

Scottish National Party National Council

Sunday 27 August 2023, 11h00

Perth Concert Hall, Mill Street, Perth

Final Agenda

AGENDA

Morning Session – Internal

- 11h00 Welcome and Report of Conferences Committee
- 11h05 Update from Governance Review Group
- 12h00 National Office Bearer Reports
- 12h45 Close of Session

Afternoon Session

- 13h45 Address by Party Leader
- 14h05 Resolutions
- 16h00 Close of Session

RESOLUTIONS

1. THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Conference acknowledges the positive impact of free bus travel for individuals under 22 years old, encouraging younger generations to utilise public transport. This initiative should be extended to all urban rail-based travel, aiming to maximise climate change mitigation and reduce harmful and toxic pollution from Non-Exhaust Emissions (NEEs), benefiting public health. Restrictive legislation that impedes tramline construction should be removed and the frequency, capacity and reliability of public transport should be increased to align us with European cities.

The Scottish Government should continue to incentivise the transition to public transport to reduce vehicle numbers, to implement schemes to slow traffic and pedestrianise more streets. Continued electrification and expansion of railways is required for public transport wherever possible. Dualling the A9, or main route North should be prioritised using steel on steel, a cleaner alternative to rubber on asphalt and more easily powered by Scotland's renewable energy sources.

PENTLANDS WEST BRANCH

2. JUST TRANSITION

Conference must learn from the abhorrent, hostile Thatcher legacy of privatisation and destruction of Scottish Industries such as coal and steel; the impacts extremely harmful and still prevalent in communities to this day. Conference fully recognises the current, special case for workers dependent on the oil industry in the north east and in the northern isles and must not repeat these failed and vicious Thatcherite policies. Instead, there must be a different, more humane, just transition from fossil fuels to renewables.

Conference asserts our very survival is dependent upon drastically reducing our CO₂ emissions yet, alarmingly, they are continually increasing. The IPCC was crystal clear that, under no circumstances, should there be any more oil or gas production. Antonio Guterres said that if we drill for more oil, 'we are digging our own graves'. Therefore, we cannot exacerbate this peril.

Conference values the wellbeing of all its citizens and recognises the particular vulnerability of oil workers and communities during our transition to renewables. Conference also understands the critical, urgent need to reduce carbon from fossil fuels is the highest priority; our very existence is at risk.

Therefore, conference proposes that:

1. although reserved to Westminster, the SNP and Scottish Government must do all in their

power to ensure all the residual oil and gas in Scottish land and waters must remain in the ground with immediate effect and into the future.

2. workers dependent on the oil industry should be supported into climate friendly jobs; support should include Government funding for training and living expenses for the duration of training to transition.

3. initially, renewables projects should centre on those geographical areas most impacted by the transition from fossil fuels with subsequent geographical spread; ultimately, transition must be beneficial for all of us and all of Scotland.

WEST FIFE & COASTAL VILLAGES BRANCH

2A After the word “ensure” add “that, in relation to future developments,”

Delete “with immediate effect and into the future” and add “unless, as recommended by the Climate Change Committee, it can be proved that such extraction would meet rigorous climate compatibility checkpoints aligned to the Paris Agreement”

After “climate friendly jobs” insert “in recognition that we must consider one ‘energy workforce’ which will increasingly work in the renewable sector.”

DUNDEE CITY WEST BRANCH

2B Replace

1. although reserved to Westminster, the SNP and Scottish Government must do all in their power to ensure all the residual oil and gas in Scottish land and waters must remain in the ground with immediate effect and into the future.

With

1. although reserved to Westminster, the SNP and Scottish Government must do all in their power to ensure all the residual oil and gas (meaning where exploration and/or extraction licenses have not yet been issued) in Scottish land and waters must remain in the ground with immediate effect and into the future.

KIRKCUDBRIGHT BRANCH

3. TAXING PRIVATE SCHOOLS NARROWING THE ATTAINMENT GAP

Council recognises that the educational attainment gap remains stubbornly high between those from the least advantaged backgrounds and those from the most advantaged backgrounds.

Council also recognises that private schools benefit from charity status and many leavers from these establishments achieve greater positions in the field of employment.

This council agrees that in order to close the educational attainment gap and give our least advantaged children a better start in life the SNP Scottish Government should use the taxation powers at its disposal and create a tax (equivalent to Value Added Tax) for each place at these private schools.

Council also agrees that the revenue raised from this should be deployed to fully close this educational attainment gap by directly focusing these resources to schools in SIMD 1 and 2 zones.

GLASGOW PROVAN BRANCH

4. E-CIGARETTES/VAPES

Council acknowledges the harm caused by the use of E-cigarettes and notes in particular their popularity and appeal to children and young adults.

Council recognises that harm caused by previously deemed innocuous products for example asbestos in industry and tobacco for personal use/consumption. These products were later deemed harmful and we know now that these can cause serious illness and premature death.

Council shares concerns raised by health professionals and environmentalists concerned their use including the lack of research about long-term health complications and the lithium batteries and disposable nature of them and their packaging.

Council calls on the Scottish Government to introduce legislation to restrict the promotion of E-cigarettes on shop floors including the immediate termination of the use of previous displays where tobacco was once prominently displayed behind shop counters, on shop floors, commercial advertising spaces and enhance restrictions regarding the sales and marketing of these products.

GLASGOW PROVAN BRANCH

4A Para 1 Line 1 insert 'disposable' between 'use of' and 'e-cigarettes'

Para 3 Delete 'concerned' to end of paragraph.
Insert 'regarding the health implications for children and young people and the environmental damage caused by littering and the danger of lithium batteries'

Para 4 Delete paragraph

Insert 'National Council calls on the Scottish Government to introduce legislation to ban disposable vapes as soon as possible.'

ANGUS NORTH & MEARNS CA

5. EXPANSION OF HIV TESTING IN SCOTLAND

Council welcomes the Scottish Governments ambition to eliminate HIV transmission in Scotland by 2030.

Council recognises that eliminating HIV transmission in Scotland will require a multi-faceted, whole-society, approach, and notes that the expansion of HIV testing is vital to meeting this goal.

Council urges anyone who may need a HIV test to get one as soon as possible; recognises that there should be no shame or stigma in taking a HIV test nor living with the virus, and that those who have HIV can live normal, healthy lives if on effective treatment.

Council commends HIV Prevention England for its annual National HIV Testing Week campaign, and welcomes recent commitments by the Welsh Government to implement its own Testing Week for Wales. Council also notes the success of emergency department opt-out HIV testing in England and its success in reaching communities most impacted by health inequalities in the UK.

Council calls on the Scottish Government to commit to the expansion of HIV testing in Scotland as a matter of urgency, including committing to the introduction of a funded National Testing Week for Scotland and to piloting opt-out HIV testing in Scotland's emergency departments in areas of the country where HIV is most prevalent.

OUT FOR INDEPENDENCE

6. HOMES FOR ALL

Conference welcomes the commitment in our 2021 manifesto to using a Citizens' Assembly to examine how best to reform Local Authority funding and recommends that in the meantime the Scottish Government should phase in supplementary taxes to raise funding for Local Authorities that are stretched to breaking point by austerity imposed on Scotland by Westminster.

First amongst these Conference recommends that the Scottish Government introduce a Supplementary Land Tax, on all ultimate beneficial owners or legal persons with total property holdings larger than one acre, to finance a Housing Land Corporation jointly owned

by all Scottish Local Authorities.

Conference recognises that the introduction of such a Housing Land Corporation was envisioned as a recommendation of the report of the Social Justice and Fairness Commission and adopted as party policy in 2021. It could be a modern incarnation of the great tradition of holding land in the common good within Scotland.

Conference would encourage SNP Parliamentarians to legislate for such a body as a priority, with full powers to:

- compulsorily purchase land at existing use value in appropriate circumstances.
- assume ownership of land that does not have its ultimate beneficial owners registered to pay the tax before the deadline for its introduction.
- facilitate the construction of half a million homes for social rent, to Passivhaus or equivalent standard, by 2030.
- create standardised plans to help speed up that development.
- ensure all such properties maximise their energy generation and storage potential to minimise grid demand and congestion.
- encourage the use of sustainable and future proof infrastructure, including district heating networks and communal ground source heat pumps, during planning and initial construction.
- develop those homes in partnership with communities that will be empowered to design, operate, and own them in a way that creates wealth and wellbeing for those communities.
- explore new and innovative funding options to maximise the ability of communities to benefit.
- ensure that rural communities are revived and centuries of depopulation reversed as a priority.
- help people that want to build their own home to do so using a similar model to that used in Germany.
- devote resources to retraining and upskilling the construction workforce.
- explore options to overcome temporary bottlenecks like importing pre-fab units from markets with spare construction capacity.
- explore options to boost economic and industrial development as part of a transition to net zero.

Conference would not expect parliamentarians to limit their ambition to those goals but to use them as inspiration to go further and achieve more.

WEST FIFE & COASTAL VILLAGES BRANCH

7. REDISTRIBUTING WEALTH TO INCREASE HEALTH – CAPPING PILLAR 1 PAYMENTS

The Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate paid 4 Direct Payments of greater than £1m last year.

This happens because over 83% of the annual £650m agricultural payments budget, which is paid to 18,000 recipients, is based on land ownership. Unfortunately, Scotland has one of the most concentrated patterns of land ownership in the northern hemisphere, with around 1,200 landowners owning two thirds of our land and just over 400 families owning half of it. That simple concentration of land ownership means that 1% of the claimants, those with most land, receive 10% of the budget. The top 20% of the claimants receive over 60% of the budget. In order to address the inherent inequality caused by the feudal nature of land ownership, conference calls on the party to support the introduction of a cap on the level of funding any individual or company can receive. Our European neighbours, Ireland, have now capped agricultural subsidy payments at 66,000 Euros. If we applied the same principle in Scotland, that would free up around £200m of public money per annum.

Instead of the wealthiest, largest landowners benefiting from that additional money, as they do now, our poorest and most at risk communities could genuinely benefit from a slice of it. Local authorities could use that money to support local food production; develop shorter food supply chains by working directly with local producers; transform local public procurement; open public diners serving fresh, affordable food; redesign how we meet food insecurity and address the public health problems the current system is exacerbating.

National Council calls on the party to support this policy and urge the Scottish Government to be bold in its review of current agricultural subsidies.

DUNDEE CITY WEST BRANCH

8. SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ+ ASYLUM SEEKERS

Conference notes the current lack of safe routes to seeking asylum in the UK from abroad, forcing asylum seekers to endanger their lives to reach these shores. Conference further notes that, under the new Illegal Migration Act, the UK risks breaching its international human rights responsibilities. Conference affirms that it is not illegal to seek asylum and that seeking asylum is a basic human right.

Conference acknowledges that the global rise in anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment has placed the lives of queer people across the world in danger, and that many LGBTQ+ people will be forced to seek asylum. Conference specifically notes the passage of the extreme anti-LGBTQ+ legislation in Uganda, which has become the first country in the world to criminalise merely identifying as LGBTQ+.

Conference recognises that LGBTQ+ people who arrive in the UK and are able to claim asylum often face humiliating assessments, hostile Home Office staff who disbelieve their sexual orientation, and unsuitable accommodation that places them at greater risk of violence and exploitation than their straight counterparts.

Conference acknowledges that LGBTQ+ asylum seekers placed in detention are at high risk of abuse and are not protected, and that trans women in particular are at risk of being

placed in male detention centres. Conference notes that having to hide their gender identity or sexual orientation in detention makes pursuing an asylum claim on the basis of LGBTQ+ identity difficult.

Conference acknowledges that even once LGBTQ+ asylum seekers are granted refugee status, they face systemic barriers to participation in the wider LGBTQ+ community while having to navigate life in a new country that is itself in the grip of an anti-LGBTQ+ panic. Conference further notes that few support programmes are in place and that these have limited, short term funding.

Conference therefore condemns the Illegal Migration Act, and calls on the Scottish National Party to commit to stable, long-term funding for programmes supporting LGBTQ+ asylum seekers and refugees and pressure the UK government to:

1. End detention of asylum seekers;
2. Create a framework providing appropriate services to LGBTQ+ asylum seekers; and
3. Urgently improve the process of decision-making for LGBTQ+ asylum claims with an emphasis on rights, dignity and respect.

OUT FOR INDEPENDENCE

9. A STRATEGY FOR ENDING INTIMATE PARTNER AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN AND BOYS

Conference notes the recent publication of a report from Glasgow Caledonian University showing that one in four gay and bisexual men in Scotland have experienced intimate partner violence, and that research by Survivors UK and Galop have found that over half of gay, bisexual, or trans men have experienced some form of sexual assault.

Conference recognises that the 2021 SNP manifesto promised the introduction of a national strategy for ending intimate and sexual violence against men and boys to sit in parallel with and complement the work of Equally Safe, but that further action has not been taken and does not appear in the 2022-23 Programme for Government.

Conference also notes that, at present, the Scottish Government does not have a national strategy for dealing with intimate and sexual violence against men and boys, leaving survivors without support and feeling as though police and public services are unprepared to take their cases seriously. Conference acknowledges that this lack of services, support, and recognition for men and boys who survive intimate and sexual violence creates a culture of silence, driving high rates of isolation, shame, and unacknowledged trauma. Conference therefore calls on the Scottish National Party:

1. to fulfil its manifesto promise and move quickly and decisively to create a comprehensive, robust, and appropriate strategy for male survivors of intimate and sexual violence;

2. to commit to an education strategy for public services, the police, and the court system about supporting male survivors of intimate and sexual violence; and

3. to develop outreach services to ensure that all survivors can access the help and support they need.

OUT FOR INDEPENDENCE

REPORTS

CONFERENCES COMMITTEE REPORT

As set out in the Provisional Agenda, National Council will operate on the Conference Standing Orders for the time being, while the Conferences Committee considers feedback on the potential structure of future meetings. With the expansion of delegate entitlement in the new iteration of National Council, the previous format might not be exactly what people want, and so – while keeping an emphasis on the additional capacity for policy debate – we want to keep an open mind on how members will get the most out of the event as we go forward.

On this occasion, Conferences Committee considered 36 submissions for the Provisional Agenda. There were a number of internal resolutions which will be covered by the ongoing work of the Governance and Transparency Review Group and these will feed into considerations prior to proposals coming to future meetings of National Council or Conference.

Nine resolutions were selected for the Provisional Agenda, and these will all appear on the Final Agenda. While we will hopefully have sufficient time to get through all of these, and the three accepted amendments during the course of the afternoon session, if we do not conclude all business then any resolution not taken will still be available for the Delegates' Choice exercise prior to Annual Conference.

Lorna Finn, National Secretary
Conferences Committee Convener

REPORTS OF THE NATIONAL OFFICE BEARERS

REPORT FROM PARTY PRESIDENT

Michael W Russell

I am pleased to be submitting a report to the renewed National Council, which is a part of governance and accountability that has been much missed in recent years.

I hope the Governance & Transparency Review, which is holding a listening session prior to Office Bearer's Reports, will make recommendations about the future frequency of the National Council and its structure and I am keen to see it form a major part of our internal democracy once again.

In particular I would like to see regular reporting and question sessions involving those the Party has entrusted to run its affairs between National Conference and National Councils.

During the Leadership Election I chaired a number of the hustings and I also took on the role of Acting Chief Executive for several weeks. I have since been part of the panel which interviewed a number of high quality candidates for the post of Chief Executive of the Party.

I have spent much of my time since the Leadership Election working, alongside my co-convenor Lorna Finn, on the Governance & Transparency Review and I am grateful to her and to the Review Group members for their dedication to the task.

There have been a number of submissions from within the Party to the Governance Review, some clear shared themes, chief amongst which has been the desire to see better communication from HQ and the NEC and better accountability for, and transparency in, decision making, including financial decision making.

The Review will report to the Annual National Conference with recommendations, some of which will not require constitutional change. Those that do will, I hope, be able to be implemented either at the Next National Council or at a special conference convened solely for that task.

I continue to be actively involved in other issues including working with Senior Office Bearers on day to day Party matters and meeting (usually online) with representatives of other national movements furth of Scotland.

REPORT FROM DEPUTE LEADER

Keith Brown MSP

Over recent months, I have been more than usually focussed on media work and working in internal fora, for the Party. On a regular basis I am required to attend NEC, the Policy Development Committee, the Conferences Committee and more recently, ad hoc Committees such as the Appointment Committee for the Party's new Chief Executive. More recently I have been asked to take forward and convene the Westminster Campaign Committee, and to lead the Party's work on Independence.

As well as seeking to promote the Party and Independence robustly in media interviews, I have sought to ensure there is as much continuity and stability as possible during a difficult period for the Party. This has involved going to and addressing as many branch meetings as possible, as well as CA meetings and Regional Assemblies. More recently I have attended Tinto Branch, and while working with the former Leader I spoke with a number of Branches, South of Scotland members, the Edinburgh Steering Group and the Party's Trade Union Group on the issue of the Party's strategy for independence. I have attended and chaired the Mid-Scotland & Fife Regional Assembly, and have addressed the South of Scotland Regional Assembly. I also plan to address the West of Scotland Regional in early September.

Since the Governance Review, which I undertook with a number of others in 2019/20, I have continued to take an interest in the reform of Party structures and processes including in support of the current Governance & Transparency Review being undertaken by Mike Russell, Lorna Finn and others.

In general terms I continue to support and, where required, deputise for, the current Party Leader, as I did for the former Party Leader.

REPORT FROM NATIONAL SECRETARY

Lorna Finn

It has been an incredibly eventful year for our party that has not come without significant challenges along the way. At times it has taken its toll, and truthfully, this year has pushed me to my limits in ways I could never have imagined. That being said, I care deeply about this Party and delivering the core mission our party was established to deliver which is the delivery of an Independent Scotland. I am committed to fulfilling what I set out to do, so to continue to serve as the National Secretary of the SNP is an honour and a privilege.

We held the first leadership election in nineteen years. As National Secretary, I oversaw this process to ensure it was carried out in a fair and robust way. We held nine hustings across every region of the country, and I attended all but one. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to every member of staff at HQ who worked extremely hard to ensure these events took place successfully. Various feedback was received about the format of the hustings and has been taken on board.

There is no doubt that we are going through a significant period of change at the moment. With the sheer volume of work that follows on the back of that, it has been incredibly difficult to carry out the role of National Secretary as a volunteer. The role often takes up just as many hours as a full-time job. I had certain ambitions for this year and have been steadfast in my commitment to achieve them. Implementing changes in a large organisation is not always easy, but the transformation we are going through is essential. Even if that does mean still sending emails at midnight!

As I highlighted in my report to the Conference last year, there needs to be a complete overhaul and redesign of the entire complaints and disciplinary process. As part of the Governance and Transparency Review, myself, and colleagues - with input from many of you - have worked hard to develop recommendations to transform this vital area of our internal processes and these will be included in our report to Annual Conference. However, I think it is important to share that I stand by what I reported to the conference last year. We must set up a clear, robust, and accessible complaints process. This simply does not exist within the current structures of the Party and is required urgently. This process should be clear, rights based, and offer individuals confidence in a process that has a defined procedure with clear timescales towards resolution.

When you take into consideration that my role this year has required me to oversee a significant amount of important work in very challenging circumstances, on top of the normal duties of a National Secretary including an inbox with a high volume of traffic, it follows that to do all of this successfully without assistance would be near impossible. To that end, I sought approval from NEC to appoint an Assistant National Secretary. I have asked Mhairi Love to

step into the role and work alongside myself and the Parties Complaints Officer to continue to work through the remaining backlog of complaints.

The most important work that is being undertaken now is the Governance and Transparency Review being led by myself and party President Michael Russell alongside a core team who have given freely of a tremendous amount of time. You will hear an update from the group at the National Council and our full report will be brought to the Conference in October. This work is of vital importance so that we can ensure that the party works for the membership. The review has received many submissions from branches and individual members, and these are appreciated and are being considered.

I would like to end on a positive note. We are the largest party in Scotland, we have an enviable track record of electoral success and so much to be proud of in Government. We must not forget the things that we do well, whilst we try to make improvements and fix processes that have let us down. This party was built on the backs of our members and the membership remains our greatest asset.

REPORT FROM NATIONAL TREASURER

Stuart McDonald MP

It is a pleasure to report to the National Council for the first time since my appointment by NEC towards the end of April.

Audit

On appointment the immediate priority was to engage new auditors given the resignation of the previous firm and impending audit deadlines:

- Electoral Commission Policy development grant deadline (May 12th)
- Short money return deadline for Westminster group (May 31st)
- Electoral Commission annual accounts deadline (June 30th)

I am grateful to all who assisted in this process of finding auditors, and then completing the audits against an incredibly pressing timescale.

Transparency and governance

While I cannot comment on the ongoing police investigation, one consequence is that there is work to do to rebuild trust in the processes and procedures that are in place to ensure proper financial management of our party.

Working with staff, the Finance and Audit Committee and our auditors, steps have been taken and work is ongoing to refresh existing policies and introduce new policies which will improve accountability and transparency in financial decision making.

Significantly, to improve the financial information that is available to staff, office bearers and NEC, colleagues on the National Executive Committee recently signed off on proposals to recruit a part time qualified accountant; and while that recruitment process is ongoing, to engage an outside firm to undertake such work.

In addition, given the limitation in scope that the auditors placed on our 2022 accounts, it is important to emphasise that procedures for dealing with smaller cash and cheque sums have been amended to the satisfaction of auditors.

As I am sure many of you attending the National Council have done, I have made a submission to the Governance Review, and look forward to supporting their work in further improving financial transparency and accountability.

I hope to appoint an assistant national treasurer shortly, to assist in taking forward this work.

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Financial position

On submission of our annual accounts I included the following in my update to Treasurers:

“The 2022 accounts will be published in accordance with the normal Electoral Commission processes. They are not dissimilar to our 2021 accounts, and other years in which nationwide elections are fought – disclosing a deficit of just over £800,000. We now need to ensure 2023 returns us to surplus, as we prepare for a general election in 2024 – and I am optimistic we will do that”.

The first half of 2023 was not without challenges. The overall cost of the leadership election was around £160k, none of which was budgeted for. Membership income has been hit by the overall fall in membership numbers (73,936 as at 29th June), while the cost of living crisis has also impacted on the level of membership payments.

However, looking ahead, the position is significantly more positive. There will continue to be concerted action to raise money to back Katy Loudon to win Rutherglen and Hamilton West. And of course, the second half of the year includes the St Andrew’s draw and dinner, as well as conference income. While making predictions is not always wise, I remain confident our 2023 accounts will show a surplus as we build towards what will be a crucial general election year.

We still have much work to do to ensure we put the party on the soundest financial footing possible. In closing, my thanks to everyone for their support in this role to date. Thanks also to branch treasurers for the vital role you undertake. And thanks to each and every member for your vital support for our cause.

REPORT FROM BUSINESS CONVENER

Kirsten Oswald MP

The months since the Annual National Conference have been busy ones, and not without challenge. Nonetheless, it is welcome to be able to give a report to a newly re-instituted National Council, which is clearly a very positive move for party democracy.

To do so with our new party leader, Humza Yousaf, leading from the front with focus and determination in relation to the party and to independence is very welcome indeed.

The recent period has been one of change, in addition to the National Council returning, we have seen the change in leadership, the important Governance and Transparency Review led by the National Secretary and Party President, and the recruitment exercise to fill the role of Chief Executive.

These changes will ultimately help us to be in the strongest position possible to win elections and more importantly to secure our independence.

I would like to note the hard work and support from HQ staff and office bearers which has enabled all of the above changes, from the most open and member-centered leadership contest possible, to the ability of members to drive change in governance and transparency throughout the party.

Alongside this we have delivered a highly successful Independence Convention with a welcome focus on members' voices, and a programme of Regional Assemblies is underway, as we look towards Annual National Conference 2023.

I am grateful for the hard work of NEC members during this time, and for their flexibility and engagement as we worked at pace during a challenging period. Volunteer office bearers have done very significant amounts of work under significant pressure. Staff too deserve our grateful thanks for their hard work and focus under challenging circumstances.

It is a critical time for us in terms of campaigning both for the forthcoming general election and for independence, and I hope that the hard work undertaken over recent months will support us in making positive steps on both fronts. Having been out campaigning in various places in Scotland, the appetite for independence and support for our campaigns remains clear. Our members as ever are the core of everything which the SNP does, and I hope the work undertaken to stabilise and move forward over recent months puts the party in the best space to allow NEC to work hard for all SNP members, in support of independence.

REPORT FROM MEMBER SUPPORT CONVENER

Alexander Belic

With the transitional arrangements following the new constitution, and the measures put in place during covid, I find myself in the peculiar position of being the 4th person to hold a post that has no job description. Work to set out a clear role for this position under the new constitutional framework, and to provide appropriate access to do so was overtaken by **EVENTS**, but shall hopefully continue apace shortly.

As it stands I have access to a convener's Facebook group and have been able to answer specific questions put to me there by individual conveners as well as a facility to email all conveners which I was able to use to inform them of the new WCC composition and the *first* set of deadlines for nominations.

In addition to this, I've had some conversations with HQ staff about updating internal reference documents. I am conscious that the last PDF of all branches and CAs was produced in 2018 and there have been a number of new branches created and old branches merged since that time. There's also been some discussion about what functionality the new my.snp mailer system should have when it goes into play and a system of automated emails for new office bearers.

Currently, branch office bearers are appointed in September, with Conference following in October and National Office bearers being appointed. We're looking at a system whereby when office bearer details change on my.snp an automatic email can go out to the new office bearer with a welcome to the role and some basic handover information to help them get started.

Once again I'm told this is something that we'll be able to implement with the updates to my.snp.

REPORT FROM POLICY DEVELOPMENT CONVENER

Toni Giugliano

It was an honour to be elected unopposed for a second year to this role. The policies and messages that we convey as a party in the year ahead will play a crucial role in the upcoming independence election. Shortly after my election I set out three main objectives: to prioritise independence; strengthen internal democracy; and empower our membership on policy-making. As a member of the NEC I've been a voice for the grassroots of the party and every vote cast has been influenced by the need to enhance democratic participation.

The Policy Development Committee (PDC)

I want to thank the PDC for its efforts over the past year. Feedback from PEOs during last year's Conference was that they wanted to feel better connected with one another at a regional level. As such, I proposed to decentralise the PDC so that its elected members worked locally to build networks of PEOs. There were two aims here: firstly to help PEOs feel less isolated in their roles by creating a regional support network, and secondly, to furnish the PDC with intel around possible resolutions coming forward. This allows the PDC to provide feedback on resolutions, which is its primary purpose. The only way for the PDC to know about resolutions coming forward is if branches and elected members inform their directly elected PDC members.

I'm pleased to report that of the 170 resolutions submitted, over half had direct involvement from the PDC – (author, co-author, proposed edits, general feedback).

I've argued – both during NEC meetings and Conferences Committee meetings – that resolutions should go to the PDC first for feedback on a more formal basis – before being considered by the Conferences Committee. This additional step would give members the

much-needed advice to help their resolution reach the final agenda – as well as reducing the workload of the Conferences Committee.

I'm pleased that for the second consecutive year we'll have a grassroots-led Conference agenda – with more resolutions submitted by branches and very few resolutions submitted by parliamentarians. Where parliamentarians have submitted a resolution, in most cases it's done in partnership with a branch – which is, in my view, the right approach to take – an argument that we made during last year's Conference.

National Council

- At Conference two years ago I seconded a resolution from Eastwood Branch calling on National Council to be reinstated – and I'm delighted that this body is this week reconvened. For the past two years I've championed the need to re-establish National Council – I ensured that constitutional amendments were brought forward during last year's Conference and pressed the NEC over the past year to Convene this meeting promptly. By re-establishing National Council we increase the party's policy-making opportunities. They also provide the chance for party members to scrutinise office bearers and hear directly from the party leadership, thus strengthening internal democracy.

Regional Assemblies

- Since my election to this role two years ago I've campaigned for the roll-out of National Assemblies on independence and made the case during NEC meetings. I was pleased when the Party Leader committed to Regional Assemblies during his Leadership campaign and that they're now taking place across Scotland. Indeed the outcome of these Assemblies will inform the debate on the independence strategy that will be held at Conference.

Empowering members

- Over the past year I've visited branches and spoken directly to hundreds of branch members across Scotland on the most pressing policy issues facing both the party and the movement. I've provided advice and feedback to numerous members on their draft resolutions.
- Through policy-making, members have the power to shape the independence prospectus and narrative for an independent Scotland. The evidence-led resolutions that the Policy Development Committee and I crafted, in partnership with branches, help to build the case for an alternative, socially just, independent country.

Prioritising Independence

- During NEC I strongly made the case that the postponed Special Conference should go ahead following the Leadership contest – I'm delighted that it was repurposed into the Independence Convention which left members feeling energised and gave the party a clearer sense of direction.
- During NEC meetings I've pushed for national days of action and targeted messaging on the cost of living crisis. I also pushed for mass-mobilisation events (rallies) where

the party is a key partner and organiser. I'm pleased that the FM will be speaking at the Believe in Scotland rally on 2nd September.

I've been attending campaign sessions in Rutherglen and would encourage members to do the same. Labour believe they have this seat in the bag but based on the feedback I've had on the doors it's all to play for – so see you in Rutherglen.

REPORT FROM WOMEN'S CONVENER

Julia Stachurska

In my first 6 months of holding the post I met with 35+ Women's Officers from across Scotland covering a variety of topics, including the mailer system literature and campaigns; identification and assessment of future candidates; training and communications channels. I also hosted a meeting for Women's Officers of Affiliate Organisations.

With Branch Meetings back in full swing, I was pleased to visit Coatbridge & Chryston Branch, Airdrie & Shotts Branch, Lochaber & North Lorn Branch, West Fife & Coastal Villages Branch and an event organised by Kelvin Branch, with attendees from Maryhill, Pollokshields and Anniesland in attendance to speak about the Party's work in strengthening women's participation in campaigning and elections, and the importance of women's representation locally.

Thanks to the team at HQ, the Women's Officers Facebook group is back up and running, and a communication channel has been re-established.

Together with the National Equalities Convener and Engender, we successfully ran two sessions on the Equal Representation in Politics Toolkit which were attended by Women's Officers, Equalities Officers and other Branch Executive members. Those proved to be helpful in strengthening understanding on equal representation and barriers associated with that. I continue to publicise the availability of the Toolkit to Branches, and I would encourage all members to complete the toolkit which is available to all members via SNP College.

My thanks as always to the team at HQ who continue to be supportive and responsive to enquiries, and to Women's Officers across Scotland who have been a force of inspiration and leadership in their Branches."

REPORT FROM DISABLED MEMBERS' CONVENER

Andy Stuart

I had the pleasure of chairing several CA Annual General Meetings, additionally I have attended branch and CA meetings on request throughout the year to date, to discuss disability issues. This is an area of the role I hoped to do more of but haven't been invited to many meetings, so I hope in future Branches, etc will take advantage of having National Office

Bearers covering areas of Equalities and will invite them to learn about the issues we face regularly.

During the Leadership Election I wrote to all the Candidates with a series of questions on disability issues, there were 30 general and 3 internal party questions. The National published the 30 general questions with the answers on their website and a small selection in print with the link to the online version of all the questions and answers. There were deliberately a lot of questions to highlight to the candidates just how much work we still have to do for disabled people in Scotland. The questions were across a wide range of different disabilities, there are many other issues not covered. It was just meant to illustrate the scale of the problems that face disabled people in Scotland. Many of these can be addressed with the powers of devolution, but a significant proportion will require the powers of Independence, it's imperative that we work on making this disability case for Independence and that is work I hope to begin with the DMG in the future. The Internal unpublished questions and the Candidates answers are in appendix 1.

I also had the pleasure of Chairing a zoom call with disabled members and the now First Minister, at his request, during which he faced questions from the members on a range of issues. The event went down well with all the members and while this was part of the leadership contest it is something I now plan to repeat with Cabinet Secretaries, Ministers, and SNP Spokespeople (Westminster) who have responsibility for issues that directly or indirectly affect disabled people. Sadly, due to health issues I haven't been able to do this so far.

The Leadership election has highlighted a significant number of issues that the party need to do better with, some are prioritising disability accessibility in the planning of events, and I have a range of suggestions for the events team at HQ, who did a good job under extreme pressure for the Leadership Hustings. I had a very productive meeting with Richy Edwards (the then Head of Events) so that we can begin the process of putting this in place.

Another issue which gave me cause for concern and was the subject of a number of member complaints to me, was the very late decision to change the Hustings from behind closed doors to, effectively broadcast events meant that we could not have BSL in place for the streaming of the first Hustings. BSL was the subject of numerous emails from members too, and I will come back to that, but in future we cannot make these knee jerk decisions to change the nature of an event if that is going to cause accessibility issues for our disabled members. A large number of disabled members are not happy that they have to contact HQ to arrange for their accessibility needs to be met, there were two different complaints under this category.

- 1 It was not adequately communicated to members that this was the procedure in place for these events.
- 2 That accessibility issues such as in hall BSL, Live Caption and the venue being suitable for wheelchair users did not appear to be considered important enough by the party to have these as standard at ALL party events.

Members complaining in the latter category feel that the party talks a good game on disability issues but don't deliver to the same standard for our own members and they rightly feel that, as the party of Government we should be setting the standard for others to follow. They also feel stigmatised by having to make separate "special" arrangements to meet their basic needs for party events. A couple of examples are.

- BSL was provided for people watching on our YouTube channel, but not for our members in the halls – I agreed with Richy that a simple solution to either have the BSL interpreters on the stage like they are at Conference or if that wasn't possible due to local availability, project the BSL for the livestream onto a screen behind/to the side of the Candidates.
- At the Aberdeen Hustings, one member attended in her powered wheelchair as she does for all party events, however the Tivoli Theatre doesn't have normal wheelchair access and the method they do have in place is, from personal experience, is quite a frightening and stressful ordeal. They use a stair climber, but it doesn't take powered wheelchairs or wheelchairs any wider than the "standard" which nowadays is most chairs. The member in the powered wheelchair had to be lifted out of her chair by two male employees out on the street and into a standard, uncomfortable, wheelchair to use the stair climber. Once inside the theatre the floor slopes across the whole auditorium towards the stage and even with the brakes on, a wheelchair will slip down the slope during the event. This is simply not good enough for an event for the party of Government in Scotland which should be raising the bar and creating more robust legislation to improve accessibility to all public buildings and events. This was a wholly unsuitable venue for the Hustings, not only because of these issues but also for members with limited mobility the nearest parking to the Theatre is a significant walk.

In regard to the last issue, we agreed that the venue was, of course, booked in good faith, but that in future recce to ascertain the venues suitability be carried out by, if necessary, trained local DMG members using a standard assessment criterion, with bookings then only taking place based on this data. I acknowledge that due to the time pressures and constraints even this solution may be difficult on occasion, but where possible we should build up a database of venues that are suitable for different purposes to inform our bookings.

I have just completed a substantive document on making our Political Communications more accessible, which will be circulated to Candidates, Election Agents, Organisers, and a copy will be placed in the MySNP library in the near future. A draft copy is being used by the team in Rutherglen & Hamilton West and elected members in Dundee have also secured an early copy. I strongly urge all members seeking election to use this reference material, it will also be relevant to Branches, etc. One example of its value is for dyslexic people, who make up 10% of the general population, which rises to 20% in rural/agricultural communities, does anyone have a majority big enough not to communicate with one fifth of their electorate? Add in partially sighted people with Colour Vision Disorder (Colour Blindness), other conditions and nonnative English Readers the benefits are significant. I have asked the former Equalities Convener Fiona Robertson to write an addendum on Accessible Social Media Communications, aimed at candidates and Branches, etc, but will be of value to all members.

I have and continue to represent the interests of disabled members within the party, both individually (when asked) and collectively, not least on the topic of a hybrid version of Conference to enable fuller participation.

I have also met with organisations outwith the party who represent disabled people to further educate myself on the issues faced by people with conditions with which I am not that familiar and where appropriate work collaboratively.

I have attended all but a couple of NEC meetings and have had several productive additional meetings with various colleagues.

I had hoped to do more but ill health got in the way.