

Scottish Liberal Democrats

Autumn Conference 2025, 18th of October, Radisson Blu – Glasgow

Pre – Agenda

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SC1: Expanding care for people with Dementia and Alzheimer's and their families

Submitted by member signatories

Mover: Les Tarr

Summator: Jacqueline Bell

1 Conference notes with concern that:

- 2 1. Dementia is the leading cause of death in the UK, yet Dementia UK cites that one
3 in three people with the condition are living without a diagnosis.
- 4 2. Alzheimer Scotland states that it has identified a cumulative £154 million in
5 proposed cuts to older people's and community care services in the financial
6 plans of Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) over the coming years.
- 7 3. The Accounts Commission has issued dire warnings about worsening IJB
8 finances and the need to reform how services are delivered to secure better
9 outcomes for people.
- 10 4. When plans for the National Care Service were abandoned, no alternative
11 mechanism for achieving a consistent minimum standard of care was provided
12 for in the Care Reform (Scotland) Act.
- 13 5. The wider harms caused by dementia and related conditions, which impact not
14 only the person with the diagnosis but also their families, friends, and unpaid
15 caregivers.
- 16 6. Within the medical research community, funding is tight; vital research is heavily
17 dependent on charitable groups such as Medical Research Scotland
18 supplementing the government grants awarded through sources such as the
19 Scottish Government's Chief Scientist Office, the Medical Research Council and
20 the National Institute for Health Research.

21 Conference believes that:

- 22 1. People with dementia are more than statistics; they are individuals who deserve
23 to be treated with dignity and supported to live as full a life as possible.
- 24 2. The inevitable collapse of the unworkable approach of a National Care Service
25 has created a policy vacuum, with no coherent plan to achieve a consistently
26 high standard of care across Scotland.
- 27 3. The cuts currently proposed by IJBs will have a devastating effect on people living
28 with dementia and their families by restricting access to vital services, ultimately
29 undermining their quality of life.

4. Older members of society who have contributed through taxes and national insurance should not be left behind by government inaction at their time of greatest need.
5. Families and unpaid caregivers providing essential support for loved ones with dementia must also be recognised, valued, and assisted.
6. Real-terms cuts to research budgets in Scotland are holding back vital work on new treatments and identification of the root causes of dementia.

Conference reaffirms our commitment to:

1. Giving people more control over their own lives and health so that everyone gets the care they need, when they need it and where they need it.
2. Helping people spend more of their lives in good health.
3. Ensuring that everyone has high-quality social care when they need it, so that all can live independently and with dignity.

Conference calls for the Scottish Government to:

1. Establish the level of cuts being made by Integration Joint Boards to dementia services in their 2025/26 budgets, and use its mid-year budget revisions to avert harmful outcomes for patients and their families.
2. Improve core dementia support services, fix care and put IJBs on a stable footing, including through service transformation, collaboration, shifting the focus to prevention and early intervention, and solving costly recruitment and retention problems with enhanced career pathways.
3. Work towards establishing and delivering Dementia Care Pathway Guarantees
4. Urgently establish minimum national care standards and entitlements with detailed, measurable, and enforceable delivery requirements.
5. Develop and fund a comprehensive support plan for the families and unpaid caregivers of people with dementia that includes guaranteed access to respite care.

Conference also calls on the UK Government to provide a rebate for the 2025/26 hike in employer's National Insurance Contributions to higher educational institutions and other public research institutes that undertake medical research.

Conference further calls for both Governments to end the cycle of real-terms cuts to research funding by:

- 62 1. Upgrading the total public funds available for new medical research grants
63 annually to keep pace with inflation.
- 64 2. Instructing public bodies to utilise Office of Budget Responsibility inflation
65 forecasts when determining the final award of multi-year research grants.

Highland Liberal Democrats - A Fair Deal for Rural Scotland

Mover: David Green

Summator: Cllr Andrew Baxter

1 Conference believes:

2 1. Scotland's rural communities are vital to our economy, our environment, and our
3 culture - but are too often left behind by the SNP's centralised, urban-focused
4 policy.

5 2. Many rural communities have a wealth of opportunities but also face significant
6 challenges, including:

7 a) Depopulation and the loss of young people;

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9 b) A chronic shortage of affordable housing and childcare;

10 c) Poor transport connectivity;

11 d) Recruitment and retention of staff to deliver public services, especially
12 in the education, health and social care sectors.

13 e) Digital exclusion and lack of access to reliable broadband and mobile
14 coverage.

15 3. Existing policy frameworks often fail to reflect the lived realities of rural
16 communities.

17 4. The centralisation of the police, the ill-judged attempt to impose Highly
18 Protected Marine Areas, and the botched National Care Service are examples of
19 decisions that run against the interests of rural communities and embody the
20 SNP's broken relationship with rural Scotland.

21 5. Scottish Liberal Democrats have a proud history of standing up for rural Scotland
22 -from Island transport to crofting rights- and must remain at the forefront of
23 shaping fair and sustainable rural futures.

24 Conference notes:

25 1. Scotland already has statutory duty for Island Communities Impact
26 Assessments (ICIAs) under the Islands Act 2018; however, no equivalent
27 statutory framework currently exists for rural Scotland.

28 2. The work of the Scottish Rural and Islands Parliament, and its call for legislation
29 to protect and enhance the resilience of rural places through their proposal to
30 enshrine a Rural Lens in law.

- 31 3. Scottish Land & Estates and others have advocated for formal rural proofing
32 legislation, such as mandatory impact assessments or rural-lens duty for all
33 public policy proposals - similar in statutory weight to ICIAs.
- 34 4. A Rural Delivery Plan is due to be published by the Scottish Government by 2026,
35 but accompanying guidance and toolkits insufficiently fall short of formal
36 legislation or impact assessment duties.
- 37 5. In Northern Ireland, rural proofing has been required since 2002 and is part of a
38 range of impact assessments, while in 2022 the Spanish congress adopted a
39 new law on the evaluation of public policies that includes a ‘rural proofing
40 mechanism’.

41 Conference calls for:

- 42 1. The Scottish Liberal Democrats to support legislation that:
43 a) Requires the Scottish Government to apply a statutory rural
44 communities Impact Assessment to new policies and legislation;
- 45 b) Embeds a Rural Lens in all public policymaking that ensures
46 transparency, scrutiny, and stakeholder inclusion, not just voluntary
47 guidance;
- 48 c) Requires monitoring of policies, so rural proofing is not a “tick-box”
49 exercise but a meaningful driver of outcomes;
- 50 d) Commits ministers to regularly report on the wellbeing and
51 sustainability of rural communities.
- 52 2. The Scottish Government to enable a review of the shape and size of rural local
53 authorities - subject to their request - and funding formulas to ensure local
54 services are properly resourced and meet the needs of local communities.

GCLD - Supporting and Improving Scotland's Nighttime Economy (NTE)

Submitted by Glasgow City Liberal Democrats

Mover: TBC

Summator: TBC

1 Conference notes:

- 2 1. That the nighttime economy (NTE) brings significant economic and cultural
3 benefits to Glasgow and Scotland more broadly, employing over 137,000 people
4 across Scotland and generating £43.5 billion in economic activity (1).
- 5 2. The recent failures in Glasgow's night bus system, where in 2023 First Bus
6 intended to scrap all of its Friday and Saturday late night services, and (even
7 after reaching an agreement with McGills to continue some routes) proceeded
8 with axing significant routes such as the N2 through Finnieston and Partick and
9 the N6 to East Kilbride, which together with the total absence of Subway services
10 on Sunday nights has left many Glaswegians with no public transport route
11 home from the city centre at night.
- 12 3. That a well-supported and thriving NTE is a matter of public safety, as bars and
13 nightclubs being understaffed and struggling to recruit bouncers and other
14 security staff leaves patrons vulnerable to violence and anti-social behaviour.
- 15 4. That NTE opportunities and activities are currently not equally accessible to
16 protected characteristic groups in Scotland, with the EHRC reporting that
17 women, trans and non-binary people were all less likely than men to feel safe
18 using a bus at night (2), and Transport Scotland reporting that disabled people
19 are less likely to feel safe and secure on buses and trains at night than non-
20 disabled people (3).
- 21 5. The boost to the NTE that can come from the creation of a dedicated ministerial
22 role, as in New South Wales where the creation of a Minister for the Night-time
23 Economy has led to innovative publicly-funded programmes such as Culture
24 Up Late, an initiative which extended museum and gallery hours in the region to
25 9pm, and facilitated world class exhibitions, live music, film screenings,
26 workshops, talks, and pop-up bars (4).

27 Conference believes:

- 28 1. That a flourishing nighttime economy is vital to Scotland's economy and society.
- 29 2. That support for the NTE ideologically aligns with the Scottish Liberal Democrats'
30 manifesto commitment to modernise employment rights and support people in

31 choosing unconventional working patterns and working hours while maintaining
32 a commitment to safety and workers' rights.

33 3. That both a practical focus on public safety and an ideologically liberal
34 commitment to support the individual's right to choose how they enjoy their own
35 evenings implore us to support the nighttime economy across Scotland.

36 4. That ensuring the operation of regular trains, trams, electric buses, and subway
37 services at night is necessary to support the proper functioning of the Low
38 Emission Zones in both Glasgow and Edinburgh, which are vital instruments for
39 cutting pollution in our towns and city centres.

40 Conference calls on the Scottish Government to:

41 1. Commit to stronger and clearer political support of Scotland's NTE.

42 2. Create a dedicated Minister for the Nighttime Economy, tasked with
43 implementing innovative national and local strategies to actively promote and
44 support Scottish nightlife (5).

45 3. Improve public safety in city centres at night, through increased and more visible
46 policing in ASB hot spots, facilitating better communication networks between
47 the police and NTE businesses such as nightclubs and pubs, and exploring other
48 practical solutions to keep patrons and nighttime workers safe.

49 4. Improve public safety on nighttime public transport services, to make these vital
50 services safer for individuals belonging to protected characteristic groups and
51 thereby empower these individuals to benefit from and more fully participate in
52 Scotland's NTE.

53 5. Work with all public transport providers in large towns and cities across Scotland
54 to increase the frequency and improve the reliability of late night services, in
55 order to mitigate the transport availability issues that often put people off staying
56 out late in the city.

57 6. Explore the possibility of alternatives to traditional nighttime transportation
58 options such as driverless taxis, which may work well in Glasgow due to the
59 city's grid layout, and when polled appear an appealing option for women
60 seeking safer and more private travel options (6).

PC1: Tackling Misogyny and Violence against Women and Girls

Submitted by Policy Committee

Mover: TBC

Summator: TBC

Note: this is a holding motion. The final text will be circulated to members ahead of Conference.

1 Conference notes with regret:

- 2 1. Since previous conference debates on this matter in 2020, violence against
3 women and girls is still endemic in our society, with recent crime statistics
4 showing sexual crimes in Scotland at their highest level since 1971.
- 5 2. The Scottish Government's recent decision to not bring forward a dedicated law
6 in this Parliament to tackle misogyny, as recommended by Baroness Helena
7 Kennedy KC, despite spending more than £140,000 commissioning the work
8 carried out by Baroness Kennedy and her working group in 2022.
- 9 3. In 2023/2024, Police Scotland recorded 63,867 incidents of domestic abuse, the
10 third highest level on record, with around two thirds of incidents involving a
11 victim and suspected perpetrator who had previously been recorded in a
12 domestic abuse incident.

13 Conference further notes:

- 14 1. The Scottish Government's publication of the Equally Safe Strategy, most
15 recently updated in 2023, which outlines steps and measures to be taken in
16 order to ensure the prevention and eradication of violence against women and
17 girls, with a delivery plan from Summer 2024-Summer 2026.
- 18 2. The UK Government has pledged to halve violence against women and girls in
19 the next decade.

20 Conference believes:

- 21 1. No one should ever live their life in fear of violence.
- 22 2. Misogyny is deeply rooted in nearly every facet of society and thus any response
23 to tackle it requires widespread and holistic strategies.

24 Conference calls on the Scottish and UK Governments:

- 25 1. To continue to work cross-party and with stakeholders, ensuring this is a key
26 priority for both Governments so that we can effectively tackle misogyny and end
27 violence against women and girls.

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PC2: Islanders and Coastal Communities Deserve Better: Ending the Ferries Fiasco

Submitted by Policy Committee

Mover:

Summator:

Note: this is a holding motion. The final text will be circulated to members ahead of Conference.

1 Conference notes:

- 2 1. Islanders and coastal communities are paying the price for the failure of the
3 Scottish Government to provide the ferries they need, manage maintenance, and
4 procure new vessels on time or on budget.
- 5 2. Scottish Liberal Democrats have launched a consultation on the future of
6 Scotland's ferry services, running from 8th August until 19th September, and will
7 hold a roundtable event with stakeholders.

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9 Conference believes:

- 10 1. Islanders, coastal communities and businesses deserve a better service and
11 deserve to reap the rewards this would bring.
- 12 2. The SNP Government have had their chance and shown themselves to be
13 incapable of running the ferries that islanders and coastal communities rely
14 upon.

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16 Conference calls for:

- 17 1. Changes that will bring an end to the ferries fiasco for good, informed by the
18 outcome of the party's consultation, for the sake of island and coastal
19 communities.

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