

# THE POST

Newsletter for the Angus & Mearns Liberal Democrats

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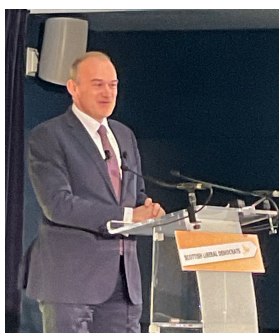


## Spring Conference in Dundee LIBERAL DEMOCRATS ARE GAINING AND CHANGING LOCAL POLITICS

**The news could not have been better on the opening day of the Spring Conference in Dundee: Fiona Bennett’s strong win of a brand new council seat in Edinburgh was greeted with excitement and hope. In front of a jubilant audience, the Leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats Alex Cole-Hamilton, declared: “This is just the latest seat we have captured from the SNP and it will not be the last.”**



The result in Edinburgh has given a welcome boost to the new “150 and rising” - strategy, launched in Hamilton last year by Alex. The aim is to get 150 new councillors elected across Scotland in 2027, a massive one on the 87 that were elected in May 2022. It has full support of **Ed Davey**, leader of the Lib Dems. “In your local parties: what have you done and what are you going to do to get behind Alex’s fantastic strategy? If you take nothing else from the Conference, let it be this: go and find more brilliant candidates now, way ahead of next elections and follow Alex’s awesome lead,” said Ed and continued:



“ Scottish MPs are well connected to their local communities which they represent. They hear their concerns on the door step, showing them that we care. First winning their trust and ultimately their votes. In other words, community politics. Community politics is something our party is good at. It’s what sets us apart from other parties. It’s how we have won in the past and it’s how we are winning today and in the future.”

## CONFERENCE IS IN THE HEART OF EVERY SLOGAN

by Rod Falconer, Convener

**When you look at our policies, especially our campaign manifesto, every slogan and every commitment comes deep from within the bedrock that is the Conference floor.**

If it's not been through the scrutiny of conference and approved by a majority vote it will never form part of our constantly evolving offer to our progressive followers. That's how important this conference weekend was. There were many locally relevant issues - school violence in particular. Another issue, which I would like to share with you is local communities benefitting from the renewable energy sector.

When you look out into the North Sea, do you see all those lovely turbines smiling back at you? We discussed how local communities should gain a higher share from our ever increasing renewables sector. Currently there is no statutory obligation for developers to pay a community benefit, no definition of a community per se or how they may benefit, only some Scot Gov guidance on £5k per megawatt irrespective of the gross value generated. So, bigger profits for the companies but a status quo for us here in the local community.

Any monies being generated here in our local area should be re-invested for our local needs. We called on the government to accept that 5% of gross revenue for new developments should be paid for community benefit. Also, to enshrine in law that communities around wind farms have a statutory right to benefit from such developments.

If you wish to propose future points for discussion or would like to take some issue to the Conference, please feel free to contact me as your local convener to get the process started here locally.

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCES FUELLED DEBATES

**The main auditorium was a hive of activity for two days. Issues from environment and energy to mental health, schools and immigration were all debated. There was no shortage of speakers and many were willing to share their own personal experiences.**

"I had not planned to speak at conference about this" was an often heard sentiment. Many marched to ask for a speaker's card spontaneously and spoke with passion about issues they strongly believe in.

Motions, if accepted, will become party policy and that's why voting for/against is an important part of the party business. Most motions were accepted after speakers had stated their support, however, one amendment was rejected with one vote. It was so close that votes were counted twice.

There were emergency motions too. **Alistair Carmichael** MP and 20 other members submitted a motion against the Conservative government's alarming Illegal Migration Bill. The motion called the Bill to be scrapped immediately and the Conference agreed.

Another emergency motion, submitted by **Willie Rennie** MSP, revealed violence in Scottish schools. According to trade union Unison, 22,507 violent incidents were recorded by Scotland's 32 councils between April 2021 and March 2022 with the majority against teachers and teaching assistants. The level of violence has increased since the pandemic. The Conference noted that there is a conspiracy of silence and of under reporting among the Scottish political and education leadership and that the current approach is not working. Sufficient investment in core education provision and support/resources for teachers and staff were called for.



## THE PRICE OF DEFENDING DEMOCRATIC VALUES MIGHT BE YOUR LIFE

*Kira Rudik, leader of the Ukrainian liberal party Golos, says this is what Ukrainians are willing to pay*



**There was no doubt who was the most anticipated guest speaker at the Conference. “Slava Ukraini! Heroyam Slava!” echoed in the main hall, when Kira Rudik was welcomed to the stage.**

Many were deeply moved by her account of the events of February 24th 2022 when Russia attacked Kyiv for the first time. This surprise attack came early in the morning, at 5 am. Nobody had expected Putin to target Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, but as soon as it happened there was fear that Putin was planning a coup and that Russian troops would try to kill president **Volodymyr Zelenskyy**.

“At times like this parliament must meet to declare that the country is under martial law,” Rudik explained. Party leaders urgently called MPs to see how many could come to Verkhova

Rada, the parliament building in Kyiv, which is located in an open space in a park in the city centre, an easy target for Russian bomber pilots. Rudik described the total chaos in Kyiv; how people were trying to get out and many roads were closed. It wasn't clear if MPs would actually be able to physically reach the parliament building. But they also had to do so in secrecy.

“We send a message for everyone to come to a place near the parliament and wait there until a signal is given,” Rudik tells the story. Finally, 400 MPs out of 440 managed to get inside the building. They moved in darkness through underground tunnels into the chambers.

After declaring martial law, the MPs made a statement for Ukrainians to be united and fight. Political disagreements were instantly forgotten when the MPs held hands and sang the national anthem.

“We made a vow that no matter how long this will last, we will stand united and work as one for Ukraine,” Rudik said. “We all have a desire to live in our own country, to decide our own future and to win the war. Only after this is over, we will again have the luxury to have political debates.” Now the parliament meets every other week in secrecy.

According to Rudik, the war has taught three lessons: humanity, leadership and how we are all connected. “The lesson of humanity is that we have seen how amazing people from the whole world have been. People from other countries have seen something in us that is the same as in themselves. A price has been put on the values. A price has been put on things you believe in and the price is sometimes as high as your own life.”

Above all, Ukrainians have a strong European identity. The fact that Ukraine is not yet a full members state of the EU, is not important at this juncture. Rudik says the Ukrainians feel that the country is on a superfast lane to become one and the rest is just paperwork.

Rudik makes it clear that Ukrainians are very grateful for all the help they have received from around the world. She is aware that **Boris Johnson** might not be the hero in the minds of British people, but he is particularly popular in Ukraine. So much so, that there is even a burger named after him.

### *Is sustainable peace possible?*

Even though the world woke up to the Russian intentions only a year ago, she stressed that Ukraine had already been at war for the past 9 years before the current Russian offensive. This has made Ukrainians very wary of the prospect of achieving sustainable peace.

“How can we make sure that Russia will not attack us again?” she asks.

She also has a word of warning: many undemocratic, autocratic regimes are watching the war in Ukraine.

“These regimes are watching and waiting to see if democratic countries break down. Then it would become normal to attack your neighbour and grab a piece of land.”

Rudik worries about the next generation. Children, who have now seen dead bodies, who do their homework in bomb shelters and who had to become refugees. The damage will be long lasting and very difficult to repair. But she firmly believes that the day will come when Kyiv will have a victory parade on its streets. Until then, the fight goes on.

### *Outi Bourke*

*Kira Rudik is the leader of our sister party, Golos (also known as Holos). It is the first liberal party to be elected to the Ukrainian parliament. The party won 20 MPs in the 2019 parliamentary elections. Rudik is also a Vice President of ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe) since 2022.*



## MICHAEL TURVEY FOR WESTMINSTER

**Michael Turvey has been selected as the Lib Dem candidate for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine in the next general elections. The seat is currently held by the Conservatives, but Michael is determined to swing it back to us.**



Michael Turvey, Convenor of the Aberdeenshire West Liberal Democrats, was unanimously chosen by members living in the constituency in March, just before the Conference.

Historically people of Aberdeenshire have been served well by the Liberal Democrats. We were represented for decades by such excellent and well respected MPs as **Sir Robert Smith, Nicol Steven, Malcolm Bruce** and in Holyrood by MSPs like **Nora Radcliffe and Alison McInnes, Mike Rumbles** as recently as two years ago.

Michael's campaign will be officially launched on 22nd April 2023. He wants to change the conversation from the constant bombardment of independence rhetoric by the SNP and in-fighting amongst the Tories to issues that matter to people here and now.

"The SNP puts all its effort into independence, while health, education and drug-related deaths spiral out of control. The Tories are riddled with in-fighting and corruption, bringing chaos in the country," Michael says and calls for a change.

"The cost-of-living crisis is being felt by every household across the North East. The price of energy, food, clothing - all are becoming increasingly more expensive and, for many, unaffordable."

Michael has worked in the energy sector for over 15 years. The Lib Dems are focused on delivering supply security, prosperity and make Scotland a net zero country, but this must not happen at the expense of jobs in the North East. "We have a vision for the North Sea. Existing hydrocarbon assets have a bright future turning natural gas into blue hydrogen. Other low/zero carbon fuels will complement new energy infrastructure, such as Scotwind developments. That will help secure energy supplies for the rest of the UK and other European neighbours. This will require upgrading of the National Grid," he explains.

Michael also strongly supports fishermen working out of Stonehaven, Gourdon and Johnshaven, who are struggling to make the live transfer needed to get the best prices for their catch. This is thanks to the hard Brexit border policies put in place by the Tories.

Michael is married to Cllr **Yi-Pei Turvey** and they have three children. They live in the centre of the constituency, between Banchory and Stonehaven.

Michael's neighbours are mostly farmers and he takes a keen interest in farming and rural affairs.

"Many of our farmers have had a tough time recently - with capacity being curtailed by labour shortages. While livestock prices have been buoyant, the cost of many basics such as machine parts, feed and fertiliser has been skyrocketing and subsidies have been uncertain. Our rural communities have been sold out by the Tories, only the Liberal Democrats will stand up for them," he says.

**Campaigning for a seat at Westminster is not cheap. If you would like to donate to Michael's campaign or help in other ways, please contact Michael on 07482214774 or email to [michael.j.turvey@gmail.com](mailto:michael.j.turvey@gmail.com)**



## Reflections on the Constitutional Future of Scotland

by John Bourke

**On the last day of the Conference, on Saturday afternoon, I went to the Law Society sponsored presentation on the Constitutional Future of Scotland. This was my first time attending the Conference and I didn't have much idea what to expect as I had never previously been to a political occasion of any description.**

However, I really enjoyed the Conference: tough issues were not ducked and there was no grandstanding. I came away far more persuaded that the Lib Dems is my political home than I had felt upon arrival. For me, one of the most interesting events was the Law Society fringe meeting. I soon realised that I knew almost nothing about this topic other than regarding Scottish independence as a disastrous economic path and a sad end to the United Kingdom. I also knew that Lib Dems supported 'federalism' and that this word means a lot of different things in different contexts. I was constantly thinking "I must remember that" during the three presentations. It was very refreshing to see and hear such political depth and such respect for us as the audience. Points I took away include:

1. Although support for independence may have peaked below 50%, that doesn't mean that support for unionism exceeds 50%.
2. It's important to root constitutional change in the general respect Liberals have for individuals and communities, including nations, rather than seeking an emotional, romantic version of Scotland.
3. Few participants thought Holyrood needed a second chamber but they did think the committee system was not functioning properly as a relatively non-partisan method for holding the executive to account and improving legislation.
4. In the short term, pragmatic improvement of devolved Government institutions was probably the best policy goal. Longer term policy could develop as more clarity emerges about the constitutional priorities of the Scottish people assuming it does indeed become increasingly clear that independence is not the likely final destination.



The low level of current demand for regional autonomy in England does potentially make for serious imbalance in a four nation federation. There are signs that this may be changing in areas such as Manchester and Teeside.

### WHISKYTASTING NOTES: POMEGRANATE, BUBBLE-GUM OR MARSHMALLOW?



*Expert guidance from Alistair Carmichael MP led us to the world of tasting whisky, kindly provided by Kingsbarns distillery. You need a good nose, said Alistair and that was certainly true, as everyone tried their best to sniff if it was fruit, berries or marshmallow notes in the wee dram. Thank you to Alistair for hosting! And a big thank you from the Dundee Liberal Democrat Association: we raised £660.*

