

Scottish Lib Dems Autumn Conference

Edinburgh Nov 2023

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Start Time: 9:25am

Welcome

SC1- Motion: Liberal Prosperity in a Sustainable Nation

Mover: Jeremy Purvis Summator: Jeremy Purvis

Conference notes:

A. The publication of the report of the Scottish Liberal Democrat Just Economy Commission, Liberal Prosperity in a Sustainable Nation.

B. Its considerations, analysis and recommendations framed within the ambition to achieve

- Freedom from poverty, bringing new policies for prosperity
- Freedom from climate harm, bringing a sustainable Scotland
- Freedom from restrictive centralism, bringing new connected communities
- Freedom from stifling inequality, bringing new social opportunities

Conference further notes its policy recommendations, which include:

i. The creation of a framework of policies which will encourage responsible and sustainable economic development, ensuring that these bring most benefit to people on modest incomes rather than to the super-rich.

ii. Within freedom from poverty, measures such as the stimulation of inward migration backed by a national workforce plan, a feminist investment policy, a comprehensive Scottish Industrial Strategy and the removal of barriers to prosperity for disabled people.

iii. Within freedom from climate harm, new measures to accelerate and coordinate the retrofit of homes and businesses, building Scotland's capacity to reduce and process waste, and learning from the windfall tax on the super profits of energy giants by exploring predictable supplemental charges on unjustified profit from unearned activity,

iv. Within freedom from restrictive centralism, encouraging communities to apply for further powers, involving communities in procurement solutions that affect them, closer ties with our European neighbours, and boosting public transport by learning from the best schemes around Europe, empowering customers and recognising core connectivity for remote and island communities is in the national strategic interest.

v. Within freedom from stifling inequality, a radical expansion of early learning and childcare, shifting tax from income to unearned wealth, and frameworks for the rollout of emerging technologies such as AI so that they are developed and deployed ethically, wealth is shared and opportunity is spread.

Conference calls for:

1) The report to be referred to the Scottish Liberal Democrat Policy Committee and MSP group so that its findings and recommendations may be taken into consideration in both the manifesto for the next Scottish Parliament election and the development of policy in the meantime.

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2) The report to be referred to the Liberal Democrat Federal Policy Committee so that its findings and recommendations may be taken into consideration in both the manifesto for the next UK Parliament election and the development of policy in the meantime.

Cards:

Mover/Summator: Jeremy Purvis, Midlothian South Tweeddale & Lauderdale, called

John Ferry, Midlothian South Tweeddale & Lauderdale, called

Daniel O'Malley, Glasgow City, called

Lauren Buchanan-Quigley, Dunfermline & West Fife, called

Dennis Mollison, East Lothian, called

Bruce Wilson, Edinburgh South, not called

CLLr Claire McLaren, Perth&Kinross, called

Votes:

Motion: Carried unanimously

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Mini Motions Housing Session

Mini Motion Title – Tiny Villages

Submitted by Paul McGarry

Recognising the success of tiny house communities, including in Scotland, we propose the following actions:

Investigate changing the rules to make it easier to build tiny house communities in Scotland.

Look into providing financial help or rewards to make it cheaper and easier for people to live in tiny houses. Tiny houses are small, eco-friendly homes that can help solve the problem of expensive housing in Scotland.

We want to follow the good ideas we've seen in places like Portland, Oregon, by encouraging the development of tiny house communities in Scotland. Tiny house communities have several benefits. They are often more affordable than traditional homes and can be built with sustainable materials that are better for the environment. Additionally, tiny house communities can help foster a sense of community and promote social interaction among residents.

Scotland already has some tiny house communities, such as the NestHouse™ and NestPod™ by Tiny House Scotland. By implementing these proposed actions, we hope to make tiny house communities more accessible and widespread throughout Scotland. This will help more people have homes that are good for the environment and affordable.

Other countries have successfully implemented tiny house communities. For example, in the United States, Portland, Oregon has been successful in creating tiny house communities that provide affordable housing for low-income residents. By following their example, we can create similar opportunities for people in Scotland.

Cards:

Mini Motion Title – Affordable Homes for Key Workers

Submitted by Michael Turvey

Conference notes

The viability of rural public services (schools, hospitals, surgeries, care facilities) often come under threat due to a chronic lack of staffing.

Conference believes

A common root cause for the lack of staffing is the lack of affordable homes available on the market in rural areas.

Conference calls for

1. The provision of low cost homes reserved for key workers in rural areas where staff shortages are most acute.

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2. That lack of staff may not be considered a good reason to permanently close a facility unless such housing has been offered to staff or prospective staff within 20 min drive of their workplace for a period of at least 12 months.

Mini Motion Title- Housing Factories to Solve the Housing Crisis

Submitted by Fraser Graham

Policy Proposal

The creation of government backed housing factories, used for large scale production of new houses using advanced off-site modular manufacturing techniques, allowing for rapid deployment of high-quality new housing at a reduced overall cost.

Policy Benefits

Efficiency: Off-site manufacturing would allow for automation, reduction of design costs, lower wastage and improved construction safety.

Quality: Off-site manufacturing is recognised as allowing for greater quality control¹, and can create better thermal detailing to reduce heat loss and improve insulation performance

New Jobs: The housing factories could be sited in areas where unemployment is high, creating skilled roles and upskilling opportunities.

Speed of Deployment: The amount of time needed on site to erect new housing would be greatly reduced, speeding the deployment and therefore availability of new housing.

Environmental Benefits: Off-site construction uses less energy than traditional construction and can reduce emissions by as much as 30%²

1. <https://theconstructor.org/building/on-site-off-site-construction-pros-cons/38334/>

2. https://www.academia.edu/5741544/A_Comparative_Carbon_Footprint_Analysis_of_On-Site_Construction_and_an_Off-Site_Manufactured_House

Mini Motions Housing Votes:

Tiny Homes Motion: not approved

Affordable Homes for Key Workers Motion: approved

Housing Factories Motion: approved

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SC2- Motion: Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC)

Proposer: Cllr Sally Pattle

Summator: Michael Turvey

Conference notes:

- 1) The serious safety issues around Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated concrete.
- 2) That an NHS Scotland safety action notice warned that roofs, walls and flooring made of this material are at “risk of catastrophic structural failure” which could occur “suddenly” and “without warning”.
- 3) That West Lothian Council has been at the vanguard of tackling issues with Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete and that until now, West Lothian Council has self-funded all remedial works.
- 4) Guidance relating to inspection of public buildings constructed using RAAC and remedial action issued between 2019 and 2023.
- 5) West Lothian Council’s prompt action to inspect buildings and schedule remedial action, self-funding this work.
- 6) The lack of action by the Scottish Government to support Councils in funding this work since this issue was first identified in 2018.
- 7) Alex Cole-Hamilton’s call for a National Fund to help Councils and Health Boards make buildings constructed using RAAC safe.

Conference believes:

- 1) That rapid remedial action is required to identify and fix buildings constructed with RAAC so that the public can be confident that their schools, hospitals and other public facilities are safe.
- 2) That Councils and Health Boards should not have to fund this work entirely from their own resources.

Conference calls for the Scottish and Westminster Governments to:

- 1) Provide sufficient funding to enable public sector remedial works to be carried out by local authorities and health authorities across Scotland and the wider United Kingdom.
- 2) Allow local authorities and health boards who have already self-funded remedial works to apply for financial compensation in retrospect.

Cards:

Mover: Cllr Sally Pattle, West Lothian, called

Summator: Michael Turvey, Aberdeenshire West, called

Jacquie Bell, East Lothian, called

Sanne Dijkstra-Downie, Edinburgh North East & Leith, called

David Ross Carruthers, Perth & Kinross, called

Andrew Reynolds, Edinburgh, called

Neil Alexander, Moray, called

Penny Carruthers, Edinburgh South, called

Conrad Wood, Edinburgh West

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Votes:

Motion: Carried

SC3- Motion: Council tax and local government finance

Proposer: Cllr Kevin Lang

Summator: Cllr Sally Pattle

The below replaced by the text of Amendment 1

Conference;

- ~~1. condemns the SNP / Green Scottish Government for causing a crisis in local government through successive cuts to council grants at a time of growing costs and increasing demand for council services.~~
- ~~2. notes that, rather than funding councils properly and despite an SNP promise to scrap the council tax when first elected, the Scottish Government is now considering changes to further embed council tax with a tax increase on bands E-H.~~
- ~~3. notes that, if implemented, over 700,000 households across Scotland would see a rise in their council tax bills, some by as much as £835 every year.~~
- ~~4. further notes that any increases in money raised from council tax will likely be wiped out by the central government grant cuts imposed by SNP and Green Ministers, meaning many people will end up paying more for less.~~
- ~~5. calls on Scottish Liberal Democrat MSPs to~~
 - ~~a) oppose the Scottish Government's council tax proposals, and~~
 - ~~b) press Scottish Ministers to rule out further cuts to local council grant funding and begin a process of reversing the cuts imposed over recent years.~~
- ~~6. agrees that the Scottish Policy Committee should build on the party's existing and long-standing policy of replacing the discredited council tax system by bringing forward an updated policy motion to a future conference so the next Scottish Parliament election manifesto includes firm commitments to both properly fund local councils and deliver a fairer alternative to the council tax.~~

Amendment 1

Submitted by ALDC for motion 3

delete all and insert:

This amendment was accepted by the movers.

Conference;

1. condemns the SNP / Green Scottish Government for causing a crisis in local government through successive cuts to council grants at a time of growing costs and increasing demand for council services.

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2. notes that despite an SNP promise to scrap the council tax when first elected, the Scottish Government has a) retained the current system of council tax and, b) consulted recently on increasing council tax on over 700,000 bands E-H properties by as much as £835 every year.

3. notes the First Minister's most recent u-turn, announcing a new plan to freeze the council tax without any discussion with the Scottish Cabinet, senior civil servants or COSLA, breaking the newly-signed Verity House Agreement and European Charter of Local Self-Government which were supposed to afford respect to councils.

4. believes any council tax freeze must be fully funded by the Scottish Government in order to avoid further damaging cuts to local services by local councils across the country.

5. therefore calls on Scottish Liberal Democrat MSPs to

a) oppose any attempt by the Scottish Government to pursue its recent nationwide council tax increases on Band E-H properties, should they re-emerge.

b) press Scottish Ministers to rule out further cuts to local council grant funding and begin a process of reversing the cuts imposed over recent years.

c) use the upcoming 2024/25 Scottish Parliament budget process to push for local councils to be fully compensated for any freeze in council tax next year.

6. agrees that the Scottish Policy Committee should build on the party's existing and long-standing policy of replacing the discredited council tax system by bringing forward an updated policy motion to a future conference so the next Scottish Parliament election manifesto includes firm commitments to both properly fund local councils and deliver a fairer alternative to the council tax.

Amendment 2

Submitted by Ross Stalker and 5 other members:

Proposer/Summator: Ross Stalker

Insert a new point after the existing point 4 that reads:

further notes that:

a. SNP MSPs were elected on a manifesto pledge to hold one Citizens' Assembly per year, including one on the reform or replacement of Council Tax.

b. Green MSPs were elected on a manifesto pledge to hold a Citizens' Assembly exploring the future of taxation and our public services.

c. despite these manifesto pledges, halfway through this Parliamentary term no Citizens' Assembly has been held on Council Tax reform or on any other issue.

Insert a new point after the existing point 5 that reads:

calls on the Scottish Government to establish a Citizens' Assembly on local taxation and local government finance that will convene in the first half of 2024; failing this, the SNP and the Scottish Green Party should return to cross-party talks on a replacement for Council Tax.

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Cards:

Mover: Cllr Kevin Lang, Paisley & Renfrewshire
Summator: Sally Pattle, West Lothian
Move Am2: Ross Stalker, Paisley & Renfrewshire called
Cllr Neil Ross, Edinburgh South, called
John Knox, Edinburgh South, called
Pater Barrett, Perth & Kinross, called
James Calder, Dunfermline & West Fife
Cllr Robert Brown, Rutherglen & Hamilton West, called
Lewis Younie, Edinburgh West
Trevor Mason, Aberdeenshire East
Jack Clark, Paisley & Renfrewshire
Malcolm Wood, Edinburgh West
Lorna Cummock, South Lanarkshire
Yipei Chow Turvey, Aberdeenshire West, called

Votes:

Amendment 1 – accepted by the movers of the motion: carried
Amendment 2 – accepted by the movers of the motion: carried
Motion as amended: carried

Lunch: 12:15pm- 1:30pm

Roundtable Policy Discussions

Start time: 1:30pm

Q&A session with Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Richard Ratcliffe

Alan Beal, Edinburgh West

Beatrice Wishart, Shetland

Leader's Speech- Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP

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[SC4- Motion: Policy Committee report on the energy reference back](#)

Mover: Neil Casey

Summator: Thomas Prag

Conference recalls that motion SC12 Energy Diversification and Resilience was referenced back to the Policy Committee at the 2022 Autumn Conference.

Conference notes and agrees to the proposed policy positions contained in the Policy Committee Report on the Energy Reference Back.

Conference believes:

1. Scottish Liberal Democrats have always been supportive of following the evidence in the bid to decarbonise energy generation in helping us to reach Net Zero whilst also meeting Scotland's energy needs, achieving these outcomes safely at the lowest cost to consumers, taxpayers and our planet. The same approach should be adopted while considering future generations of nuclear power in Scotland.
2. A mix of generating technologies will be essential to meeting our future energy requirements, providing resilience and predictability particularly at times of peak demand. This will need to be backed by smarter flexible infrastructure, a modernised grid and greater storage capabilities.
3. There should be an evidence-based assessment of energy sources which considers their potential to contribute to cutting emissions and takes a whole-life approach to risk, environmental impact and cost, from construction through to decommissioning and long-term legacy. This objective assessment should apply to future generations of nuclear power in the same way that it does to other technologies.
4. There are currently no small modular reactors (SMRs) in existence for power generation. The fact that there are dozens of different designs being worked upon around the world impedes, at this time, a full, fair and comprehensive assessment of the environmental consequences, cost, production times and other issues. The assessments of benefit and harm will vary within designs, regulatory frameworks and local context, with each requiring thorough risk assessment and public engagement.
5. The developers of SMRs, or any other form of nuclear power, would need to demonstrate beyond any reasonable doubt that their technology is effective, safe, clean, value for money and has the support of communities.
6. There is finite resource to incentivise and explore technologies. Any work on nuclear power must not starve other technologies of the funds they need.
7. Scotland has made good progress towards decarbonising energy generation and making the essential transition away from fossil fuels within this sector, thanks in significant part to the decisions of Liberal Democrats in government who showed leadership and encouraged innovation. Our party's record shows we are always the strongest supporters of renewable technologies.
8. We also recognise the opportunities for Scotland's worldclass universities, engineering expertise and industrial base to play their part in the research and development that will be necessary to develop embryonic technologies and deliver the scientific breakthroughs that will pave the way for

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the power sources of the future.

Cards:

Mover: Neil Casey, Central Scotland, Called
Summator: Jack Norquoy, Orkney
Stephen Harte, Edinburgh West, called
Liam McArthur MSP, Orkney, called
Denis Mollinson, East Lothian, Called
Prof David Hutchins, East Dunbartonshire, called
David Ross Carruthers, Perth & Kinross
Penny Carruthers, Edinburgh South, called
Charles Dundas, North Edinburgh East and Leith
Liz Barrett, Perth & Kinross, called
Michael Turvey, Aberdeenshire West, called
Mike Wayne Roberts, ??, called

Votes:

Item 1: Carried
Item 2: Carried
Item 3: Carried
Item 4: Carried
Item 5: Carried
Item 6: Carried
Item 7: Carried
Item 8: Carried
Motion: Carried

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Mini Motions- Families, Children and Young People

Mini Motion Title – Free Childcare from Birth to Nursery

Submitted by Noah McGarry

I propose free childcare for all kids from birth to nursery age. This lets parents get back to jobs without huge childcare bills. No parent should have to pick between a job and high childcare costs. This helps families avoid money troubles and supports everyone in working.

Mini Motion Title- Bringing swimming back into the School Curriculum

Submitted by Cllr Aude Boubaker-Calder

Policy Suggestion

We recommend the Scottish Government take steps to return swimming into the primary school curriculum

Policy Benefits

- Lifesaving skill - If everyone has a basic level of swimming ability this will save lives.
- Physical wellbeing - Swimming can help with physical fitness and tackling obesity for people of all ages.
- Mental wellbeing - Swimming is well known to help with issues such as stress and would be a positive outlet for children and young people who face many challenges.
- Equality of opportunity - Many children from disadvantaged backgrounds have less opportunity to take up swimming and this will allow them the opportunity to learn this skill.

By bringing swimming back into the school curriculum, we would make sure everyone would have the opportunity to take on this lifesaving skill with significant health benefits.

Mini Motion Title- Child Bereavement

Submitted by Christine Jardine MP

We recommend the creation of a new protocol for supporting bereaved children.

Policy benefits

- Automatic recognition of an estimated 4,700 children in Scotland who lose a parent every year, with countless others who lose a friend, sibling or grandparent.

Votes:

Motion – Free Childcare from birth to nursery: approved

Motion – Bringing Swimming to the school curriculum: approved

Motion – Childhood Bereavement: approved

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EM1- Emergency/Topical Motion – Connecting the North of Scotland

Submitted by Highland Liberal Democrats and Moray Liberal Democrats

Mover: Neil Alexander

Summator: David Green

Conference notes with concern:

1. New data, attained through freedom of information and published by the Highland News Group on 20 September, reveal 10 out of the 11 most dangerous single carriageway sections of the A9 are north of Inverness.
2. Audit Scotland's warning in a publication dated 28 September that Scottish Government investment plans – including dualling the A9 – are no longer affordable.
3. The revelations by the Northern Scot, published on 20 September, show the A96 section between Elgin & Forres is the most dangerous section of this road in the past 5 years.
4. Thirteen people lost their lives on the 112-mile section of the A9 between Inverness and Perth in 2022, the highest number of fatalities on the stretch in 20 years.
5. The vulnerability of the A83 to landslips and closures, as demonstrated on 7 October, and calls for a permanent solution to make the road more resilient to bad weather.

Conference welcomes:

- I. The campaign run by The Inverness Courier, including hosting of an 'A9 Crisis Summit', in support of dualling the A9.

Conference reaffirms the Scottish Liberal Democrat commitment to:

- A. Delivering core connections for the Highlands and Islands, including investment in programmes such as the A9, A96 and for the A82 and A83.

Conference believes:

1. The SNP's admission that their commitment to dualling the A9 by 2025 is "unachievable" represents both a betrayal of trust and neglect towards people living in the North of Scotland.

Conference further believes upgrading the A9, A96, A82 will:

- I. Transform the lives of people and communities in the Highlands and beyond by sensitively promoting regional tourism, business, local products and services.
- II. Make a significant contribution to reducing the severity and rate of accidents along the roads and on the Scottish trunk road network as a whole.
- III. Better connect the Highlands and Islands and therefore improve access to goods, people, employment opportunities and services.
- IV. Provide the opportunity to enhance linkages to walking and cycling routes to help increase active travel and ensure public transport will benefit from reliable journey times.

Conference calls on the Scottish Government to:

- A. Make an immediate statement in the Scottish Parliament detailing the final date for the completion of the dualling programmes for the A9 and A96.

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- B. Publish a detailed roadmap for the completion of each of the remaining sections, followed by quarterly updates.
- C. Review current road safety measures and publish an impact assessment of the conditions of the A9, A82, and A83 on the local economy.
- D. Commit to investing in infrastructure north of Inverness, including dualling the A9 to Nigg, to maximise opportunities from the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport plans.
- E. Commit to a national memorial to those who have lost their lives in road traffic incidents, including the A9.

Cards:

Mover: Neil Alexander, Moray, called
Summator: David Green, Highland, called
Trish Robertson, Highland, called
Daniel O'Malley, Glasgow City, called
Penny Carruthers, Edinburgh South, called
Alan Reid, East Dunbartonshire, called
Andrew Reynolds, Edinburgh
Scott Simpson, Glasgow City, called
Move Amd1: Conrad Wood, Aberdeenshire East, called
Claire McLaine, Perth & Kinross
Michael Turvey, Aberdeenshire West
Jack Clark, Paisley & Renfrewshire
Ross Stalker, Paisley & Renfrewshire

Amendment 1:

Request to include A90 to list of roads in Conference Calls for item iii

Votes:

Amendment: accepted by the movers
Motion: Carried

Party Awards

New Hugh Waterfield award, for non-elected, non staff – Tim Brett