

Virtual Autumn Conference  
8th and 9th October 2021

# AGENDA



# Welcome to Conference

Dear Member,

We are so excited to welcome you to our virtual Autumn Conference 2021. This conference is going to be even better than the last. This Autumn, we are hosting a joint conference with the Welsh Liberal Democrats. The Scottish conference will be taking place on Friday 8th and the joint conference will proceed on Saturday 9th October. There is still time to submit a Topical Debate Motion and or a joint motion. You can find more information in the agenda below.

Just to remind you at our virtual conference you can find:

- Simplified voting, securely integrated into the conference platform
- An Exhibition hall, where you can watch informative videos from organisations across the country
- A programme of Fringe events
- Plus, lots more

This agenda promises to be exciting, and we are particularly excited by some of the speakers we have lined up to this year's conference. We will be releasing more information in due course.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my conference committee and the staff at HQ who do so much to ensure this conference is delivered. A special thank you also goes to our chair and aide team, who will be assisting us again this year.

We look forward to seeing you at our conference.

**Paul McGarry**  
Conference Convenor

PS: You will be able to find information relating to conference at the conference hub, which can be found at [www.scotlibdems.org.uk/conference](http://www.scotlibdems.org.uk/conference) or alternatively get in touch with the team by emailing [hq@scotlibdems.org.uk](mailto:hq@scotlibdems.org.uk)



# Scottish Conference

Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021

## Constitutional Amendments

BM1

Lunch

Fringes

### SC1: Empowering local authorities and communities

Submitted by: The Scottish Policy Committee

Mover: Carole Ford

Summator: TBC

#### 1 Conference notes:

- 2 1) The pivotal contribution of local authorities in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic,  
3 creating new services for people and businesses, managing financial and practical  
4 emergency measures, and providing essential logistical support, staff and facilities to  
5 partners including the NHS.
- 6 2) The report of the Accounts Commission, *Local government in Scotland: Overview 2021*,  
7 published on 21 May 2021, highlighting the urgent need to address inequalities but that  
8 councils operating “in a climate of significant financial uncertainty” is an obstacle to  
9 progress.
- 10 3) The Accounts Commission further reporting that councils “need the certainty of a multi-  
11 year financial settlement”.
- 12 4) Current risks to the powers and standing of local authorities and local decision-making  
13 include:



- 14 (a) The launch of the Scottish Government consultation on a National Care  
15 Service on 9 August 2021, running until 18 October 2021, preparing for the  
16 centralisation of adult social care services “at a minimum”.
- 17 (b) The consideration being given in the course of the National Care Service  
18 consultation to “extending its scope to other groups such as children and  
19 young people, community justice, alcohol and drug services, and social work”.
- 20 (c) The reported lack of engagement with the Convention of Scottish Local  
21 Authorities (COSLA) by the Scottish Government prior to the publication of  
22 the consultation, with COSLA describing the additional proposals as  
23 potentially “the end for anything other than central control in Scotland” and  
24 “an attack on localism and the rights of local people to make decisions  
25 democratically for their place”.
- 26 (d) The recent strikes in response to Scottish Government-owned Highlands and  
27 Islands Airports’ policy to centralise air traffic control services, removing high-  
28 skilled jobs from rural and island communities in defiance of both the  
29 findings of the retrospective Island Impact Assessment and the wishes of  
30 local communities.
- 31 (e) The further reliance on ring-fenced funding as a result of the response to the  
32 pandemic which has been accompanied by an expansion of the need for local  
33 authorities to secure permissions and operate within frameworks set by the  
34 Scottish Government.

35 **Conference believes:**

- 36 1) Local authorities should be recognised as the representative voice of the people at  
37 community level, with their own mandate and statutory responsibilities, and should have  
38 the powers and resources to act as such and deliver effective and efficient local services.
- 39 2) Decisions should be taken as close as possible to the citizen on the principle of  
40 subsidiarity because power shared is safer, more flexible and more efficient than power  
41 hoarded at either Holyrood or Westminster.
- 42 3) Areas which already benefitted from strong local partnership working were better  
43 prepared to react to the unprecedented needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic, and  
44 that this was reflected in the quality of the service provided to vulnerable people  
45 shielding, children learning from home and businesses requiring immediate support.
- 46 4) The pandemic, and especially the requirement for people to remain in their local areas,  
47 exposed the short-sightedness of centralising services.
- 48 5) The budgets of local authorities have been targeted for cuts by the Scottish Government  
49 to protect its own spending power and reputation.
- 50 6) Since 2007, successive SNP Governments have consistently reduced the influence and  
51 power of local authorities and councillors.
- 52 7) Scottish Liberal Democrat councillors are champions for their communities, backed by a  
53 party that is the strongest supporter of local government in Scotland, localism,  
54 subsidiarity and community empowerment.

55 **Conference calls on the Scottish Government to:**

- 56 1) Deliver reform of adult social care without resorting to putting ever more control in the  
57 hands of Scottish ministers, instead improving care with national standards and  
58 entitlements for users and by ensuring that the hard work of staff is recognised with a  
59 step change in pay and conditions, as endorsed by the Scottish Liberal Democrat  
60 Conference in March 2021.



- 61 2) Resist using the cloak of a National Care Service to seize sweeping powers from local  
62 authorities.
- 63 3) Work with local government to establish a fiscal framework, underpinned by new  
64 principles including that:
- 65 (a) each local authority receive a fair share of Scottish Government resources to enable it  
66 to effectively meet the needs of the communities it serves.
- 67 (b) the framework encourages and rewards innovation by local authorities as a means to  
68 deliver service improvement.
- 69 (c) it empowers local authorities to make long-term investments to address challenges  
70 including poverty and the climate emergency.
- 71 (d) transparency is at its heart, for example publishing each year a clear statement on  
72 how settlements for local authorities vary in comparison to other budgets including that  
73 of the Scottish Government as a whole.
- 74 (e) there should be established and enforceable rules of engagement between the  
75 Scottish Government and local authorities, including a new rule to prevent the Scottish  
76 Government from making disproportionate cuts to council funding.
- 77 (f) multi-year financial settlements are used because one-year funding agreements with  
78 the Scottish Government, combined with national policy initiatives accounting for an  
79 increasing proportion of council budgets, are a barrier to service transformation,  
80 innovation and the implementation of fair work policies.
- 81 (g) it is inappropriate for the government to use financial penalties to exert control over  
82 local authorities.
- 83 4) Deliver 1) and 3) as part of a new programme of empowerment for local authorities  
84 aligned with Scottish Liberal Democrat policies including a full power of general  
85 competence, the approval of local policing plans by locally elected people, and enabling  
86 local authorities to raise at least half of the money they spend locally backed by powers  
87 including the setting of local domestic and business taxation.

88 **Conference further supports** the concept of parity of esteem between local and central  
89 government and calls for the independence and standing of local authorities to be protected in  
90 the constitution of the Federal United Kingdom which Liberal Democrats espouse.

## EM1: Emergency Motion



## SC2: Fair and Flexible Local Taxation

Submitted by: Paisley and Renfrewshire local party

Mover: Ross Stalker

Summator: Eileen McCartin

1 **Conference notes that:**

- 2 1. Of the five parties represented in the Scottish Parliament, only the Conservatives now  
3 oppose the principle of replacing Council Tax with a fairer alternative.
- 4 2. The SNP initially came to power with a highly publicised policy of abolishing Council Tax,  
5 and progress on this front is long overdue.
- 6 3. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) has called for councils to have  
7 greater freedom in adopting the most appropriate system of local taxation for their area.

8 **Conference believes that:**

- 9 1. Enabling local authorities to choose from various forms of local taxation is in line with  
10 our party's localist values.
- 11 2. The upgrade of HMRC's infrastructure to handle Real Time Information and the residency  
12 data requirements of Scottish Rate of Income Tax has established the possibility that  
13 they could act as the collection agency for a local income tax, which would save  
14 administrative costs for local councils.
- 15 3. The increased devolution of taxation to Revenue Scotland creates an opportunity for the  
16 Scottish Government to enable local authorities to set new discretionary taxes, which  
17 merits consideration in any future system of local taxation.

18 **Conference calls for:**

- 19 1. The Scottish Government to immediately restart cross-party talks at Holyrood on the  
20 future of local taxation.
- 21 2. Scottish Liberal Democrat parliamentarians, councillors, and campaigners to advocate  
22 the replacement of property-based council tax and non-domestic rates with a flexible  
23 system of local taxation, in which local authorities would have the freedom to implement  
24 one or more of:
  - 25 a. a locally administered land value tax;
  - 26 b. a local income tax, with the rate set by local authorities and the collection managed  
27 by HMRC;
  - 28 c. locally set components of certain taxes that are administered by Revenue Scotland,  
29 such as landfill tax.



## SC3: Scotland's Drug Death Emergency

Submitted by: Central Scotland Liberal Democrats

Mover: Alex Cole-Hamilton

Summator: Wendy Chamberlain

1 **Conference Notes:**

- 2 1. That that 1339 people died as a result of drug use in Scotland last year, representing another  
3 devastating record in Scotland's in drug use mortality figures.  
4 2. That Scotland has the highest drug death rate in Europe.  
5 3. That Scotland's drug use mortality rate is nearly 4 times of any other country in the rest of the  
6 UK. 4. The SNP government's budget cut of 22% to Alcohol and Drug partnerships in 2015 and  
7 2016 saw services go to the wall and severed vital relationships between workers and users.  
8 5. That despite changing rhetoric around the subject, drug use is still treated as a criminal justice  
9 issue rather than one of public health with many people at risk of drug-related death and people  
10 caught in possession for personal use being sent to prison rather than treatment or education.  
11 6. Statistics published on 14 September showing 722 suspected drug deaths during the first half  
12 of 2021, putting Scotland on a trajectory to match the devastation recorded in 2020.

13 **Conference believes:**

- 14 1. Every life lost to drugs is a tragedy and that the SNP government have shown themselves  
15 wholly unequal to addressing this particularly Scottish problem.  
16 2. That the SNP are wrong to suggest that our disproportionately high death rates in this area  
17 are a result of any UK wide factors, on the basis that were that the case, Scotland's death rate  
18 would be more aligned with the other UK nations.  
19 3. Scotland's drug death emergency now represents a public health crisis which demands  
20 political focus, innovation and resources.  
21 4. That we should seek to emulate international best practice in treating this as a public health  
22 emergency, diverting people into treatment or education instead of prison.

23 **Conference resolves:**

- 24 1. To hold government ministers to account at every opportunity on this devastating crisis.  
25 2. To build a cross party consensus on a radical new approach to the problem.  
26 3. To continue to press for this to be treated as a public health issue, where people at risk of  
27 drug-related death and people caught in possession for personal use are diverted into treatment  
28 or education rather than criminal justice, with fast access to support and comprehensive services  
29 for them and their families wherever and whenever this is required.  
30 4. To support measures which are designed to improve public safety, including calling for the  
31 further acceleration of training, awareness raising and rollout of naloxone, the provision of  
32 environments and equipment to provide safer conditions for the consumption of drugs, and  
33 further investment in drug testing to make it widely accessible and available - all with the  
34 purpose of reducing morbidity and mortality.  
35 5. To support the request for the World Health Organisation to send a taskforce of global experts  
36 on drug mortality to help get this public health disaster under control.

## Fringes

In Conversation with Kirsty Williams and Christine Jardine MP



# Joint Conference with Welsh Liberal Democrats

## Saturday 9th October 2021

### Panel 1: A Liberal UK in 2030 Local Government and Electoral systems

#### Speech by Naomi Long MLA

#### Topical Debate 1:

##### **School qualifications – how should achievement be measured?**

The Covid pandemic has caused serious disruption to education, resulting in the cancellation of external examinations in both 2020 and 2021. A level, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications have been awarded largely on the basis of teacher grades, moderated, or not, by algorithms, evidence of pupil performance or in-school and cross-school scrutiny. It is fair to say that the resulting significant improvement in final grades has been met with scepticism, delight or dismay, depending on individual attitudes to both the examinations themselves, and the purpose they serve.

Examination systems have developed over time. The current systems in both Scotland and Wales have changed in numerous small ways – additional subjects, the introduction of more practical or investigative elements, length of exams and specific nature of questions, but the final awards are largely unchanged, and the importance of an externally examined element has remained, relatively unchallenged. The cancellation of exams has changed this. In educational circles, and in the wider public, fundamental questions are now being asked about the nature of end of school assessments and qualifications.

As Liberal Democrats, where do we stand on the fundamental questions?

What are school qualifications for? Are they to acknowledge individual achievement or enable the selection process for universities, colleges, training providers or employers? Are they to provide the starting point for future study or a more general measure of ability? Are these aims mutually exclusive?

Do we need examinations at the end of each of the final three years of school education, or is one set in the final year enough? And should we assess only curriculum content or the wider



aspects of education associated with active citizenship – confidence, responsibility, contributing to the community?

Which is paramount, the fairness associated with examination conditions and independent marking or the more comprehensive knowledge of the teacher? Should the needs of less advantaged students influence the assessment system? Are these contradictory aims?

Should the frailties of human nature be a consideration? Do examinations have a motivating impact on young people? Is it possible to eliminate bias from teacher grades? Can we eliminate 'teaching to the test'?

How important is public confidence in the awards system? Would the public trust a system based entirely on teacher grades? Is it possible to quality assure standards between teachers and between schools?

If the pandemic has opened up the opportunity for fresh thinking, what do liberals think about assessment and qualifications? How should we shape policy?

The education system is fundamental to the prosperity of individuals and to society as a whole. It influences the nature of society and the quality of life. How do we make the assessment system fit for the young people it serves?

## **Speech by Sir Ed Davey**

### **Panel 2: A Liberal UK in 2030**

#### **Healthcare in Scotland and Wales**

**Lunch**

**Fringes**



## Speech by Jane Dodds MS

### Topical Debate 2:

#### A vision for Scotland and Wales

This Joint Conference of the Scottish and Welsh Liberal Democrats notes that:

1. Our political system has failed to hold Governments across the United Kingdom accountable, and has increasingly failed to provide: political, social or economic fairness for our country and our citizens; competence, probity or trust in our leaders; and public confidence in the institutions of our democracy
2. The lives of too many people are scarred by poverty incomes, poor health and lifestyles, lack of economic and personal opportunity and housing challenges
3. Longstanding structural economic imbalances between the richer and poorer parts of the United Kingdom have been made worse by neo-conservative economic theories, and over-reliance on a few sectors such as financial services
4. The international standing of the United Kingdom has been damaged by the populism, disdain for the Rule of Law and international treaties, poor relations with other world leaders and the cuts in international aid which have marked the tenure of the current Conservative Government.

Our vision is of a country where wellbeing is underpinned by a vibrant economy based on enterprise and fair employment practices. We wish to see a society where security and respect is afforded to all residents regardless of background, supported by a fair and clear way of paying for investment that includes taxing wealth and property. We wish to see a country founded on environmental sustainability where the journey to zero carbon is characterised by a just transition. We believe in self-government for Scotland and Wales within a Federal UK, within the EU, and within the wider international community.

To implement this vision, conference asserts that:

1. The constitutional structure of the United Kingdom requires fundamental reform to enable it to serve the needs of Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the regions of England in the future.
2. Such reform must be based on principles of federalism, partnership, fairness, mutual respect, subsidiarity and the establishment of a written constitution
3. The aims and purpose of the United Kingdom, and its nations and regions, should be set out in a Federation Agreement, embodying a social contract that ensures:
  - a. the delivery of personal liberty, opportunity, physical and economic security, environmental sustainability, and justice for all our citizens;
  - b. the fair taxation of income and wealth and closure of the loopholes which meantime permit massive tax avoidance;
  - c. the sustainable delivery of high class public services;
  - d. rapid movement towards environmental sustainability and net zero targets in a way that spreads the costs of this fairly;
  - e. Respect for diversity and creativity;



- f. investment wherever necessary to raise education, early years provision and parenting skills to levels where functional illiteracy and innumeracy are eliminated and aspirations flourish; and
  - g. enhancement of the dignity and wellbeing of individuals and their right to develop their talents to the full
4. The economy is a means to shared prosperity rather than an end in itself, social justice should be central to how it operates and a broader concept of civic capitalism should underpin our economic strategy;
  5. One of the core missions of Liberalism should be to harness the power of the State for the benefit of those most disadvantaged in society, and to ensure that each individual has an equal chance to realise his or her own potential.
  6. The Scottish and Welsh Parties have a particular duty to use their powers to the fullest extent to widen the life chances of the poorest and most disadvantaged people in Scotland and Wales. They should seek and campaign for political, economic and democratic reforms that enhance the public good, wellbeing and constitutional standing of Scotland and Wales.
  7. Scotland and Wales are best served by the UK being in the European Economic Area (EEA), re-joining the Single Market immediately, and the European Union at the first practical opportunity (recognising the need for sustained public support for this).

Conference notes that the Scottish and Welsh Parties are both developing their future strategies and believes that these should aim:

- to develop and maintain a broad, radical centre-left political strategy for our parties, enabling the Liberal Democrats and Liberalism to exert growing influence in local, national and federal government;
- to use the vision set out in this motion as the basis for a distinctive narrative which supports all of our campaigning;
- to campaign for, and to build, wide civic and political support for a federal partnership between the nations and regions of the United Kingdom as the lynchpin of much-needed constitutional reform;
- to identify the groups of voters most likely to be attracted by our message, and demonstrate clearly how radical Liberal policies can benefit our people;
- to use the Scottish and Welsh Parliament voting systems more effectively, targetting the Regional List votes of electors some of whom may have supported another party with their constituency vote
- to apply all of this in our approach to forthcoming Council elections, which are important in themselves and a crucial staging post towards the next Holyrood and Senedd elections; and
- to refocus our mission, campaigning in all our communities for Liberal Democracy and individual and community empowerment.

**Speech by Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP**



## JCC1: COP26

Submitted by: The Scottish Policy Committee

Proposer: TBC

Summator: TBC

1 Conference notes:

- 2 1. The UK will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow  
3 on 31 October - 12 November 2021 and its goals on mitigation, adaptation, finance and  
4 collaboration.
- 5 2. The findings of the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate  
6 Change (the IPCC), warning of a “code red for humanity” with evidence of the irrefutable link  
7 between human emissions and catastrophic environmental impacts.
- 8 3. The Paris Agreement commits countries to limiting temperature rises to well below 2°C  
9 above pre-industrial levels, while pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C, but that the world has  
10 already warmed by 1.1°C degrees.
- 11 4. Emissions reductions in both Scotland and Wales have not been distributed evenly across  
12 sectors. Both achieved significant emissions reductions through decarbonising power and  
13 the closure of coal-fired power stations, but this has served to mask a complete absence of  
14 progress in other areas such as transport where emissions remain stubbornly high and  
15 virtually unchanged since 1990 levels.

16 Conference believes:

- 17 1. That the scale of action in both Scotland and Wales has been insufficient and that the  
18 urgency of the twin climate and nature emergencies must compel the Scottish and Welsh  
19 Governments to rapidly accelerate their responses.
- 20 2. Both Scottish and Welsh governments hold power over key policy levers such as agriculture,  
21 tree planting, waste management, buildings efficiency, public transport and active travel, and  
22 that without radical policy reform in these areas the ambition of Net Zero will be  
23 unreachable.

24 Conference calls on the Scottish and Welsh governments to:

- 25 1. Rapidly accelerate the decarbonisation of those sectors that have recorded little or no  
26 emissions reduction targets since 1990.
- 27 2. Establish routemaps with milestones for sectors to ensure that each plays their full part in  
28 achieving targets for net zero.
- 29 3. Sense check all future policy commitments in light of the climate and nature emergencies,  
30 and in recognition of the gravity and urgency of the situations.
- 31 4. Commit to calls 1-3 in advance of COP26.



Panel 3: A Liberal UK in 2030  
What does the UK look like for state parties?

Fringes

In Conversation with Willie Rennie MSP



# Fringes

Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October  
Found in the Sessions section of HopIn

12.45-1.45pm

## Engender



Equal Representation in Politics Project - An Introduction to the Equal Representation Toolkit and Panel Discussion - Hosted by Engender and Inclusion Scotland

This session will introduce you to the [Equal Representation in Politics Toolkit](#), a set of resources that has been developed by the Equal Representation Coalition to help political parties review and enhance their practice around equality, inclusion and diversity in order to create a Scotland where our elected representatives reflect the diversity of our society. There will also be a discussion and a chance to ask questions to a panel including representatives from Engender, Inclusion Scotland and the Scottish Liberal Democrats.

5.00-6.00pm

## ALDC and SLDW

Lessons from the Highlands and Perth to help us win in 2022



Join ALDC and the Scottish Liberal Democrat Women as they discuss with Molly Nolan, Cllr. Jill Tilt and Cllr. Liz Barrett about our recent by-election successes and how this can help propel us to win more councillors in 2022.

## RNIB

Accesible Voting



In May 19 per cent of blind voters, and 44 per cent of partially sighted voters surveyed by RNIB, said they could vote independently and in secret. Find out about work to develop ways for voters with a visual impairment to vote privately and what you can do to ensure elections are accessible.

# Training

Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October  
Found in the Sessions section of HopIn

11.30-12.30pm: Winning your Scottish Council seat

3.30-4.30pm: Lessons from Perth and Highlands by election wins

We advise you to register your interest for these training sessions here:

<https://digitallibdems.typeform.com/to/nJR9CrzD>

# Fringes

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> October  
Found in the Sessions section of HopIn

**12.45-1.45pm**

## Social Liberal Forum



The Future of Liberalism in Europe

Join Christine Jardine MP & Alexandre Holroyd - En Marche French Député for Northern Europe in conversation about the Future of Liberalism in Europe. With populism rising globally in the past decade and advancing Euroscepticism, what are the ideals and values that will not only create a more stable and prosperous Europe but build a winning strategy for Liberals across the continent?

## Liberal Democrats for Electoral Reform



Electoral reform in Scotland and Wales

Join a panellists of experts as we compare progress in the two countries, and opportunities for cross-country and cross-party cooperation to achieve more.

**5.00-6.00pm**

## Liberal Democrats European Group



The Future of Europe

Post Brexit, the future of Scotland, Wales and the UK in Europe is an important topic.

Join LDEG Chair, David Chalmers, Sir Graham Watson (Former ALDE President and MEP) and Renew MEP TBC for a lively discussion. This discussion is one of a number of state and regional events being held around the UK before a full day LDEG Conference of the Future of Europe to be held online on 30th October.

# Training

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> October  
Found in the Sessions section of HopIn

10.30 - 11.30am: Finding Council Candidates with ALDC

11.30-12.30pm: Introduction to Lighthouse

12.00-12.45pm: Digital Drop in

2.00-3.00pm: Growing your team with ALDC

3.30-4.30pm: Advanced Lighthouse Training

We advise you to register your interest for these training sessions here:

<https://digitallibdems.typeform.com/to/nJR9CrzD>



## Virtual Autumn Conference 2021



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**Scottish**   
Liberal Democrats

Published, Printed and Promoted by Scottish Liberal Democrats. 4 Clifton Terrace,  
Edinburgh, EH12 5DR