



Autumn Conference 2024

16th November 2024

Salutation Hotel, Perth



Preliminary Agenda



Information about our venue:

Salutation Hotel, Perth

The Salutation Hotel, Perth is the oldest hotel in Scotland, and is a part of the Strathmore Group. The hotel brings great character and history making it a fitting venue for our Autumn Conference.

Address: 30-34 South Street, Perth, PH2 8PH

Train Station: Perth Train Station - 12 minute walk from venue

Bus Station: Perth Bus Station - 10 minute walk from venue

Accommodation availability:

Members can claim a discount on hotel accommodation by phoning the hotel to book their room and referencing 'Scottish Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference'. The venue is also walking distance to other hotels in the centre of town.

Parking:

Parking is available throughout Perth, mostly with 'Pay&Display' machines. The venue offers a discount for the Multi Storey Car Park on Canal Street. This can be discussed with the venue upon arrival.

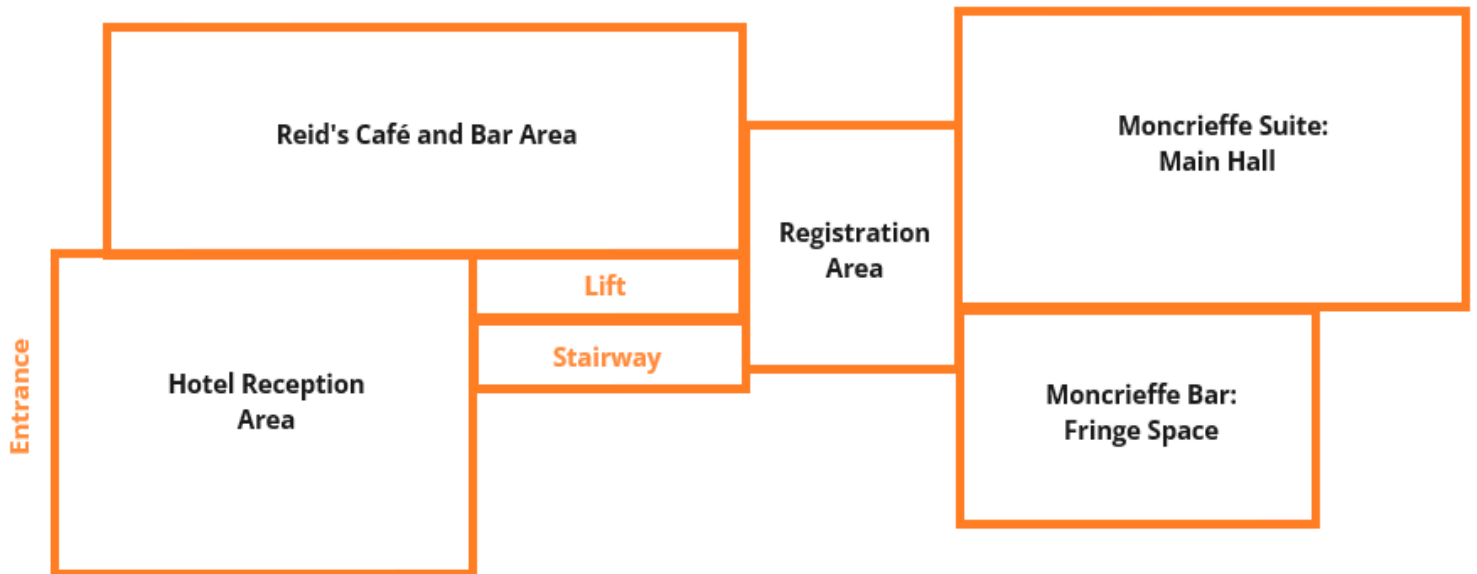
Catering facilities:

The venue is equipped with a cafe on the ground floor, offering teas, coffees, cakes and other food options. There are also a variety of cafes and food offerings short walks away from the venue.

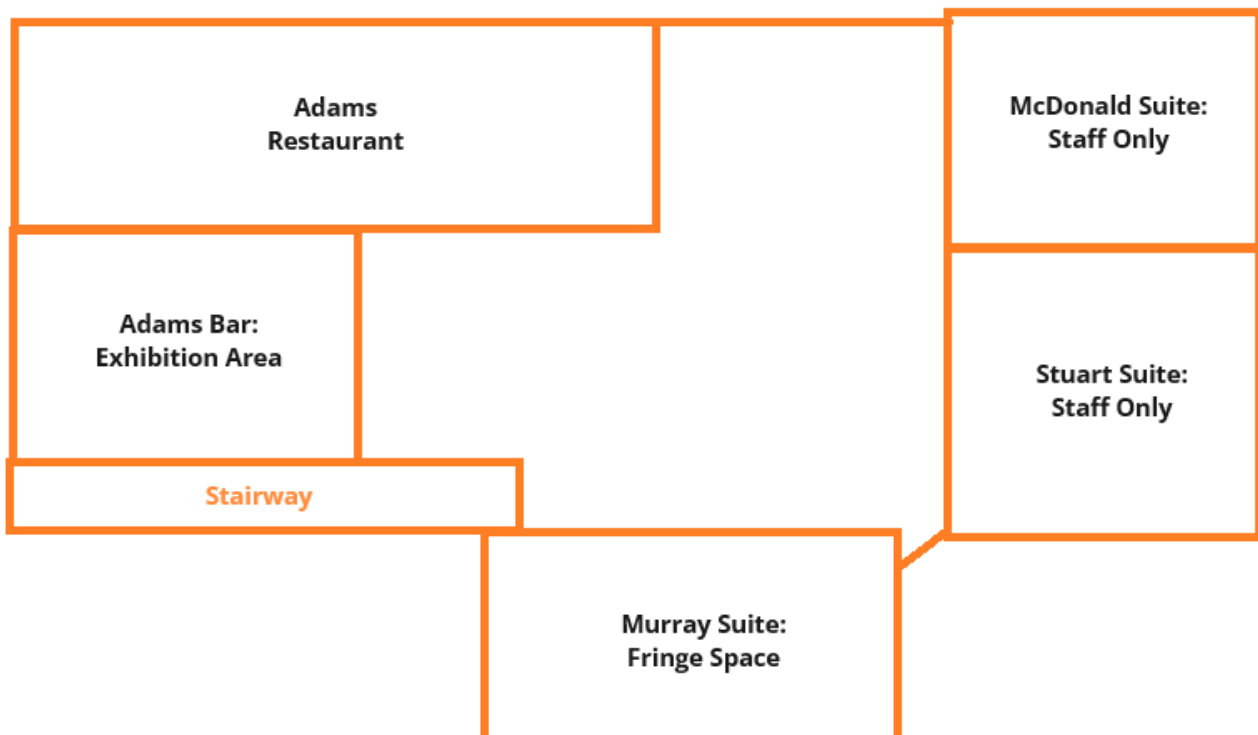


Venue Floor Plan

Floor 1



Floor 2





What's going on? - Morning Session

Start: 09:30

Welcome

SC1: Winter Fuel Payments

MM1: Justice and Policing

Introducing our new MPS:
Susan Murray MP and Angus
MacDonald MP

LUNCH: 12:00-13:00

FRINGES: 13:00-14:00



What's going on? - Afternoon Session

Start: 14:00

SC2: Reducing the harm caused by smoking

SC3: Addressing the shortfall of ASN Teachers and PSAs

LEADERS SPEECH:

Alex Cole Hamilton MSP

EM1: Emergency Motion

SC4: Gender Balance in our Candidate Selections for the Scottish Parliament Elections



Motion 1: Winter Fuel Payments

Mover: Christine Murdoch

Summator: Caron Lindsay

1 Conference notes:

- 2 1. The SNP Government had been preparing to replace the Winter Fuel
3 Payment with Pension Age Winter Heating Payment but has now proposed
4 replicating the changes recently announced by the UK Government and
5 delay the introducing of the Winter Heating Payment until 2025-26.
- 6 2. That the cut to Winter Fuel Payment was announced without prior notice
7 or consultation with affected groups.
- 8 3. While some, fortunately, can afford to lose these payments many cannot.
9 Around 900,000 pensioners will be £300 worse off this winter and average
10 bills are set to rise by £149.
- 11 4. Winters in Scotland are colder and often longer than in the rest of the UK,
12 with many people in rural Scotland having no access to mains gas, meaning
13 higher fuel costs than in non-rural areas.
- 14 5. Liberal Democrat MPs have led the fight against the cut in Winter Fuel
15 Payment in Westminster, standing up for pensioners who will be impacted
16 by these changes this winter.

17 Conference believes:

- 18 1. Restricting the benefit to those who receive Pension Credits (PC) or other
19 social security benefits, will see some pensioners who just fail to qualify for
20 PC worse off than those who do.



- 21 2. The UK Government has made a grave mistake in its decision to cut Winter
22 Fuel Payment
- 23 3. That while the Scottish Government may not be able to bring in its
24 proposed Winter Heating Payment, it has other levers and powers at its
25 disposal to help pensioners this winter, such as the possibility of a social
26 tariff for gas and electricity.
- 27 Conference calls:
- 28 1. On the UK Government to reverse their decisions to cut Winter Fuel
29 Payment for 2024-25 and to consult with organisations supporting older
30 people before announcing changes for any future years.
- 31 2. On the UK Government to carry out work to ensure that everyone who is
32 eligible for Pension Credit receives it.
- 33 3. On the Scottish Government to explore other options it has at its disposal
34 to help pensioners through this winter



Motion 2: Reducing the harm caused by smoking

Mover: Adam Harley

Summator: TBC

1 Conference notes:

- 2 1. The harm caused by tobacco, with over 8,000 smoking-related deaths
3 every year in Scotland, meaning it is the most preventable cause of ill
4 health and premature death.
- 5 2. The annual cost to NHS Scotland of treating smoking-related diseases is
6 estimated to be between £300m and £500m each year.
- 7 3. The Scottish Government's target is for smoking prevalence among the
8 adult population to be 5% or lower by 2034, and that Public Health
9 Scotland reports that 15% of adults were cigarette smokers in 2022.
- 10 4. The new UK Government will legislate to gradually increase the age of sale
11 for cigarettes, meaning it will be an offence to sell tobacco products to
12 anyone born on or after 1 January 2009.
- 13 5. Agreement has been reached with devolved governments, meaning that a
14 four nations approach will be taken subject to the Scottish Parliament
15 giving its consent.
- 16 6. Reports suggest that the Prime Minister is also considering separate
17 tougher rules on outdoor smoking in England.

18 Conference believes:

- 19 1. In John Stuart Mill's harm principle that says individuals should be free to
20 act as they wish unless their actions cause harm to another.



- 21 2. State interventions to reduce smoking should be evidence-based.
- 22 Conference calls for:
- 23 1. The Scottish Liberal Democrat party to A) support OR B) oppose the
- 24 introduction of an escalating age limit on the purchase of tobacco
- 25 products.
- 26 2. The Scottish Liberal Democrat party to A) support OR B) oppose further
- 27 restrictions on outdoor smoking rules.
- 28 3. The new UK Government to introduce a levy on tobacco company profits
- 29 to help fund healthcare and smoking cessation.



Motion 3: Addressing the shortfall of ASN teachers and PSAs

Mover: Amanda Clark

Summator: Amanda Clark

1 Conference notes that:

- 2 1. The Scottish Government's pupil census shows the number of pupils
3 identified with additional support needs (ASN) has doubled over the last
4 decade, rising from 132,000 in 2013 to 259,000 in 2023.
- 5 2. The teacher census shows the number of ASN teachers has decreased
6 by 12% (392 teachers) since 2013, falling to 2,898.
- 7 3. The Scottish Parliament's Education, Children and Young People
8 Committee undertook an inquiry into additional support for learning. Its
9 report, published on 14 May 2024, stated that "there was strong evidence
10 to suggest that the majority of ASN pupils are not having their needs
11 met".
- 12 4. There have been devastating cuts to education budgets made by some
13 councils, following derisory settlements from the Scottish Government,
14 which are expected to lead to job losses for ASN staffing with harmful
15 long-term impacts upon pupils. Glasgow City Council is cutting 450
16 classroom teachers over 3 years, with NASUWT and Scotland's Children
17 and Young People's Commissioner among those warning that this will be
18 felt acutely by pupils with disabilities and additional needs.
- 19 5. The attainment gap in the pass rate between disabled and non
20 disabled learners widened at both National 5 and Higher level this year.



21 6. The National Deaf Children's Society in Scotland report that there has
22 been a steep decline in qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young
23 People (QToDs), and evidence from Edinburgh University indicates that
24 there has been a significant decrease in the numbers of Qualified
25 Teachers of the Visually Impaired (QTVI) trained in Scotland.

26 Conference believes that:

- 27 1. Every child has a right to a good education, the right to achieve their
28 potential and be supported to have a positive school experience.
- 29 2. The statutory requirement to identify and make provision for the extra
30 support and resources some pupils need to achieve their potential must
31 be respected.
- 32 3. Cuts to teacher numbers will not only affect ASN pupils but have a
33 wider impact on all pupils. Teaching staff are already over-stretched and
34 violence in schools is increasing. Teachers have minimal non-class contact
35 time and are expected to cater for large classes with wide-ranging needs
36 often without pupil support assistants.
- 37 4. The presumption of mainstreaming cannot be delivered without the
38 resources also being in place to support teachers, pupils and families.
- 39 5. The distinct needs of children with a sensory impairment (blind, deaf
40 and deafblind children) can only be met by being able to access support
41 from a teacher with additional specialist qualifications.

42 Conference calls for:

- 43 1. The Scottish Government, Education Scotland and COSLA to jointly
44 develop a national strategy to enhance the training, recruitment and
45 retention of ASN teachers and PSAs. This should:
 - 46 a. include consideration of career progression for trained specialist



- 47 teachers.
- 48 b. focus on the needs of each individual pupil by establishing a
- 49 guaranteed minimum level of support staff.
- 50 c. include a national workforce plan for specialist teachers for
- 51 children with a sensory impairment, with clear pathways for
- 52 teachers who want to specialise, and bursaries for funded places
- 53 for teachers studying to obtain the mandatory qualifications.
- 54 2. The Scottish Government to provide job security for educational staff
- 55 by ensuring proper, stable working conditions and putting an end to the
- 56 culture of short-term and zero hours contracts.
- 57 3. Local authorities to use the direct funding coming from the Scottish
- 58 Government for additional teachers and classroom support assistants to
- 59 enhance ASN provision and reverse the steep decline in qualified teachers
- 60 of deaf children and young people and qualified teachers of the visually
- 61 impaired.



Motion 4: Gender balance in our selections for the next Scottish Parliament Elections

Business Motion

Mover: Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP

Summator: Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP

1 Conference notes:

- 2 1. That of the 31 Liberal Democrat MSPs elected to the Scottish Parliament
3 since its inception, only four of them have been women.
- 4 2. All of the Lib Dem MSPs elected in the Scottish Parliament elections of
5 2016 were men, while of those elected in 2021, only one of the four
6 elected is a woman.
- 7 3. Successive opinion polling and the results of the 2024 General Election
8 suggest the party could dramatically increase its representation at the
9 next Scottish Parliamentary elections.
- 10 4. The efforts being undertaken by the party leadership and key
11 stakeholders to encourage more women to stand for the Scottish Liberal
12 Democrats at all levels
- 13 5. The party has successfully improved the representation of women among
14 our elected members in the past through gender balance mechanisms in
15 both Westminster and the European Parliament.
- 16 6. That conference previously agreed to use a system of gender balanced
17 lists for the 2021 Scottish Parliament election which would have seen an
18 additional four women MSPs elected had our vote share increased
19 marginally.
- 20 7. Those mechanisms employed by the party for the selection of Holyrood



21 candidates have now timed out and the party has no current mechanisms
22 to achieve a more balanced representation of women in our next Scottish
23 Parliamentary group.

24 8. Section 104 of the Equality Act 2010 allows the party to introduce gender
25 balance mechanisms in the selection arrangements for candidates in
26 certain circumstances. The circumstances are:-

27 (a) that the arrangements apply to a relevant election. Relevant elections
28 include Scottish Parliamentary elections.

29 (b) the purpose of the arrangements is to reduce inequality in the party's
30 representation in the body concerned. Inequality in the context of
31 gender balance means between the current number of male and
32 female MSPs.

33 (c) the arrangements are a proportionate means of achieving that
34 purpose.

35 Conference believes:

36 1. That given the possibility of a significant increase in our MSP group, it is
37 imperative to do all we can to improve the gender balance of that group
38 through encouragement, training and the introduction of a gender
39 balance mechanism for the next Scottish Parliament Election.

40 2. As there is currently a 3:1 male to female ratio, the Party can put in place
41 selection arrangements intended to reduce that inequality as afforded
42 under the terms of the Equality Act 2010.

43 3. That selection arrangements are an appropriate and necessary means of
44 reducing gender inequality among Liberal Democrat MSPs.



45 Conference resolves:

- 46 1. To alter the arrangements for the selection of candidates for the regional
47 lists so that the four regions closest to returning a Liberal Democrat MSP
48 based on the 2021 election results see the highest placed woman in that
49 contest ranked at number 1 on that list. This would apply to the following
50 four regional lists:
- 51 • North East Scotland
 - 52 • Highlands and Islands
 - 53 • Mid Scotland and Fife
 - 54 • Lothian
- 55 2. The remaining four lists would be selected under normal arrangements
56 with no changes.
- 57 3. This arrangement would be disapplied following the conclusion of the
58 next Scottish Parliament election.
- 59 4. Constituency selections will proceed based on current arrangements.