboration would have a positive effect on convictions for sexual offences.

Conference is alarmed that under the proposals in the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill, an accused could be convicted on the evidence of a single witness even if five of the 15 jurors thought them innocent, and notes the comments from the Law Society of Scotland that a move to a weighted majority will not be sufficient to remove the risks created by removing corroboration.

Conference recognises that corroboration has been a cornerstone of the Scottish justice system for hundreds of years and believes that the Scottish Government has not made the case to proceed with such a major change.

Conference considers that the requirement for corroboration provides an important safeguard against miscarriages of justice and is an essential component of the presumption of innocence and a necessary bulwark against false accusation and injustice.

Conference therefore states its opposition to these plans and calls on MSPs to oppose the removal of the requirement for corroboration as the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill proceeds.

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**Cards:**

Move – Alison McInnes MSP - called  
Sum Up – Fred Mackintosh, Edinburgh South  
Jade Holden, Paisley - called  
Clive Sneddon, Angus & Mairns - called  
Graeme Cowie, North Glasgow – called  
Caron Lindsay - called

**Votes:**

Motion - carried

11.30 Speech

Chair:  
Aide:

**SC6 Speech by Jo Swinson MP** for East Dunbartonshire, Minister for Employment Relations and Consumer Affairs

11.45 Policy Motion

Chair: Cathy McInnes  
Aide: Mike Falchikov

**SC7 Emergency Motion or Topical Issue**

*Aberdeen Central, South and North Kincardine*

Mover: Sir Robert Smith MP

Summator: John Thurso MP

### Fairer Delivery Charges

Conference notes:

The campaign 'Fairer Delivery Charges' launched by Sir Robert Smith MP for West Aberdeenshire & Kincardine on Monday 9 September and the Second Reading of the Private Members Bill which would make it compulsory for websites to declare the presence of surcharges before consumers even start to browse was debated on the 13 September.

Conference notes the research carried out by Citizens Advice Scotland with regard delivery charges as reported in their report 'Postcode Penalty' in 2012 which highlighted the extent of the problem. The report showed that residents in the North East and the Highlands and Islands could face delivery charges that were double or triple the charges for elsewhere in the UK. Sometimes the charges were as much as five times as high.

Conference welcomes the commitment by the Minister for Consumer Affairs to hold a summit with retailers and other interested parties to encourage best practice on the issue.

Conference therefore calls on:

- online retailers to offer delivery by Royal Mail's Universal Services where possible in order to avoid surcharges because of where someone lives.
- online retailers to make sure any surcharges for delivery are clearly displayed at the very start of the shopping process

Cards:

Move – John Thurso MP - called

Sum Up – Sheila Thomson, Aberdeen Central & South and North Kincardine

Alan Reid MP, Argyll & Bute - called

Eileen McCartin, Paisley & Renfrewshire - called

Christine Jardine, Abd etc – called

Can't remember!

Votes:

Motion - carried

### **12.05 Question and answer session**

Chair:

Aide:

SC8 Shirley Williams

Cards:

David Hannay, Galloway - called

Cllr Tim Brett, NE Fife - called

Tony Hughes, Glasgow North

Galen Milne, Stirling & Clacks - called

Nigel Lindsay, East Lothian – called

Berry Loveday, East Aberdeenshire - called

Rev Scott Rennie, Abd C, S & NKink – called

Caron Lindsay, - called

Moyra Forrest, Edinburgh NE&L

Jack Daniels, NE Fife

Carolyn Caddick, Inverness - called  
Christine Jardine, Abd etc

12.45 Lunch

14.15 Policy Motion

Chair: Kevin Lang

Aide: Helen Watt

### **SC9 Sprinklers: protecting lives and homes**

Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey local party

Mover: Trevor Escott

Summation: David Green

Conference notes:

- 1) In the UK, 2 people die and 50 are injured every day as a result of fires.
- 2) Compared with the rest of the UK, however, Scotland has the highest rate of fire deaths and injuries per million of population.
- 3) 75% of fires in the UK occur at home.

According to the Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service "Think Sprinkler" Campaign, sprinklers are ideal for protecting homes for the following reasons:

- a) Over the past 130 years, sprinklers have had a better than 99% success rate in controlling fires around the world;
- b) Sprinklers virtually eliminate fire deaths, reduce injuries by at least 80%, reduce property damage by 90% and substantially reduce damage to the environment by fire;
- c) Sprinklers not only warn of a fire, they act immediately to control it - even if nobody is present.
- d) Over 60% of fire casualties are physically or mentally disadvantaged, which prevents or slows their escape from a fire. Sprinklers will at the very least control the fire and will raise the alarm, greatly extending the time available for escape or rescue.
- e) Sprinklers are not expensive; normally costing around 1% or 2% of the cost of construction of a new building.
- f) Records show that the chance of finding a faulty sprinkler head is about one in sixteen million.
- g) Each sprinkler is individually triggered directly by the heat of a fire. Only the sprinkler(s) directly affected by the fire go off, not all of them.
- h) Perhaps most importantly when reducing preventable deaths due to fire is that: There have been no deaths from fire in a building fully protected by sprinklers in the UK.

Conference also notes:

That Angus Council undertook to fit domestic sprinkler systems in all new build social housing since 2009 and all new build domestic properties in 2012 and that the Welsh Assembly has introduced legislation that sprinklers will be fitted in all new homes from September 2013.

Conference calls on the Scottish Government to:

Legislate, as soon as possible, that all new builds should be protected by sprinklers.

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**Cards:**

**Move – Trevor Escott, Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey - called**

**Sum Up – David Green, Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey - called**

Michael Wallace, Abc C,E & N Kink - called  
Christine Jardine, Abd etc - called  
Gurudeo Saluja, Aberdeenshire  
Hamish McKenzie, Abd

Votes:

Motion - carried

14.35 Speech

Chair:

Aide:

**SC10 Speech by Willie Rennie MSP**, leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats

15.05 Policy Motion

Chair: Craig Harrow

Aide: Sheila Thomson

**SC11 Subscription rates for 2014**

Finance & Membership Committee

Mover: Caron Lindsay

Summation: Caron Lindsay

Conference notes that:

- a) The Scottish Liberal Democrats Executive is proposing that there be no change to the Minimum, Concessionary, or Liberal Youth subscription rate for 2014.
- b) The Scottish Liberal Democrats Executive is proposing that the recommended rate should rise from £65 to £67.
- c) The proposed minimum rate, together with our concessionary rate of £6 for those receiving or entitled to receive state benefits, maintains our position of offering access to the widest possible proportion of society.

Conference resolves that for the year 2014:

1. The recommended subscription rate shall be £67.
2. The minimum subscription rate shall be £12.
3. The concessionary subscription rate for those in receipt of, or entitled to, state benefits other than child benefit or state pension shall be £6.
4. Those paying their subscription through Liberal Youth Scotland shall pay a minimum of £6 or, where a new member joins, a special introductory rate of £1.

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Cards:

Move – Caron Lindsay

Votes:

Motion - carried

15.15 Close of session