

Scottish Liberal Democrats



Conference pre-agenda

***Autumn Conference 10th of October 2026 – University of Edinburgh,
Pollock Halls***

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SC1: Support for Children with Life Limiting Conditions

Submitted by member signatories

Mover: Isobel Knights

Summator: Tanvir Ahmad

1 Conference notes that:

- 2 1. There are over 1,800 families with children who have life-limiting conditions living in
3 the North East, Orkney & Shetland.
- 4 2. The only dedicated residential children's hospices in Scotland are Rachel House in
5 Kinross and Robin House in Balloch, forcing families to travel hundreds of miles to
6 access specialist respite or palliative care.
- 7 3. Charlie House, founded in 2011 with a vision for all children with life-limiting and life-
8 threatening conditions in North East Scotland to receive the support they require in the
9 North East:
 - 10 a. supported over 100 local families in 2022/2023, delivering 2,692 family support
11 hours, 107 face-to-face visits, and over 5,510 donated volunteer hours.
 - 12 b. is entirely self-funded with no government support, relying solely on charitable
13 donations and volunteer time.

14 Conference further notes with concern:

- 15 1. Construction sector inflation has forced Charlie House to abandon its plans for a £8m
16 ground-up build at Woodend Hospital in favour of exploring the retrofit of an existing
17 building or alternative site solutions.
- 18 2. The lack of support and respite care in the North East, Orkney, and Shetland for
19 families with children who have life-limiting conditions.
- 20 3. The distances families must travel for support and respite care at all times of year, and
21 the additional costs placed on families by the 'pay and reclaim' model of the NHS
22 Scotland Patient Travel Scheme and the Highlands and Islands Patient Travel Scheme.

23 Conference believes that:

- 24 1. High-quality healthcare and respite should be delivered as close to home as possible.
- 25 2. Third-sector providers play a vital role in sustaining Scotland's care system, and
26 government should proactively lower barriers to their success where such
27 opportunities arise.

28 3. By failing to consider specific regional gaps in provision, instead making only vague
29 one-size-fits-all commitments, the Scottish Government's *Palliative Care Matters for All*
30 strategy ultimately falls short in its stated aim of tackling regional inequities.

31 4. Patient Travel Schemes must prioritise real human needs over bureaucratic thriftiness.

32 Conference calls on the Scottish Government to advance the delivery of Charlie House's
33 dedicated support facility by:

34 1. directing Community Planning Partnerships to undertake a Place-Based Asset Review
35 involving NHS Grampian, local authorities, and the charity, to identify a suitable idle
36 public building for retrofit, or appropriate plot of serviced public land for construction,
37 and fast-track a Community Asset Transfer at nominal cost.

38 2. offsetting the charity's construction costs through capital grants from existing
39 schemes, such as the North East Just Transition Fund for zero-carbon energy systems.

40 3. instructing the region's NHS and Integration Joint Boards to agree a clinical
41 commissioning framework well in advance of the centre opening, to guarantee stable
42 long-term funding for its nursing and care posts.

43 **Conference further calls on the Scottish Government to:**

44 1. extend the *Palliative Care Matters for All* strategy to explicitly address regional inequities
45 such as the lack of paediatric respite and end-of-life bed capacity in the North East,
46 Orkney, and Shetland.

47 2. guarantee 100% Non-Domestic Rates relief for registered healthcare, hospice, and
48 respite charities by making the 20% discretionary top-up mandatory for these specific
49 organisations.

50 3. reform NHS Scotland's Patient Travel Schemes to provide upfront coverage of travel
51 and accommodation for remote and island families accessing specialist paediatric
52 respite and palliative care, and to supply more than one medical escort for children
53 with the most complex medical needs.

SC3: Protecting Scotland Against Wildfires

Submitted by member signatories

Mover: Andrew Baxter MSP

Summator: TBC

Conference notes:

1. In the last few years, Scotland has seen a rise in the number of wildfires, most notably on Dava Moor, within the Cairngorm National Park and on Arthur's Seat. Land management practices and climate change mean it is likely we will see more.
2. The tackling of wildfires requires an intensive use of resources by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Services, with more than 100 firefighters required to tackle the wildfire in the Cairngorms.
3. Communities can also be impacted by the increasing number of wildfires, with residents of Nethy Bridge having to temporarily evacuate and local businesses forced to close during the Cairngorm wildfire.
4. The Scottish Government has published a Strategic Action Plan to tackle wildfires in March 2026 and announced a fund for the businesses affected by the Cairngorms Wildfire in August 2026.
5. The UK Government has issued a temporary ban on the selling of disposable barbeques, due to the significant risk they can pose in hot and dry conditions.

Conference believes:

1. As Scotland begins to experience hotter and drier summers, we need to make sure we are prepared for the heightened risk of wildfires that these types of summer bring.
2. On the ground firefighting personnel, alongside community volunteers, should be commended for their work in tackling these blazes, especially given the pressure they place on an already stretched service.
3. Despite the Scottish Government's publication of its action plan, their response to the Cairngorms wildfire fell short and that lessons must be learnt so that other communities are not let down when the next wildfire arises.

Conference calls for the Scottish Government to:

1. convene a cross-party summit with relevant stakeholders in order to learn the lessons of the Cairngorms wildfire so that communities are not let down again.

- 28 2. commission a probe to review the current state of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
29 and identify what steps need to be taken to ensure the service can tackle major
30 incidents without experiencing undue pressure on resources.
- 31 3. work closely with the UK Government to determine whether the temporary ban on
32 disposable barbeques needs to be made permanent and what other measures to
33 protect the public can be taken, ensuring that everyone can enjoy our outdoor spaces
34 and national parks safely.

PC1: Homes Around Stations – Unlocking Sustainable Growth

Submitted by member signatories

Mover: Jack Clark

Summator: Andy Williamson

Conference notes that:

1. Scotland faces an acute housing shortage, with too few homes being built in the places where people most want and need to live.
2. Housing shortages contribute to rising living costs, labour market constraints, slower economic growth and increased inequality. This makes it harder for young people to remain in the communities in which they have grown up.
3. Scotland has made substantial public investment in its rail network, stations and public transport infrastructure, yet much of the land surrounding stations remains occupied by surface car parks, vacant sites, low-density development or other underused land.
4. Building more homes within walking distance of high-quality public transport reduces dependence on private cars, supports town and city centres, improves the viability of public transport, and helps Scotland meet its climate objectives.
5. This has been demonstrated in other countries in Europe and Asia, leading to stronger local economies and more successful public transport systems.
6. The current planning system often makes well-designed, sustainable development around transport hubs slow, uncertain and expensive, discouraging investment and reducing housing supply.

Conference believes that:

1. The best place to accommodate much of Scotland's future housing growth is around existing public transport infrastructure, where residents can easily access employment, education and services without relying on private cars.
2. The planning system should provide certainty by establishing clear rules in advance, allowing developments that comply with agreed standards to proceed quickly.
3. Local communities should retain a strong voice in shaping the character of development through local design codes, rather than repeatedly debating the principle of development on individual planning applications.

Conference therefore calls on the Scottish Government to establish Station Growth Zones around qualifying railway stations, subway stations, tram stops and other major public transport interchanges, and:

- 30 1. Establish criteria for qualification based on service frequency and connectivity to
31 employment, education and services.
- 32 2. Define these zones as covering, by default, all land within approximately 800 metres'
33 walking distance of the station entrance, with local authorities able to extend
34 boundaries to include additional areas with a clear functional connection to the
35 station.
- 36 3. Permit the default boundary of these zones to be reduced only where physical barriers
37 make land inaccessible from the station.
- 38 4. Amend national planning policy such that there is a strong statutory presumption in
39 favour of higher-density residential and mixed-use development within Station Growth
40 Zones, with planning permission normally being granted unless narrowly defined
41 statutory grounds for refusal apply.
- 42 5. Establish national standards that require Station Growth Zone design codes to:
43 a. enable a substantial increase in housing capacity and density in comparison with
44 existing development patterns.
45 b. be prepared such that they set out clear and objective standards for development,
46 to be determined by planning authorities only after sufficient consultation with
47 local communities.
- 48 6. Ensure that development complying with all standards adopted for these zones
49 benefits from a significantly streamlined planning process.
- 50 7. Publish a national programme identifying publicly owned land suitable for station-led
51 housing development, working with Transport Scotland, ScotRail, Network Rail, local
52 authorities and other public landowners to bring forward sites for development.
- 53 8. Regularly review the performance of Station Growth Zones, identifying and addressing
54 barriers preventing housing development from coming forward.

SC6: Equitable Exam Access for All

Submitted by member signatories

Mover: Eliza Twaddle

Summator: TBC

1 Conference notes that:

- 2 1. In Scotland, as of August 2025, 2581 children and young people were home educated.
- 3 2. The rise of home educated children and young people has increased dramatically, with
4 a 79% increase since the 2021/22 school year.
- 5 3. In Scotland, children and young people who are home educated face extreme barriers
6 to accessing examination and assessment arrangements, including but not limited to
7 the Scottish Government's policy which states that local authorities are not required to,
8 and therefore do not, meet the costs associated with home educated candidates taking
9 examinations or other qualifications.
- 10 4. A successful pilot project run by the University of Exeter in partnership with Exeter
11 College, Cornwall Council, Devon County Council and the exam board AQA provided
12 barrier- and cost-free access to GCSE exams for home educated Young People.

13 Conference believes that:

- 14 1. Education is the best investment we can make in our children's potential and our
15 country's future.
- 16 2. In an increasingly digital world, access to education via online education is not only
17 possible, but an equally valid method of receiving some education, especially for Young
18 People aged 15+, in line with the increase of Work From Home opportunities.
- 19 3. Children and young people who choose to home educate are more likely to be
20 neurodivergent, have additional support needs or a learning disability and to have
21 experienced bullying, violence and/or harassment in mainstream education.

22 Conference therefore calls for the Scottish Government to:

- 23 1. Urgently publish plans to support cost-free and barrier-free access to examinations for
24 all home educated young people in Scotland.
- 25 2. Commit to developing an inclusive and accessible digital curriculum for families who
26 choose home education.
- 27 3. Work with home educated families and the home education community to develop a
28 Home Educated Children and Young People Framework.

29 4. Tackle the root problems that often drive families to home educate, including violence
30 in schools, large class sizes and limited support for children and young people with
31 additional needs.

PCRB Report on Reference Back of Motion SC7

Background

Motion SC7 – “Safe and Ethical AI Deployment in GP Practices and NHS Scotland” – was submitted to the Spring 2026 Scottish Liberal Democrat Conference in Edinburgh. A petition was brought forward under Article 11 of the Conference Standing Orders to refer Motion SC7 back to Scottish Policy Committee (SPC). After a debate on the conference floor, this petition was actioned by Conference.

This report constitutes the response of the Scottish Policy Committee to this reference back, under Article 11.10.2 of the Conference Standing Orders. **SPC recommends conclusion of this reference back with no further action.**

Discussion

Motion SC7 primarily calls for regulation of the forms of AI technology permitted to perform particular roles within the Scottish public healthcare sector. Generally, it calls for restrictions on the use of ‘generative AI’, instead promoting use of ‘extractive NLP.’ The motion justifies these regulations by drawing a distinction between these forms of AI (Conference Believes 1) and claiming that ‘generative AI’ is inherently unreliable, biased, and incapable of reasoning or understanding (Conference Believes 2; Conference Notes 3).

SPC does not believe that the content of this motion is appropriately accessible for debate at Conference. Indeed, at Spring Conference, the majority of debate on the motion did not engage with these claims about operational specifics or the proposals to regulate them. Instead, speakers discussed the possible outcomes, positive and negative, of AI deployment for society at large. Some speakers openly admitted ignorance of the technical details in the motion, such as the distinctions between different AI architectures. SPC does not believe it is reasonable to expect conference delegates to commit the Party to specific technical claims about AI capabilities, and consequently to these specific regulations. Rather, delegates ought to decide the principles according to which organisations should make operational decisions around AI technology deployment.

SPC believes that the regulations proposed are overly rigid. Indeed, there is a fundamental issue with the distinctions the motion attempts to draw: the architectural details of an AI system are not determinative of its properties. For instance, it is technically straightforward to prevent confabulation when using ‘generative AI’ architectures, such as large language models (LLMs), to perform ‘extractive NLP’ tasks such as identifying key sentences in a transcript (Conference Calls For 6) [1]. State-of-the-art diagnostic computer vision tools (Conference Calls For 3) have the same architectures as LLMs – the primary difference being the training data [2]. Moreover, even when LLMs *are* used to output normal text, it is possible to achieve human-level performance on certain clinical tasks (Conference Calls For 1) [3]. Given how rapidly the field of AI is developing, it is also likely that, in the near future, even more techniques will be developed to mitigate the

weaknesses of 'generative AI' systems described in the motion. For those seeking to regulate an AI system, its salient properties are not, then, its architectural *bona fides*, but rather how the system performs and what it is used to do, alongside the ethics of using AI in the first place. As the examples demonstrate, implementation of the policies in this motion would risk preventing the use of particular AI architectures in contexts where such a deployment would nevertheless be safe and effective according to the principles implied in the motion itself.

It is not feasible to redraft the motion into a form SPC believes is appropriate for debate at Conference. SPC has considered redrafting the motion to remove or replace overly technical material. However, the motion is comprised primarily of such material, and the principles underlying the technical points are not adequately presented in the motion text. Consequently, such a redrafting would require SPC to draw out, evidence, and set out these principles. Apart from requiring significant extra work, such a process would risk misrepresenting the intent of the original motion's drafter. Additionally, due to the fairly narrow scope of the original policy motion, the redrafted motion would set out general principles for AI regulation but only apply them as policy to the public healthcare sector.

SPC will therefore instead create a comprehensive AI policy motion for submission to Spring Conference 2027. As well as setting out regulations to ensure safe and ethical AI deployment across the Scottish economy, this motion will set out policy around industrial strategy, research and innovation, and infrastructure. The motion will focus on principles and practical outcomes, as opposed to operational details. SPC believes AI regulation is an important and timely issue, and will, of course, welcome amendments from all members in order to foster open debate on the Scottish Liberal Democrat position. SPC is also aware that an AI policy motion has been submitted to the Federal Autumn Conference 2026; if passed, this will be taken into account when drafting the motion.

Summary

SPC believes Motion SC7 is not appropriately accessible for debate at conference, and that the overall motion is significantly weakened by its rigidity. Further, SPC does not believe it is feasible to redraft the motion for debate at Conference due to the high proportion of inaccessible content and the motion's narrow scope. SPC intends to submit a comprehensive AI policy motion to Spring Conference 2027.

SPC therefore recommends conclusion of the reference back with no further action.

References

1. Ebrahim Norouzi, Sven Hertling, & Harald Sack. (2025). ConExion: Concept Extraction with Large Language Models.

2. Neidlinger, P., El Nahhas, O.S.M., Muti, H.S. *et al.* Benchmarking foundation models as feature extractors for weakly supervised computational pathology. *Nat. Biomed. Eng* **10**, 1113–1123 (2026).
3. Liévin, V., Palepu, A., Weng, WH. *et al.* Towards conversational artificial intelligence for disease management. *Nature* **655**, 1292–1299 (2026).

Appendix - Text of Motion SC7

Conference notes that:

1. According to the latest survey by the Royal College of General Practitioners Scotland, GPs spend around 22% of their day on administrative tasks that do not improve patient care.
2. Rapid development of Large Language Models (LLMs) and Large Multimodal Models (LMMs) has led to American Big Tech firms now strongly pushing the narrative that these models represent a form of general purpose artificial cognition.
3. There is growing evidence that LLMs and LMMs are not cognitive, but probabilistic, and therefore, issues such as confabulation, token bias and algorithmic pareidolia are ultimately not solvable. The increasing environmental cost of generative AI is particularly pronounced when the data centres powering the models are located in the United States.

Conference believes that:

1. While we should embrace the potential of technology to reduce the administrative burden on GPs, it is critical that a distinction is maintained between generative AI (which unreliably creates new content, even when it appears to be referencing existing knowledge) and extractive NLP (Natural Language Processing, which reliably organises and categorises data).
2. The industry narrative suggesting that LLMs and LMMs possess 'cognition', 'reasoning' or 'understanding' is scientifically flawed, and dangerous when applied to a healthcare context.
3. The use of models which are affected by token bias in a decision making context will inevitably introduce an unpredictable and unacceptable source of discrimination.
4. the 'human-in-the-loop' principle is non-negotiable, and as such a GP or another appropriate clinician must remain the final author and auditor of all clinical decisions and communications.
5. Using generative AI for direct diagnostic purposes, such as interpreting medical imagery or data, or summarising unread patient histories, poses unacceptable patient safety risks.
6. The appropriate use of AI in healthcare is proven, specialised tools that primarily assist with workflow management, rather than generative tools that make false claims of reasoning and dangerously overpromise on their capabilities.

111 Conference calls for Healthcare Improvement Scotland to:

- 112 1. Classify LLMs/LMMs as entirely unsuitable for diagnostic or clinical decision-making
113 duties.
- 114 2. Produce a Safe Transcription Standard for GP surgeries and consultants, such that
115 voice-to-text tools are only permitted if they:
 - 116 a. Incorporate preprocessing steps such as noise gating, voice activity detection
117 and speaker classification to reduce the risk of confabulation.
 - 118 b. Are limited to acting as transcription assistants, with a mandatory 'human-in-
119 the-loop' verification step before any data is committed to the patient record.
- 120 3. Ensure that only predictable, narrow-scope Computer Vision tools with medical
121 device certification are deployed for patient image analysis.
- 122 4. Require that NHS Scotland data remains within the European Economic Area of UK
123 jurisdiction and that no model training or computation is carried out under a US
124 Data Processing Agreement.
- 125 5. Permit the use of LLMs to generate synthetic training data only for the purpose of
126 building smaller, more reliable, and fully auditable NLP tools.
- 127 6. Promote the use of reliable extractive NLP technologies specifically designed to
128 reduce the administrative burden on GPs.

BM1: Constitutional Amendments for submission to Autumn Conference 2026, as agreed by the Scottish Executive.

1 Approval of Defecting Councillors

2 At clause I5, adds the following;

3 5 (d): Any member of a Council who joins or seeks to join a recognised Liberal Democrat
4 council group, without having been elected with the sanction of a Liberal Democrat
5 Delegated Nominating Officer, shall be subject to the approval procedure established in
6 terms of Section H, Clause 24.

7 Three Year Terms

8 At clauses F4, F20 and G1(g), replaces the words 'two years' with 'three years'.

9 Implementation of Office Bearer Term Limits

10 Adds new clause after F20;

11 F21: No person may hold the same Office Bearer post, other than Leader or Deputy Leader,
12 for longer than two full consecutive three year terms. If a person is elected by the members
13 or appointed by the Executive to fulfil one of these roles not less than two years into a
14 term, they may serve two additional three year terms. This does not apply to terms served
15 prior to 1st January 2028.

16 Renumbers following clauses accordingly.

17 Removal of Requirement for Postal Ballots

18 At clause F5, removes the word 'postal'.

19 Minimum Voting Age

20 At clause C4, after the words, "All Party Members shall be guaranteed the following rights
21 under this Constitution", adds the following;

22 "...but only members whose age is at least ten years shall be entitled to vote in Party
23 elections including Parliamentary and local government selections and the provisions of
24 this constitution as to members' voting rights shall be construed accordingly."

25 Office Bearer Vacancy

26 Replaces clause F10 with the following;

27 F10: Save if the Convener's term has less than six months to run the Executive may appoint
28 an acting Convener or if the vacancy for Leader or Deputy Leader occurs less than six
29 months before polling day in a scheduled Scottish General Election the Executive may
30 appoint an acting Leader or Deputy Leader."

31 **Renumber Duplicate Clause**

32 Renumbers the second clause H23 as H24, and renumbers following clauses accordingly.

33 **Constitutional Amendments to Any Conference**

34 At clause L1, after the words “called for the purpose.”, adds new sentence;

35 “Conference Committee, at their discretion, may also allow validly submitted constitutional
36 amendments to be considered at any other conference of the party.”

37 **European Parliament**

38 At clauses F9 and the Heading before second clause H23, removes the references to the
39 European Parliament.

40 **Joint Candidates Sub-Committee**

41 At F31a, change first occurrence of 13.4 to 19, and delete the word ‘States’.