



## Dear Members

*Our Spring Conference at Dynamic Earth was a real success, with a strong presence from LI Scotland. Thank you to everyone who stopped by the stall, joined our fringe meeting or contributed to the conversations; it was encouraging to see such interest and engagement.*

*Our fringe discussion was lively and thoughtful, reflecting both the complexity of today's international challenges and the appetite within the party to engage with them.*

*Many colleagues will now be involved in Scottish elections campaigning.*

*Thank you to everyone for the energy and commitment you are bringing to that work. We will continue, alongside this, to ensure that international perspectives remain part of our collective thinking. Global events are moving so quickly and often unpredictably.*

*A new, truly international Apollo mission was circling the far side of the moon recently. What a powerful image of cooperation and ambition. Yet, it sits in sharp contrast to the current international climate, where tensions are high and collaboration can feel increasingly fragile. That contrast underlines the importance of the work we are doing. LI Scotland will continue to bring forward discussions that connect Scotland to the wider world. Thank you, as always, for your support.*

**Sally Robertson**  
Convenor, LI Scotland

## LI Scotland Spring Conference Fringe meeting: Conflicts not only forgotten but actively ignored



From left: Sir Graham Watson (chair), panellists Lord Jeremy Purvis, Gillian Gloyer and Dr Matteo Fumagalli at the fringe meeting in Edinburgh, updating the packed room of conference goers on conflicts in Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Myanmar.



*Sally welcomed all to the fringe by toasting to Ukraine, a war that we hope will not become another victim of the world's reduced attention span. (left)*

*Our stall proved to be a popular spot to talk about all things international. It was Douglas McDonald's turn to man the stall (right)*



**Be part of the conversation! Ideas? Suggestions?  
Contact Outi (outi60mb@gmail.com) or Sally  
(sally@hillrobertson.co.uk)**

# Silent Suffering in Sudan, DRC and Myanmar

**While the world is watching every turn of the Iran war, many other armed conflicts have faded into obscurity. In the LI Scotland fringe meeting at the Spring conference in Edinburgh, the spotlight was turned to some of the less talked about, ongoing clashes: Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Myanmar.**

Conference goers at the Dynamic Earth got a full update on all three countries by our panellists with in-depth knowledge about the situation on the ground. Lord **Jeremy Purvis**, Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords, talked about Sudan. Travel writer and LI Scotland Secretary **Gillian Gloyer** explained the origins of the conflict in DRC and Dr **Matteo Fumagalli** from St Andrews University highlighted the current challenges in Myanmar.

All these conflicts have lasted for years, even decades, and the origins of the in-fighting are buried deep in the history of power struggles between armed opposition groups and foreign backed governments. All three countries have highly desirable natural resources. Gold glitters in Sudan, whereas both DRC and Myanmar have rich deposits of rare earth minerals. Myanmar boasts big oil and gas reserves. Foreign powers and alliances are eyeing these ultimate rewards, hoping to back the winning groups or governments to negotiate deals. China and USA are competing for pole positions. Peaceful solutions are fragile or non-existent and the humanitarian crisis continues. Millions of people have lost their lives or been displaced and forced to migrate. There is hunger and violence. Lord Purvis has visited Sudan numerous times. He said that the conflict in Sudan is not only forgotten but “actively ignored”.



Since 2019, when the military ousted President Omar Al-Bashir in a coup, the country has faced one conflict after another and fighting continues. According to Purvis there are practically no international peace keeping forces in Sudan at the moment. The borders are porous, 12 million people have left, mostly to Egypt and Chad. Around two thirds of the population (34 million people) need humanitarian assistance. Acute food insecurity is a daily reality to 21m people. “We are still quite far away from finding a credible process which would result in cessation of violence and which would result in a political solution of finding sustainable peace”, Purvis said.

## **Fragile peace in the DRC**

The situation in the eastern part of DRC is fragile despite recent peace negotiations. As explained by Gillian Gloyer, the origins of this conflict go back to 1994 and the Rwandan genocide, when Hutu militia engaged in systematic killing of Tutsis, a competing ethnic group. When Tutsis gained power after the genocide, many Hutus escaped to the eastern part of Congo and used that as a base to attack Tutsis both inside the DRC and in Rwanda. Many twists and turns later, a new Tutsi-led militant rebel group M23 emerged in 2012 and since then M23 has been the main opponent against the DRC government.



*Sir Graham Watson, Convenor of the LIBG, drew attention to the drastically reduced UK International development aid budget (0.3% of gross national income in 2027/28.) The UK government is prioritising defence spending. This will have a major impact on several countries, including Sudan and Ukraine.*

In June 2025 President Trump boasted of brokering a peace deal between DRC and Rwanda. This included US access to rare earth minerals, such as coltan. However, M23 was not part of the negotiations and the ceasefire broke down quickly. Instead, peace negotiations in Qatar in November 2025 led to an agreement between DRC and M23 where a new framework was agreed. The human cost of this decades long fighting has been enormous.

### **Myanmar remains an enigma**

Dr Matteo Fumagalli has been visiting, researching and speaking about Myanmar for the past 14 years.

The latest cycle of violence and war started with a military coup in 2021 when the civilian government led by Aung San Suu Kyi and her party National League for Democracy was ousted. War has escalated since then and according to Dr Fumagalli, there are three issues driving the current situation.

“Firstly, neither the military government, nor the forces opposing it have been able to have control over territory or the people. There is fragmentation. There are territories with their own dynamics. There is no overarching explanation of the war. This is not a simple case where the military is fighting against people,” Fumagalli says.

Secondly, there is lack of international co-ordinated peace efforts, it’s too fragmented.

The third issue is the relationship with China, whose main interests are oil, gas and heavy rare earth minerals in Myanmar. China has supported the military junta strongly since 2021 with Chinese companies supplying arms and equipment to the government. But there have been instances where the Ethnic Armed Organisations have also benefitted from Chinese support, which has resulted in a curious, strategic balancing act. The humanitarian cost of the conflict is massive: according to the UN, 16 million people will need humanitarian assistance in Myanmar in 2026.

Sudan, DRC and Myanmar are good examples of conflicts that have faded away from daily newsrounds, yet, the devastating consequences will be there for decades and generations.



## **Festival of Europe in Scotland 7<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Brexit referendum result. However, the spirit of being a European is very much alive in Scotland. Join the debates, talks, walks, films, dance, art, music and community events at the Festival of Europe which will be happening in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Kirkcaldy, Dumfries and Stirling. The festival celebrates co-operation and shared values with peaceful, democratic, sustainable and free Europe at its core. Full festival programme and tickets are available on [www.festivalofeuropescotland.org/events](http://www.festivalofeuropescotland.org/events).

**Our traditional LI Scotland Autumn event will be held on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2026 at the Royal Scots Club, Edinburgh. From 11 am to 1 PM followed by lunch. Theme and panellists to be confirmed.**

# The European Movement in Scotland: Keeping the UK-EU relationship alive is in our best interests



*Scottish Liberal Democrat Leader Alex Cole-Hamilton was welcomed by Jo Goodburn, Vice-Chair of the European Movement in Scotland, when he visited the Movement's stand at the Spring Conference in Edinburgh in February.*

***This year, the European Movement in Scotland (EMiS) is 36 years of age. The organisation is in good heart, with over 2,000 subscribed members and some 20,000 registered supporters, write Sir Graham Watson and Jo Goodburn.***

EMiS draws its members from all mainstream political parties, though many members have no party-political affiliation. But we are a political movement and firmly part of the Scottish political world. EMiS works to keep alive the idea of being actively European in the minds of politicians, media and leaders across civic society in Scotland. In the aftermath of the Brexit vote it was vital that the case for European internationalism in the UK was not allowed to wither away in the political and public mind.

Our most important job is to give ordinary people of all ages, in all walks of life, in every part of Scotland permission to believe that drawing ever closer to Europe and eventually rejoining the EU is in the best interests of Scotland and the UK. Most essential is getting that message to young people. The core strength of EMiS lies in the local groups operational in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Fife Stirling and the Southwest. We aim to reestablish a local branch in Aberdeen this year.

A campaigning training course has been developed for new activists and existing campaigners who want to brush up on their skills. Last year, we established a branch in Brussels, and we enjoy excellent relations with the European Parliament representative office in London. Our activities include responding to Westminster and Holyrood

EU-related issues; talks to clubs and societies, webinars, debates, street stalls and stalls at community events and freshers fairs, stands at party conferences, newsletters, direct lobbying of ministers, comment on relevant news, radio and TV interviews, social media campaigns, campaign literature and monitoring events in the European institutions.

We campaigned over many years for the reinstatement of the Erasmus+ scheme, raised the problems faced by travelling musicians, artists and others involved in the culture entertainment and hospitality industries and worked to promote the rights of European citizens living in Scotland. In Glasgow, we were the key driving force in the creation of the Glasgow European Citizens Forum. EMiS provides the secretariat to the Cross-Party Group on Europe at Holyrood. Keeping up to date with developments affecting relations between the EU and the Scottish and UK parliaments is an important part of EMiS' work. We respond to consultation opportunities and write to ministers and others when issues of concern arise. In the ten years since the Brexit vote the job of EMiS has been to be a torch bearer in Scotland for the idea of European integration, primarily by championing the fundamental elements of the EU; peace, democracy, equality and prosperity.

# Uncertainty about the future takes a heavy toll on the mental health of Ukrainians living in Scotland

by Outi Maattanen-Bourke

**Five years on and the war in Ukraine continues. In 2022, Scotland received the largest number of Ukrainians in the UK. They found a warm welcome and a safe haven here. In many ways it has been a Scottish success story. But hidden from the public view are issues related to trauma, recovery and healing. Many Ukrainians suffer from constant stress and anxiety, leading to multilayered mental health problems. This has had a domino effect on other areas in their lives.**

“While Scotland’s initial response to Ukraine has been outstanding, we now face new challenges that make it difficult for Ukrainians to fully integrate and rebuild their lives,” says **Olha Maksymiak**.

In June 2025 Maksymiak chaired the Health And Wellbeing Working Group for the Cross-Party group on Ukraine in the Scottish Parliament, where her colleague, Ukrainian certified psychotherapist **Olga Lutsyshyn** served as a secretary. The Working group completed a survey of 375 Ukrainians based in Scotland regarding psychological support and stress levels.

Three main causes of stress stood out: uncertainty around visa status (87.7 %), worries related to war (77.9 %) and loss of professional identity (64 %).

Initially, the visa schemes gave a three year permission to stay and these have been extended a couple of times but there is no path to permanent residency available. Stress over visa expiry dates makes it difficult to plan for the future or recover from the past. It also creates practical problems in housing and employment.



*Olha Maksymiak came to Glasgow with her 11-year old son when the war in Ukraine started.*

Professional identity issues add to the sense of not being fully integrated. Many Ukrainians have had professional careers in their homeland before coming to the UK. Even though Ukrainians have found work, they are often in lower level skilled jobs with much less pay. Lutsyshyn says: “People’s sense of self is deeply connected with their work, and when that is taken away, the psychological cost is real.”

According to Maksymiak, one of the most urgent issues is to develop dedicated programmes for displaced communities who come from conflict zones, requiring specialised trauma care. This would benefit not only Ukrainians, but other groups as well, such as Syrians and Afghans who have gone through war and forced migration. But we are a long way away from that yet. One particular group of professionals who have found themselves in limbo are Ukrainian psychiatrists, psychologists and psychotherapists.

Their Ukrainian qualifications are rarely recognised in the UK. Additionally, there are no formal mechanisms to integrate certified Ukrainian mental health professionals into the NHS. Yet, their services are in high demand. When asked in the survey about preferred formats for mental health support, 71.9% said they prefer in-person consultation

“War trauma, at its core, damages a person’s basic trust in other human beings and the world as a safe place,” says Lutsyshyn.

Mental health charities have been offering important support but they are often concentrated in urban areas and their resources are limited. Because Ukrainian professionals are not able to practice, it’s difficult to get help in Ukrainian language.

Could online services and AI come to the rescue? Both Maksymiak and Lutsyshyn agree that online services can be a useful alternative, but AI gets a thumbs down from both. Says Maksymiak:

“Cultural understanding is not easily transferable or translatable. Cultural nuances, shared context and lived understanding play a vital role in building trust and enabling effective therapeutic support.”

‘Can AI truly support women who have lost their husbands and sons in war? Can it comfort families of the missing? Can it help a wife who has waited for over a year for the return of her husband’s body, simply to be able to bury him?’



*Olga Lutsyshyn lives in Glasgow with her sister. The rest of her family are still in Ukraine.*

Lutsyshyn agrees: “A skilled therapist does not just listen to what a client says. They watch the breathing, the body language, the micro-expressions. They hear the tone behind the words. They hold cultural knowledge, the specific fears,” she says and gives an example: Ukrainian women, who have been conditioned to cope alone and not show weakness.

Lutsyshyn wants to make it clear that Ukrainians are deeply grateful for all the support they have received:

“Many of us have not only safety, but also a genuine sense of welcome and that matters deeply. At the same time, I would encourage policy makers to continue building on this strong foundation by seeing Ukrainians not as a temporary situation but as people who are already part of Scotland’s communities – professionals, parents and individuals who want to contribute more.”

Maksymiak also has a message to the new MSPs:

“Scotland has shown remarkable leadership in its response to displaced Ukrainians. But the next phase requires courage to address long-term challenges.”

“This means investing in mental health services and recognising the skills of displaced professionals. Decisions made now will shape not just policy outcomes, but people’s futures.”

- **More than 28 000 people with a Scottish sponsor have arrived in the UK since the war started in February 2022. Scotland received 20.1 % of all arrivals to the UK, most per head of any UK nation.**
- **According to the Office for National Statistics (April 2024), 68 % of Ukrainians in the UK wish to remain permanently and 69% are already in paid employment.**

# Scotland and the world: A Liberal Choice on May 7<sup>th</sup>

*by Sally Robertson*

**For voters in Scotland who care about international issues, the Scottish Liberal Democrats offer something that is in short supply: a consistent, outward-looking approach rooted in cooperation, democracy and shared problem-solving.**

While much of Scottish politics is framed through constitutional or national lenses, we make the case that our future depends on strong relationships; particularly with Europe. Our push to rebuild ties with the EU is not nostalgic, but practical. It's about restoring opportunities and influence that matter in everyday life.

There is also a deeper set of values at play. Through organisations like Liberal International and its Scottish Committee, we are part of a global movement that champions democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We should not stand apart from global challenges, but help to address them. That includes standing up clearly for international women's rights and LGBTQ+ rights at a time when both are under pressure in many parts of the world. Our internationalism is not neutral. It's rooted in the belief that dignity, equality and freedom should apply everywhere.

As liberals, we favour working through partnerships and international institutions rather than going it alone.

In a world where issues like climate, migration and global health do not respect borders, that approach is realism. There is an ethical dimension too. We have consistently supported international development, fair trade and humanitarian assistance. For those who want the UK to act as a positive force in the world that consistency counts.

This internationalism is not abstract or distant. It is linked to tangible benefits: opportunities for young people to study and work abroad, access to research funding, stronger economic links, and shared approaches to energy and climate challenges. For those of us who believe Scotland should be open, connected and engaged with the wider world – and that cooperation is essential in tackling modern challenges – this election offers a clear and values-driven choice. For me, that's why I'm proud to be a Liberal Democrat – and why I'll be voting that way on May 7th.



## An Appreciation of the Life of Menzies 'Ming' Campbell (1941-2025)

**'Ming was undoubtedly the best Foreign Secretary the United Kingdom never had.' These were words repeatedly said, by political friend and foe alike, of Menzies Campbell – Lord Campbell of Pittenween CH CBE PC KC – throughout his long parliamentary career and after his death on 26 September 2025 at age 84.**

Winning the North East Fife seat as a Liberal from the hitherto unassailable Conservatives at his third attempt in 1987, he combined a career at the Scottish Bar with the work of an accessible and assiduous constituency MP whilst also making his mark at Westminster. There is no doubt he sacrificed a distinguished legal career to continue to serve his constituents and party, and turned down an offer to be appointed a Judge on at least one occasion.

He became party spokesman on sport where his previous Olympic athletic success and lifelong love of many sports made him a well-informed voice. He held the Great Britain 100m record from 1967-1974. A subsequent appointment as defence spokesman led in time to him succeeding David Steel as foreign affairs spokesman in 1992. As an authoritative voice of sanity and liberal internationalism, he was sought constantly by the media for his intelligent and well-informed views, especially before and during the Second Gulf War which the Liberal Democrats under Charles Kennedy had strongly and bravely opposed.

He was Leader of the UK Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO from 2010-15, and served with distinction as Vice President of the Assembly, Chairperson of the Defence and Security

Committee's Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Cooperation and Chair of Political Committee during his 17 years on the Assembly.

In a keenly-fought leadership contest following the resignation of Charles Kennedy, Ming emerged victorious however, at the very moment of his election, BBC Live posed the question of whether he was too old for the job. He led the party with courage and determination until he too was forced to suddenly resign as leader due to constant negative media coverage that focused on his age and appearance.

No recollection of his life would be complete without reference to Elspeth Campbell, his wife of 53 years who pre-deceased him in 2023. Invariably at his side in the constituency, in London and at conference, theirs was a formidable partnership. After stepping down as MP, he continued in his role as Chancellor of St Andrews University and as a member of the House of Lords. With his own health in decline, Elspeth's passing affected him deeply. Ming's wisdom and knowledge on international affairs and defence was recognised and respected across the political spectrum. His was a voice of reason and liberal values that is so badly missed in these troubled times. He was a longstanding member and supporter of Liberal International (British Group) for which he participated in countless fringe meetings and events.

*Iain Smith (MSP for North East Fife, 1999-2011)*  
*John Barnett (Convener North East Fife Liberal Democrats, 2004-2008)*

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### LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL SCOTLAND COMMITTEE 2026

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