

# Spring Conference 2025 - Final Results

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# Friday 4th

## SC1: Restoration of the Bus Partnership Fund

Submitted by the Association of Scottish Liberal Democrat Councillors

**Mover:** Sally Pattle    **Summator:** Peter Barrett

Conference notes that the Bus Partnership Fund was:

1. initially confirmed to be worth £400 million in grants to local authorities and bus operators when introduced in 2022.
2. to enable the development of local bus investment partnerships that would deliver sustainable public transport alternatives to private car use across Scotland.
3. trumpeted by the Scottish Government as part of a raft of measures to help the country achieve net zero by 2045, with specific reference to the Scottish Government's commitment to achieve a 20 per cent reduction in car usage by 2030.
4. intended as an effective measure for reducing congestion in urban areas, particularly during peak commute hours.

Conference further notes that:

1. In 2023, barely a year after coming into operation, the Bus Partnership Fund was 'suspended' having only distributed £21 million worth of grant funding.
2. Since 2022, Scotland has seen a dramatic drop in both operational bus routes and timetables, particularly during evenings and weekends.
3. Local authority funding has been continually reduced and ring-fenced in recent years, forcing the removal of route subsidies. This has led to the private bus companies that were deregulated by the SNP Scottish Government cutting non-profitable services.
4. The SNP Scottish Government is scrapping the Bus Partnership Fund to replace it with a 'Bus Infrastructure Fund', worth only tiny fraction of the original scheme. It is now worth only £10 million, as part of a merged 'Support for Active and Sustainable Travel' funding stream.
5. In December 2024, Transport Scotland revealed that a 'Travel Demand Management Options Study' had been commissioned in which several models of road user charging were explored.
6. A recent Audit Scotland report on the car use reduction strategy said, "A lack of leadership has resulted in minimal progress against the demanding policy intention. It is not clear if the Scottish Government remains committed to the target as key documents remain in draft form, there is no costed delivery plan or measurable milestones, and arrangements for monitoring and scrutinising progress are insufficient."

Conference believes that:

1. If the car usage reduction target is to be met, bus routes and timetables must not only be protected from cuts but expanded.
2. Sustainable public transport is an equal partner to, but distinct from, infrastructure for walking, wheeling and cycling. The two policy areas should not be grouped under a single funding stream.
3. Road user charging, in which drivers pay per mile driven, unfairly penalises drivers as many do not have any alternative but to use their cars to commute to school or work.

Conference therefore calls for the Scottish Government to:

1. immediately restore the Bus Partnership Fund with the initial funding commitment so that local authorities and bus operators can start the vital work needed to develop long-term, sustainable bus networks.
2. restore the distinct funding streams for sustainable transport and active travel infrastructure.
3. instruct Transport Scotland that road user charging must not be used to meet National Transport Strategy goals and that no further consideration should be given to any such policy.
4. provide additional funding to local authorities for the establishment of community bus services.
5. give clearer guidance and direction to local authorities going forward on what their role in delivering the target of 20 per cent reduction in car use by 2030 is expected to be, with firm commitments on funding.

Amendment:

Delete conference therefore calls for 1 and insert "Recommence and fund partnership working to make buses more convenient, faster and eco-friendly, helping to protect the long term future of the bus network.

Immediately restore the Bus Partnership Fund with the initial funding commitment so that local authorities and bus operators can start the vital work needed to develop long-term, sustainable bus networks."

Cards:

Mover: Sally Pattle, West Lothian-called

Summator: Peter Barrett, Perth & Kinross, called

Trish Robertson, Highland, called

Jacqui Bell, East Lothian, called

Eugene Clarke, NE Fife, called

Ian Dyer, Argyll & Bute, called

Chris Lewcock, Highland, called

## Votes:

Amendment: Carried

Motion as amended: Carried

## SC2: Protecting Access to Banking Services

Submitted by Member Signatories

**Mover:** ~~Jamie Stone~~ **Summator:** David Green

Conference notes that:

1. Lloyds, Halifax, and Bank of Scotland will close 61, 61 and 14 sites respectively between May this year and March 2026. The UK-wide closures will bring the Lloyds brand down to 386 branches, Halifax down to 281 and Bank of Scotland to 90.
2. According to the consumer group Which?, more than 6, 000 sites across the UK have closed since 2015. That equates to more than 60% of the UK's banking network, at a rate of around 53 closures every month.
3. In the Highlands, closures in Wick and Kyle in 2025 will see the loss of the last bank in town. The recent closure in Golspie means the county of Sutherland is without a bank, a trend seen across the country.

Conference believes that:

1. Financial services support can be a lifeline for those who need it most, particularly during an ongoing cost of living crisis, and every citizen has a right to access safe and secure banking services.
2. While the country increasingly moves towards the digital age, the impact of bank closures increase the threat of isolation amongst older generations, people with disabilities and those without internet access.
3. Reducing bank branches has a disproportionate impact on rural communities where public transport is increasingly limited and town centres are struggling with declining retail and limited private sector investment.
4. The Federation of Small Businesses is right to warn of the impact of bank closures on small businesses, not least the loss of face-to-face interaction and a reduced ability to manage cash flow.
5. The establishment of Banking Hubs - owned by the not-for-profit company Cash Access UK and funded by nine high street banks to provide easy access to face-to-face cash and banking - are welcome innovations, but agrees with Age UK that it is unacceptable for

there to be long delays between the last bank branch closing and a banking hub opening.

Conference calls on the Scottish Government to help protect communities from bank closures by exempting the “last bank in town” from business rates.

Conference further calls on the UK Government to:

1. Accelerate the establishment of Banking Hubs to ensure the banking services they provide are accessible before any community suffers a bank closure.
2. Instruct the high street banks that if they do not adequately fund the Banking Hub network, then it will be paid for by a levy on bank profits.
3. Commission an independent review on the effectiveness of the regulatory functions of the Financial Conduct Authority with regards to protections of cash deposit and withdrawal services.

Cards:

**Mover:** Neil Alexander, Moray, called

**Summator:** David Green, Highland, called

Trish Robertson, Highland, called

Cllr Michael Baird, Sutherland, called

Wendy Chamberlain, NE Fife, called

Christine Murdoch, Dumbarton, called

Declan Gallacher, Highland, called

Jacqui Bell, East Lothian, called

Sheila Thomson, Abd, called

Lorna Cammock, Rutherglen

**Votes:**

Motion: Carried

## SC3: Creating world-class drug services for Scotland by 2030

Submitted by Policy Committee

**Mover:** Alex Cole-Hamilton    **Summator:** Alex Cole-Hamilton

Conference notes that:

1. Scotland has by far the highest drug-related death rate in Europe, with 1, 172 people dying in 2023 alone.
2. The 2024 Liberal Democrat manifesto's commitment to treat Scotland's drug deaths crisis as a public health emergency, and devolve powers for tailored solutions where necessary.
3. The party's continued commitment to measures that will improve public safety, including the rollout of naloxone, drug checking facilities, heroin assisted treatment, and diverting people caught in possession of drugs for personal use away from prison.
4. The first safer drugs consumption facility opened in Glasgow in January 2025, allowing people to take substances under the supervision of clinicians in a safe and clean space.
5. Research by the Scottish Liberal Democrats showed at least 1, 500 babies have been born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome since 2017 – showing signs of drug addiction because of their mothers taking legal or illegal drugs during pregnancy.
6. Scottish Liberal Democrat MSPs successfully secured further investment in drug and neonatal services totalling £2.6m, with a special focus on creating new services to help babies who are born addicted to drugs.
7. The People's Panel on Reducing Drug Harm and Deaths in Scotland, commissioned by three Scottish Parliament committees, reported on 21 January 2025 that it was "shocked to learn about the lack of urgency and implementation, given the scale of the crisis, and asks the Scottish Government to provide longer term funding."

Conference believes that:

1. Everything possible must be done to stop people dying.
2. There is now broader political support for some of the measures which the Scottish Liberal Democrats have long campaigned for, but that action continues to be too slow.
3. Safer drugs consumption facilities are proven to prevent fatal overdoses and present new pathways for treatment and recovery, and that these life-saving services must not be limited to one part of Scotland.
4. Every child deserves a good start in life, and few have it harder than babies born addicted to drugs.
5. Families need to be kept together during treatment and recovery through accessible women-specific services, both in the community and residential.

6. Drug laws need to back up the provision of safe and evidence-based harm reduction services, while robustly tackling organised crime which profits from the misery of communities.
7. Life-saving services shouldn't constantly have to worry about their funding because this lack of stability has an impact on staff and service users.
8. After lagging behind other countries for years, all parts of Scotland should have fast access to world-class drug services by 2030.

Conference calls for the Scottish Government to:

1. Begin the roll out of a Scotland-wide network of safer drugs consumption facilities, continually learning from Glasgow's experience while recognising that there is an inherent risk to life created by waiting three years for the full conclusions of that pilot before progressing with other facilities.
2. Rapidly deliver new Mother and Child Recovery Houses - residential rehabilitation beds for mothers and babies affected by substance abuse - and new intensive community-based perinatal services, using the funding secured by Scottish Liberal Democrats.
3. Introduce a long-term multi-year funding model for all drugs services, to give them the certainty they need to be able to invest in facilities, recruit staff, build up relationships with service users, boost access to care and open up new pathways to education and employment for people in recovery.
4. Take forward the recommendation of the People's Panel on reducing drug harm and deaths in Scotland for "a well-publicised single point of access for specialised advice and support relating to alcohol and drug problems (like NHS 111, Childline or Samaritans)", providing support and advice to people who use drugs and their loved ones, reducing the fear of criminalisation or stigma, and providing the option for NHS 111 and 999 services to redirect people where appropriate.

**Cards:**

**Mover:** Alex Cole-Hamilton, Edinburgh West, called

**Summator:** Euan Davidson, Edinburgh, called  
Fraser Graham, Edinburgh South, called  
Ben Langmead, East Dumbarton, called  
Sally Pattle, West Lothian, called

**Votes:**

Motion: Carried



## SC4: Transformation of Children's Social Care

Submitted by Member Signatories

**Mover:** Duncan Dunlop      **Summator:** Hayley Bennie

Conference notes that:

1. Care experienced people have the worst outcomes from any section of Scottish society across all social wellbeing indicators, for instance:
2. they are six times more likely to be excluded from school than their non-care experienced peers, and are twice as likely to have no educational qualifications.
3. at least 25% of prisoners are care experienced, a more than ten-fold overrepresentation relative to the general population.
4. children living in the 10% most deprived areas are 20 times more likely to become care experienced than those in the 10% least deprived areas.
5. over a third of children in care have a significant mental health issue, and they are twice as likely to have poor general health.
6. they are twice as likely to have experienced adult homelessness and three times as likely not to have a full-time job at 26.
7. Recent University of Glasgow research has highlighted that care experienced people have a 5.5 times higher rate of premature death, despite the fact that they are not born physiologically different from the rest of the population.
8. The care system costs £1 billion per annum to deliver, while the consequences of the poorer life outcomes for care experienced people have a combined further public cost of at least £1.2 billion per annum.
9. The Promise Scotland was established in 2021 to facilitate change within the care system. However, its policy remit has not provided the detailed implementation roadmap necessary for achieving transformative change on the ground.

Conference believes that:

1. The Scottish Government's approach to care reform has lacked urgency and cohesion, resulting in a failure to achieve meaningful transformation and protect the rights of care experienced people.
2. The Scottish Government must prioritise the development of a comprehensive roadmap with clear actions and timescales if the transformation of care is to be fully realised.
3. Every child deserves to feel loved and to belong, and the best environment for establishing and sustaining lifelong loving relationships is within supportive families in their community.

4. Actively engaged and supportive communities are essential for helping vulnerable families and children thrive, requiring public education to promote understanding and responsive local solutions.
5. Accessible community spaces offering skilled, non-judgmental support and resources are essential for helping children thrive.
6. Institutional care has poor outcomes and is expensive, so should only be used for short term therapeutic support to enable children to form and maintain loving relationships.
7. Transparent and comprehensive data on the life chances of care experienced children is crucial to hold the state accountable in its role as their corporate parent.
8. Society has a moral duty to recognise the enduring impact of a care experience and to ensure access to lifelong additional support for care experienced people.
9. Current UK equalities legislation fails to protect care experienced people, who experience significant stigma and discrimination as a result.

Conference calls on the Scottish Government and the Education, Children and Young People Committee to expedite and strengthen the Promise Bill by:

1. producing a comprehensive Promise Roadmap outlining a time-bound action plan for realising each aspiration of The Promise, clearly identifying the responsible agencies and detailing the specific actions they must undertake.
2. amending existing legislation and guidance to reflect the principle that children should only be placed in institutional care for rehabilitative therapy that enables them to form and maintain lifelong relationships outwith that setting.

Conference further calls on the Scottish Government to:

1. launch a public awareness campaign to educate communities about the challenges faced by families in need and inspire local support for these families as vital sources of love and stability for their children.
2. immediately instruct Education Scotland to begin reporting the number of care experienced children who are excluded or placed on part-time timetables in their inspections.
3. annually publish the age-related mortality rate of care experienced people at a local authority level.

Conference additionally calls on:

1. COSLA to develop a best practice framework for the delivery of non-stigmatising, universally accessible early help services in every community.
2. the UK government to bring forward amendments to equalities legislation such that care experience is recognised as a protected characteristic.

Cards:

**Mover:** Duncan Dunlop, East Lothian, called

**Summator:** Fraser Graham, Edinburgh South, called

Lorna Cammock, Rutherglen, called

Christine Murdoch, Dumbarton, called

Willie Rennie, N E Fife, called

Isobel Knights, Angus & Mearns, called

Euan Davidson, Edinburgh West, called

## Votes:

Motion: carried

## MM Mini Motion Session

### MM Energy Prices in Rural Scotland: The Imbalance No One Talks About

**Angus MacDonald MP.**

#### Policy Suggestion

We propose the UK Government launches a consultation on regional disparities in energy pricing to identify fairer pricing structures and reassess the application of environmental taxes.

#### Policy Benefits

- Addressing fuel poverty: Rural Scotland, particularly the Highlands and Islands, has the highest levels of fuel poverty in Britain, despite being a major contributor to UK renewable energy generation. Households in these areas often rely on electricity for heating—yet electricity costs four times more than mains gas, pushing many into financial hardship.

- Fairer energy pricing: Environmental and social obligation taxes are disproportionately placed on electricity bills, despite much of the supply coming from renewable sources.

Shifting these costs to fossil fuel-based mains gas would ease the burden on rural households.

- Decoupling electricity from gas prices: The current marginal pricing system ties electricity costs to gas prices, meaning that even renewables are sold at inflated rates.

Reforming this system would allow consumers to benefit from lower-cost, domestically generated renewable energy.

- Levelling-up rural areas: A cost-of-living equaliser approach would ensure that households without access to mains gas are not unfairly burdened with higher energy costs.

## MM Transitioning to 4G and 5G in Rural Scotland

**Lesley Lythgoe**

### Policy Suggestion

We propose the halting of 3G and landline stoppage in rural Scotland until free, full provision has been made available by the telecom companies.

Appropriate assistance with installation and use of such new services should be provided by it on behalf of the telecom companies.

### Policy Benefits

People in rural communities in Scotland who are currently dependent on 3G and landlines, e.g. for access to internet-based public services and emergency services, will be assured of continued access to said services.

People who are unable to afford the new equipment required to access these new services will be properly reimbursed for the transition costs.

People who are unfamiliar with or uncertain about the use of newer technologies, e.g. due to age or disability, will be properly supported to transition to their use.

Although the upgrading of telecommunications technology undoubtedly holds promise of educational, economic and social benefits the current rollout programme doesn't have sufficient regard to the specific geographical circumstances and other needs of people, especially the elderly and disabled, living in rural Scotland.

## MM Ferry Services

**Alan Reid**

Conference believes that ferry services to the island and peninsula communities on Scotland's west coast would be far better run if the communities they serve were at the heart of decision-making.

The longstanding structure of the Scottish Government, CMAL and CalMac making decisions on vessel procurement and operations has clearly failed and must be urgently reviewed.

Putting those who rely on ferries at the heart of decision making would lead to much more effective long term planning. This in turn would result in services much more suited to the needs of west coast island and peninsula communities and help to reverse years of population and economic decline.

## Indicative Votes:

Energy Prices in Rural Scotland: The Imbalance No One Talks About: To be taken forward

MM Transitioning to 4G and 5G in Rural Scotland: To be taken forward

MM Ferry Services: To be taken forward

## EM1 Preparing for the Radio Teleswitch (RTS) switch off

Mover: Beatrice Wishart      Summator: Alistair Carmichael MP

Conference notes:

1. The Radio Teleswitch (RTS) services, used by energy suppliers for some older electric meters particularly in island and rural areas to switch tariff rates and turn on storage heaters, is set to end on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025, with tens of thousands of customers across Scotland, impacted as they are yet to have their RTS meter exchanged.
2. A national ad campaign run by Ofgem and Energy UK, featuring television presenter Lorraine Kelly, that launched on the 20<sup>th</sup> January has sparked increasing awareness among customers of the need to book a metering appointment.
3. Energy companies are not replacing meters at the pace required before the deadline and large area of Scotland face technical issues with connecting smart meters and a lack of engineers
4. On 10<sup>th</sup> March OFGEM published  
In Scotland, as of October last year, more that 165, 000 households and businesses were still using RTS meters, with the Northern Isles, Argyll & Berwickshire the most affected.

Conference believes:

1. Functioning heating and hot water systems are fundamental to an adequate standard of living.
2. Changes to metering technology should not leave households, particularly those in island and rural communities, worse off than they are and facing the possibility of losing heating and hot water after switch off the RTS signal.

Conference calls for:

1. Energy companies to expand their efforts to exchange RTS meters and reach all customers needing their meter exchanged ahead of 30<sup>th</sup> June.
2. Local resilience partnerships to ready themselves for the potential adverse outcome of the RTS switch off which may include thousands of homes without heating and hot water.

3. The Scottish and UK Government to set up an Emergency Summit to support Ofgem, energy companies and relevant stakeholders through the transition, holding them to account where required.
4. Smart DCC to enhance the smart meter communications network and plug the existing gaps, particularly in rural and island areas, to improve connectivity

**Cards:**

Mover: Beatrice Wishart

Sally Pattle, West Lothian, , Withdrawn

Alistair Carmichael, Orkney & Shetland

**Votes:**

Motion: Carried

# Saturday 5th

## SC5: Improving Scotland's Links with Europe

Submitted by Member Signatories

**Mover:** Ray Georgeson      **Summator:** Paul Kennedy

Conference notes that:

1. After the Rest of the UK, Scotland's largest trading partner is the European Union.
2. Currently, the majority of goods being traded between Scotland and Europe must travel via the Rest of the UK, and via ports such as Newcastle, Hull, Harwich and Dover.
3. Currently, the only direct vehicle ferry link between Scotland and mainland Europe is from Aberdeen to Norway, though one previously operated between Rosyth and Zeebrugge. There is no direct passenger ferry connection with Europe. There are welcome reports of a possible new service from Rosyth to Dunkirk, with three sailings per week, but as yet this is not a concrete proposal.
4. Tourism from European visitors contributes strongly to the Scottish economy. For example, visitors to Scotland from the Netherlands in 2023 spent £165 million.
5. The UK's withdrawal from the Single Market and Customs Union has negatively affected trade between Scotland and mainland Europe.
6. With increased customs checks being necessitated by post-Brexit regulations, haulage companies increasingly face delays when transporting goods to the EU.

Conference believes that:

1. Scotland's businesses should be able to trade goods and services easily with our European neighbours.
2. Post-Brexit customs delays at UK ports may increase losses of perishable goods like fresh fish or dairy products.
3. If we are committed to reducing the carbon footprint of goods and services, providing a more direct link to mainland Europe is essential.
4. To reduce the carbon footprint of tourism to Scotland, we should be providing more alternatives to air travel for transport by tourists.
5. Scotland and the UK should be seeking closer links with Europe as a large local trading partner and should be looking to smooth the flow of goods, services and tourism.

Conference calls for:

1. The Scottish Government to work with ferry companies to establish new passenger and cargo ferry routes between Scotland and mainland Europe. Preparations for this route should include the creation of an improved port facility with facilities to assist in meeting new EU trading regulations.
2. The UK Government, in the establishment of Great British Railways, and the construction of HS2, to explore options for the creation of a 'Regional Eurostar' direct rail service between Scotland and mainland Europe via the Channel Tunnel, removing the need to change trains in London.

## Drafting Amendment

to correct printing error, requested by movers of the amendment, Change after Believes that

4. To reduce the carbon footprint of tourism to Scotland, we should providing air travel for transport by tourists.

To

4. To reduce the carbon footprint of tourism to Scotland, we should **be** providing **more alternatives to** air travel for transport by tourists.

### Cards:

**Mover:** Ray Georgeson, Midlothian & Borders, called

**Summator:** Paul Kennedy

Sally Pattle, West Lothian, called

Jacquie Bell, East Lothian

Fraser Graham, Edinburgh South, called

Richard Coxon, Edinburgh North East & Leith, called, rqst for sep vote on ll 42-46(calls for item 2)

Margot Kerr, Highland, called

Declan Gallacher, Highland, called

Trish Robertson, Highland

## Votes:

Sep Vote lines 42-46 (calls for item 2): lines are retained

Drafting amendment: accepted without vote

Motion: carried



## SC6: Providing Support to Young Carers Through a Young Carers' Lead

Submitted by Member Signatories

**Mover:** Wendy Chamberlain **Summator:** Wendy Chamberlain

Conferences notes that:

1. The Carers Trust Scotland estimate that 1 in 5 children in a classroom has a caring role, but the actual recorded number of young carers in school is much lower.
2. The most recent Carers Census showed that, where information was available, for only 55% of those surveyed with Young Carer Statements or Adult Carer Support Plans, these were complete. 38% reported an incomplete plan or statement.
3. Whilst absence rates from school for young carers has previously been recorded in England, it is not in Scotland. This makes it difficult to examine how young carers are coping within educational settings and to determine what action may need to be taken to help them.
4. Sir Ed Davey, Leader of the Liberal Democrats, has already written to the Prime Minister calling for the creation of this role in England, highlighting that often young carers struggle at school to balance education and their caring responsibilities.

Conferences believes that:

1. Young carers do an incredibly important job which they deserve more support for. Too often, they are forgotten and ignored.
2. Education and school should not be seen as difficult for young carers to attend, or as yet another obstacle in their lives. It should provide them with tools for the future, the opportunity to engage with their peers and, for some, a respite from their caring responsibilities.
3. Teachers and education staff work incredibly hard to support all the children and young people in education but they must have the appropriate tools to help provide support to young carers.

Conference calls for the Scottish Government to:

1. Work with local authorities to create the position of 'Young Carers' Lead' in every school and college in Scotland, which can provide support to those young carers currently in education and advice or training to teachers on how to best support pupils who are young carers.
2. Review the data it holds on the number of young carers in education settings and to undertake work to ensure this data is accurate.

3. Work with local authorities and the Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance, as well as other relevant organisations, to ensure that young carers across Scotland are aware of and can access all forms of support and pathways that are available to them.

## Amendment

On Conference notes add the following paragraph:

According to the Carers Trust Scotland paper, Being a Young Carer is not a Choice: It's just what we do, a key recommendation is that young carers and young adult carers' physical and mental health and wellbeing should be at the forefront of decision making. This includes urgently introducing a Right to a Break from Caring.

On Conference calls for add the following paragraph:

Secure a Right to a Break from Caring for all unpaid carers, so that young carers can access person-centred respite breaks including away from home, with practical support to be given to local authorities so that this right is deliverable.

### Cards:

**Mover:** Wendy Chamberlain, North East Fife, called

**Summator:** Amanda Clark, Perth & Kinross, called

Amd Mover: Cllr Aude Boubaker-Calder, called

Amd Summator: Cllr James Calder, called

Sally Pattle, West Lothian, called

Jacquie Bell, East Lothian, not called

Malcolm Heughan, Highland, called

Lucy Smith, Central Scotland, called

Duncan Dunlop, East Lothian, called

## Votes:

Amendment: carried nem con

Motion as amended: carried nem con

## SC7: Protecting Young People from the Harms of Vaping

Submitted by Member Signatories

**Mover:** Noah McGarry

**Summator:** Susan Murray

Conference notes that:

1. The popularity of vaping among young people is increasing. Statistics from ASH Scotland indicate that 10% of 13-15 year olds have already tried vaping.
2. Many vapes feature cartoon-like animations in their designs, and the style of vape shops often resembles sweet shops.
3. The sale of single-use vapes will be banned from 1 June, but this does not affect availability of devices with inexpensive refill pods, which are marketed in a similar way.
4. While initially intended as a tool for smoking cessation, vapes have become a trendy gateway to nicotine addiction, particularly among young people.
5. There is growing concern among teachers and parents that vaping is becoming normalised among teenagers, despite the legal restriction prohibiting sales to those under 18.
6. Unlike tobacco, for which all forms of advertising, even on packaging, are effectively banned, vaping is widely promoted, particularly through social media and influencer marketing aimed at young audiences.

Conference believes that:

1. Vapes should be solely a tool for smoking cessation and not be marketed in a way that encourages vaping among non-smokers, especially young people.
2. While a welcome step, the ban on disposable vapes primarily addresses environmental concerns and does not tackle the underlying causes of youth vaping.
3. The promotion of vaping products, regardless of type, should be subject to the same stringent advertising and labelling restrictions as tobacco.
4. Further research is needed to fully understand the health effects of vaping, particularly on young people.
5. Given their particular appeal to children and the lack of evidence that they are significantly better for smoking cessation, flavoured vapes should not be allowed.
6. Policy on vaping must consider both the environmental impact and the consequences for public health beyond just its potential as a smoking cessation tool.

Conference calls on the Scottish and UK Governments to:

1. Restrict vape advertising in line with restrictions on tobacco products, particularly social media marketing and influencer promotions.

2. Establish stricter regulations of vape labelling and retail environments to prevent the use of designs and flavours that appeal to children and young people.

Conference further calls on the Scottish Government to:

1. Deliver more effective enforcement of existing age restrictions on vape sales, clamping down on retailers who sell to underage individuals.
2. Revamp the public health campaigns for educating young people about the risks of vaping and nicotine addiction.
3. Develop a national strategy for tackling youth vaping, in collaboration with schools, health professionals, and youth organisations

**Cards:**

**Mover:** Noah McGarry, Mid Dunbartonshire, called

**Summator:** Susan Murray, East Dumbartonshire, called

Jacquie Bell, East Lothian, called

Michael Crichton, Dundee, called

Nicholas Budgen, Glasgow, called

## EM2: Strengthening Scotland's Role in National Defence and Industrial Strategy

Submitted by: Policy Committee

Conference notes that:

1. Recent actions by the current US administration, characterised by an apparent antipathy toward Europe, underline the need for European partners – including the UK – to readjust their spending priorities and foreign policy in a drastic and strategic manner.
2. At the recent Liberal Democrat Federal Spring Conference in Harrogate, the leader of the party, Sir Ed Davey MP, emphasised the importance of increasing UK defence spending to 2.4% of GDP as soon as possible, with cross party talks on how to reach 3%.
3. Chancellor Rachel Reeves confirmed at the Spring Statement on 26 March 2025 that the government is committed to increasing defence spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2027, funded by reducing the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget from 0.5% to 0.3% of Gross National Income (GNI).
4. Scotland plays a pivotal role in UK defence, with the Ministry of Defence spending £2.09 billion annually with Scottish industry, supporting thousands of jobs and contributing significantly to the economy.
5. The Scottish National Investment Bank (SNIB) updated its Ethical Investment Policy in November 2024, allowing investments in certain defence-related industries. However,

the policy maintains exclusions for companies involved in nuclear weapons systems, precluding investments in firms such as Babcock, BAE Systems and Rolls Royce due to their roles in nuclear submarine programmes, whilst permitting investment in non-nuclear programmes of companies like Raytheon and Leonardo.

Conference believes that:

1. While recognising that defence remains a reserved matter, there should be a cross-party consensus to achieve the necessary increase in UK defence spending to ensure national security, strengthen NATO, and provide leadership in European Defence,
2. Reallocating funds from the foreign aid budget is a politically expedient decision rather than a strategic one, as well-targeted aid contributes to long-term stability and reduces the likelihood of future conflicts. Paying for the defence of the nation on the backs of the poor, both at home and abroad, is unacceptable and unnecessary.
3. Scotland's place as a vital and indivisible part of a strong UK is vital for maintaining robust defence capabilities and ensuring active participation in NATO, which are essential for both national and regional security.
4. Integrating defence into Scotland's industrial strategy presents significant economic opportunities, fostering innovation, job creation and technological advancement.

Conference calls for the Scottish Government to:

1. Acknowledge the new security reality and engage constructively with the UK Government on how Scotland can contribute to the UK's overall defence and resilience.
2. Work with the defence companies based in Scotland to ensure the sector is fully supported as part of Scotland's industrial strategy, including recognising the role of the defence sector in advanced manufacturing, aerospace and cyber security, and publishing a plan showing how schools, colleges, apprenticeship programmes and universities will help provide the skills sector requires
3. Engage with the Scottish National Investment Bank's board to consider further revisions to its Ethical Investment Policy, specifically to enable support for non-nuclear programmes of defence-related companies – including those involved in submarine programmes – thereby aligning with Scotland's economic and security interests,

**Cards:**

**Mover:** Neil Casey, Central Scotland, called

Andy Williamson, Edinburgh South, called

Trish Robertson, Highland, called

Struan Mackie, Highland, called

Nigel Lindsay, East Lothian, called

Sally Pattle, East Lothian, called

Richard Coxon, Edinburgh North East & Leith, called

## Votes:

Motion: carried

## SC8: Trump and the UK's Place in the World

Submitted by Member Signatories

**Mover:** Christine Jardine      **Summator:** Christine Jardine

Conference notes:

1. In the weeks since his inauguration, President Trump has made a range of alarming statements on the territorial integrity of Greenland, Canada and Panama, and claims the US will “take over” and “own” Gaza.
2. President Trump’s decision to withdraw from the Paris international climate change agreement.
3. A number of executive orders have been signed by President Trump in the early days of his administration which are harmful to the LGBTQ+ community and women are fearful of further restrictions on their reproductive rights following the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn Roe vs Wade.
4. A trade war with China has been initiated with 10% tariffs on all Chinese imports to the US, with the continued threat of tariffs being imposed on Canada, Mexico and the EU. President Trump has not ruled out also implementing tariffs on the UK and we must be aware of the impact that any tariffs would have on the UK economy.

Conference believes that:

1. At this time, it is more important than ever to show leadership and stand up for the core liberal values of equality, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, both at home and around the world.
2. As one of our closet trading partners, we must work closely with our European allies to protect our economy, defend European security and give us the ability to deal with President Trump from a position of strength, not weakness.
3. The UK must support democracies around the world and champion international institutions including the United Nations and NATO.
4. President Trump has shown how unpredictable he is, and a trade war will hurt our economy and push up prices even if the UK is not directly targeted.

Conference calls for the UK Government to:

1. Negotiate a brand new UK-EU Customs union and negotiate a youth mobility scheme, boosting our economy, removing barriers and strengthening our hand with President Trump.
2. Hold a summit with the Commonwealth nations with the aim of discussing a joint response to threats of tariffs that would deepen the global trade war.
3. Convene an international summit to agree how to use the hundreds of billions of dollars, pounds and Euros of frozen Russian assets to pay the weapons Ukraine needs to beat Putin.
4. Immediately recognise Palestine as a state, to make clear our commitment to a two-state solution based on 1967 borders.
5. Create a visa route to allow highly-skilled Americans who wish to flee the Trump presidency to come to the UK, so they are able to legally bring their money and skills to the UK, contribute to the economy and help fund public services.

Conference also calls on both the UK and Scottish Government to continue to stand against hatred and attacks against those groups within our society most likely to face them.

## Amendment

After line 18 add:

“5. Donald Trump has closed USAID and terminated 83 per cent of its programmes and that the UK Government is cutting UK aid to 0.3 per cent and halting almost all new development programmes.”

After line 40 insert:

“Reverse the proposed cuts in UK aid and urgently explore partnerships to stop the life-threatening withdrawal of support for essential measures such as for malaria prevention and treatment, AIDS retroviral drugs, sexual health and contraception and maternal health and other potential diseases and security threats.”

### Cards:

**Mover:** Christine Jardine, Edinburgh West, called

**Summator:** Alastair Carmichael, Orkney & Shetland, called

Amd: Malcolm Bruce, Gordon, called

Sally Pattle, West Lothian, withdrawn

Fraser Graham, Edinburgh South, called

Stephen Harte, Edinburgh West, called

Richard Coxon,, Edinburgh North East & Leith, called

Ian Dyer, Argyll & Bute, called  
Norman Rae, South Lanarkshire, called  
Neil Casey, East Renfrewshire, called  
Amy Carman, Glasgow, called  
Lin Macmillan, West Lothian, called

### Votes:

Amendment: carried

Motion as Amended: carried

### Party Awards

<b>Award</b>	<b>For</b>	<b>New Recipient</b>
The Russell Johnston Trophy	Speech to Conference	Malcolm Bruce
The Helen Watt Quaich	Diversity	Aude Bounaker-Calder
The Sheila Tennant award	SYL member	Malcolm Heughan
The John Morrison award	Local Government	Eugene Clark
The Ray Michie Quaich	Membership	Highland Lib Dems
The Robbie Simpson award	Service to the party over many years	Gregan Crawford
The Hugh Waterfield award	Non elected, non staff	Not awarded



