

# OPEN WORLD

## NEWSLETTER



**Hello and thank you!**

*What a great fringe meeting we had at the Scottish Liberal Democrats Conference in Inverness in April! The room was packed and we heard great presentations from Christine Jardine MP, John Edward and Sir Graham Watson on the impact of Trump. Thanks to everyone who came along, particularly to those who contributed to the question and answer session.*

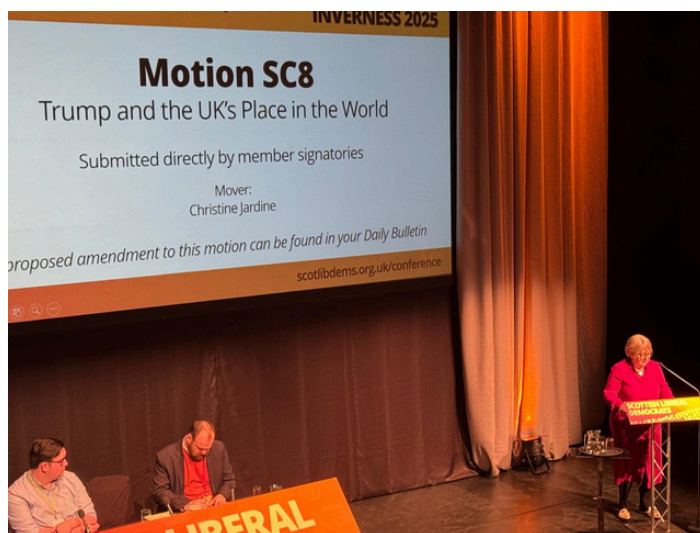
*We have some more exciting events coming up.*

*In June we will be marking World Refugee Day with a garden party in St Andrews, with Wendy Chamberlain MP.*

*And we will be repeating our successful panel discussion and lunch event in the Royal Scots Club in Edinburgh in September. The panel will include Lord Purvis of Tweed.*

*I hope to see you at one of our forthcoming events. Join us by clicking the QR code below - it's as easy as that!*

**Iain Smith**  
Convenor/LI Scotland



***Trump and the new era in American politics was on the agenda at the Spring Conference in Inverness. Photo: Sally Robertson***

### LI SCOTLAND SUMMER GARDEN PARTY TO MARK WORLD REFUGEE DAY Saturday 21 June 2025 from 13.00 - 15.00 53 Hepburn Gardens, St Andrews

**Guest Speakers:**

**Wendy Chamberlain MP**

**Alison Jardine, CEO Fife International Forum**

**Katya and Ruslan, Refugees from Ukraine**

Tickets are limited and cost £20 pp. This includes a light sandwich lunch and wine or soft drinks.

All profits from tickets will be donated to Fife International Forum (<https://fifeinternational.uk/>).

To avoid disappointment and secure your tickets, please send £20.00 per head to the account of Liberal International British Group Scottish Committee with Virgin Money:

Sort Code 82-68-17, Account No.30046032.

Please add the reference '22Jun25 [your surname]'.



## Full house at the “Trump, Ukraine and Europe” Spring Conference fringe event

*Text and photos Sally Robertson, Scottish Representative to Federal International Relations Committee(FIRC)*

While foreign affairs, defence, and national security are reserved matters for Westminster, the Liberal Democrat Spring Conference in Inverness showed that international issues matter deeply to Scottish members. The Liberal International (LI) stall drew steady interest during conference, and the evening fringe event–“Trump, Ukraine and European Security”–was standing-room only, confirming a strong appetite for global discussion.

Chaired by Iain Smith, Chair of the LI Scotland Committee, the panel brought together Christine Jardine MP, Sir Graham Watson (Chair of the Liberal International British Group), and John Edward of the Scottish Council on Global Affairs. Together, they explored the far-reaching impact of Donald Trump’s return to office .

Will Trump’s use of tariffs as a diplomatic tool provoke global recession? Is his stance on Ukraine a route to peace or a form of appeasement? What future does NATO face–and is Western democracy at risk?

Each panellist offered an informed, compelling perspective, sparking lively questions and discussion from the audience.

Through representation on the Federal International Relations Committee and Liberal International, Scottish members are making sure our voices are heard on the global stage.

Internationalism is more than a principle–it’s an ongoing, passionate conversation. And thanks to Liberal International Scotland, that conversation is thriving in the Scottish party.



*From the top left corner: John Edward, Christine Jardine MP and Sir Graham Watson got an enthusiastic reception from the crowd, standing room only.*



# The End Of “Hope and Admiration”

*by John Edward, LI Scotland & EP Office*

**Since 1945 the USA, Canada, NATO and the EU have shared the same basic belief in the urgency and stability of multilateral solutions. Jean Monnet, one of the strongest advocates for European Unity, first met Eisenhower in 1951. Key State Department figures, such as Dean Acheson and John Dulles, were consultees on every model of European cooperation from the still-born European Defence Community onwards. Times change.**

**“The European Union, which was formed for the primary purpose of taking advantage of the United States on TRADE, has been very difficult to deal with...”  
Donald J Trump, 23  
May 2025**

The plain inaccuracy of that remark is unprecedented. Never, since the establishment of the Marshall Plan for European Recovery, has any administration on either side of the Atlantic declared mutual cooperation inimical to their own national interest. Just as “America First” makes rivals out of Denmark and Greenland, Canada or Panama, so it presents Europe – to its widest boundaries – with the reality that for now, the USA is no longer an ally but a rival.

It would be naïve to claim that that rivalry is in one direction only. Many in Europe have railed against the overwhelming power of the US economy, currency, or military. The establishment of the Euro as a circulating currency was seen by some as a serious attempt to unseat the US Dollar as the world’s principal reserve currency. The dollar today remains a three times greater reserve than the Euro (the Euro is a reserve four times greater than the pound).

The sight of a US administration threatening to impose 50% tariffs on EU-sourced goods (10% for the UK and Turkey, 15% for Norway, for now) is a category change however. Friction on the trade front is nothing new, but the undiscerning nature of the current proposals ignore the level of interoperability between the European continent and the USA from Marshall, to GATT and the WTO and beyond. The USA was involved in discussions about German coal and steel as early as 1950, when the original Community was being discussed. The European Court of Justice holds bilateral meetings with the US Supreme Court, the EU delegation is a substantial addition to K Street, Washington, and the European Parliament relationship with Congress dates back to at least 1972.

Militarily, increased US scepticism over the efficacy of NATO and European members willingness to pay for it, has some justification. It comes propitiously at a time when the original second “pillar” of the Maastricht Treaty has finally evolved into serious cooperation at a military, defence, security and procurement level. That progress has been slow and at times grudging, inevitable in a community of two dozen ancient and distinct national identities – some formally neutral.

It has been given new vitality by a US President publicly dressing down an elected Ukrainian President for the effrontery of having been invaded. The US Vice-President was able to stand in Munich – of all places – and state that such invasions were not Europe’s greatest threat (and for Europe the UK was included) but rather it was a retreat from “fundamental values” where “old, entrenched interests” were hiding behind “ugly, Soviet-era words”. These may not be permanent changes, little in politics outlasts the politicians and governments involved. This assumes, however, that we are in the hands of “government of the people, by the people, for the people.”

That much is not clear anymore.

**The quote “Hope and Admiration” is from JF Kennedy’s “Great New Edifice” speech, which supported European integration. Independence Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 4 July 1962**

# Scotland, Security and the Liberal Case for Defence Investment

*by Neil Casey, Vice Convenor - Policy, Scottish Liberal Democrats*



**At our recent Conference in Inverness, Scottish Liberal Democrats passed a motion calling for a step-change in UK defence spending, and that Scotland's industries and skills pipelines must be harnessed to meet new security challenges**

With NATO burden-sharing under strain, Trump's unpredictability, and European rivals already raising their budgets beyond 2.5% of GDP, the UK - and Scotland - risks being left behind unless it embeds defence at the heart of its industrial strategy. While defence remains a reserved matter, Scotland is central to the UK's defence capabilities. The MoD invests over £2.09 billion each year in Scotland, supporting more than 12,000 highly skilled jobs. That investment is not just about security - it's a driver of innovation, manufacturing, and long-term economic prosperity.

According to Scottish Enterprise, targeted investment in advanced manufacturing and defence could increase Scotland's GDP by 1.5% over the decade, and that was before the recently announced increase in spending by the UK Government. Defence should be at the heart of Scotland's industrial strategy, with coordinated action from government, industry, and our schools, colleges, and universities to build the skills pipeline our future workforce will need.

The UK Government has committed to raising defence spending to 2.5% of GDP, but it plans to do so by cutting foreign aid and welfare - choices that place an unfair burden on the poorest and damage our global reputation. There are better ways to fund our security, as Sir Ed Davey MP outlined at Federal Conference.

We must defend liberal values abroad without undermining them at home.

Internationally, other non-US NATO allies are already stepping up.

Greece (3.5%), Poland (3.1%), and Estonia (2.7%) all exceed the 2.5% of GDP target for defence spending, despite not sharing the scale or resources of larger allies. Emmanuel Macron recently called for European nations to move to 3-3.5% of GDP spending on defence.

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte recently stated that there would be a new spending target "significantly more" than 3% for member nations when the body meets at the Hague in June. The UK must not lag behind.

We also need further changes to the Scottish National Investment Bank's ethical investment policy, which still blocks support for major employers like BAE, Rolls-Royce, and Babcock - even for non-nuclear programmes. That is ideology blocking opportunity.

And as support for Ukraine risks flagging as the issue slips down the headlines, we must continue to make the case - clearly, constructively, and repeatedly - that backing Ukraine is in our national interest, and that democracy, when under threat, deserves steadfast support. The liberal tradition isn't about pacifism at any cost; it's about protecting freedom, human rights, and open societies. A strong defence isn't contrary to our core values - it's essential for safeguarding them. By investing in robust security, we create a stable environment that allows international cooperation, the rule of law, and the thriving, open market economies that liberalism has always championed.

Scotland can and must be part of that.

**Do you follow an interesting website or podcast about international issues? Please tell Open World so we can share it with members. One that might be of interest is The International Crisis Group, an independent organisation working to prevent wars.**  
**[www.crisisgroup.org.uk](http://www.crisisgroup.org.uk)**

# Delivering ambulances to Ukraine brought home the cost of war

*by Angus MacDonald MP*

**I attended a meeting with a colleague, held in Westminster to hear of the work by the Christian Medical and Dental Association in Ukraine. An hour later the two of us had committed to find MPs to raise the money and buy five ambulances, fill them with medical supplies and drive them to Lviv.**

**Danny Chambers** the LibDem MP for Winchester was the first to say yes, then **Alex Cole-Hamilton** the leader of the LibDems at the Scottish Parliament, and **Paul Sweeney** a Labour MSP, along with **Simon Brake** the organizer. **Michie**, my wife, volunteered to be my co-driver. ....we had us a convoy!

We departed at 7am on Wednesday the 9th April. We had walkie talkies, the craic was good between vehicles, stopping every three hours to swap drivers and refuel on snacks and coffee.

Then the dreaded night shifts, these ambulance seats were not built for long distance driving, they don't recline at all and are hard. Heads in the passenger seats jolted painfully as we tried to sleep. Thursday morning we motored into Poland, marveling at its prosperity and how the country had changed over the last 15 years.

There was a wonderful moment when we passed 30 British fire engines decorated with Union Jacks and Ukrainian flags who, realising we were going the same way flashed blue lights and turned on their sirens. At 3pm we were into Ukraine. Each village graveyard with freshly dug graves and flags bringing home the personal cost of the Russian invasion to each local community.

Central Lviv is truly beautiful, a UNESCO site. We dined quickly due to the curfew, and it was snowing hard as we came out of the excellent restaurant. Never has a bed been more welcome.

At 8am on Friday we were being shown around the amputee wards of St Panteleimon's Hospital, blown away by how immaculate and professional it was. Tears welled up as we saw a veteran with no arms or legs going through physiotherapy. There was a centre for survivors of captivity and torture. Then to meet the Mayor Andrii Sadovyy for a hot chocolate. He told us of 'Unbroken', the initiative to work with the 'heroes' as the military are called: 20% of the city's income is handed over for the war effort. We went to one of the drone manufacturers in the city, leaving with some knowledge of how this harrowing war is now being fought.

Then to an army camp for a reception from senior officers. Their speeches were so heartfelt about how supportive Britain was and how our leadership in supporting Ukraine was essential to encourage other countries, we were all emotional again.

On our several hour journey to Warsaw airport we marvelled how resilient the Ukrainians were and how they would never give up. We discussed the war crimes in Bucha, the 19,000 Ukrainian children taken by the Russians, and about how Trump seemed to be siding with Putin. Every one of us was proud to have done a small bit to help; Slava Ukraini.



*From left: Danny Chambers MP, Angus MacDonald MP, Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP and Paul Sweeney MSP in Ukraine.*

# Katya and Ruslan: Escaping Ukraine

by Outi Määttä-Bourke

**Three years ago Katya Ustiuhova was having dinner at home in St Andrews. Suddenly there were loud bangs and crackling sounds outside. Katya froze on her seat. Her mind went blank. She was instantly back in Ukraine with missiles falling around her and the family, husband Ruslan and daughters Iskriana (10) and Maiiana (7).**

"I quickly realised that it was just students having fun with fireworks," Katya laughs now, sitting in front of me in a café in Dundee. She comes across as a confident person with energy and drive, not someone easily spooked. Katya was surprised about her own reaction, thinking that she had dealt with all her feelings and experiences in Ukraine. But it all came back in a flash.

The family found a new home in St Andrews at the house of John and Karen Barnett in June 2022. John and Karen had applied to the Scottish resettlement scheme and Katya and Ruslan were put in touch with them by the team responsible for matching hosts and families. It was a decision they have not regretted.

"My life is so great!" said Iskriana the other day to Katya. Both girls are now at school and have settled down well with lots of friends. But neither Iskriana nor Maiiana spoke any English when they arrived to Scotland. The first year, Maiiana didn't talk at all, she refused to say anything in English. Now both girls are fluent English speakers.

When the war started in February 2022, Katya and her family were living in Kharkiv, in the northeastern part of Ukraine. Their home was an apartment on the seventh floor in a high rise building. Katya says she didn't know anything about politics and a full scale war didn't seem likely to her. Katya's family is from Donbas which was invaded by Russia in 2014. Her older brother warned Katya that what happened in Donbas could happen again.

In Kharkiv Russian was widely spoken even though the population was not ethnically Russian. Katya is bi-lingual herself. She says the relationship with Russia was good. Belgorod, a large Russian city, was only a short hop away and it was easy to visit.

On the night of 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 Katya, Ruslan and the girls were fast asleep when the first missiles hit the city in the early hours of the morning. "I couldn't believe what was happening. I had just had a rehearsal for an amateur musical production the day before," Katya says.

Ruslan woke up Katya, they started to read the news. "We thought it would be over in one day, that there would be a peace deal," Katya says. But the bombing continued and life became dangerous. Katya and her husband tried to keep things as normal as possible for the girls so that they would not be traumatised. They soon ran out of food and water. Ruslan's work colleague invited the family to his house with a basement.



*Katya Ustiuhova and her husband Ruslan will be guest speakers at the LI Scotland World Refugee day event in June.*

They left their apartment with one suitcase, all personal belongings were left behind. After a while, they had to move again: the family drove from Kharkiv to Dnipro, central Ukraine. It was a terrifying journey with many people on the road and constant fear of becoming a target. Totally unknown people offered two bedrooms in their apartment in Dnipro to be shared with mutual friends. The city was still functioning quite well. "We ordered a pizza and cried because it felt like we were back having a normal life," Katya says.

In Dnipro they listened to the air raid sirens day and night, heard bombs falling and worried about their safety. They then went to Ruslan's hometown in the northern part of Ukraine but after it was occupied by Russia and then liberated again, the infrastructure was practically destroyed.

One of Katya's friends told her about the Scottish scheme. Katya and Ruslan took the chance. The journey to Scotland was long and complicated. Katya and the girls arrived first, Ruslan joined them some months later. "John and Karen helped us with absolutely everything," Katya says.

There is deep sadness. Katya knows that the chances of seeing her brother or elderly parents again are practically nil. She feels that there is no possibility of going back to Ukraine ever again. Katya has found work as a Ukrainian teacher and she works as an administrator for the Edinburgh University Ukrainian Politics network. Ruslan works for a local IT company. Scotland is their new home. Safe at last.





Next time you see our stall at the party conference, please come and say hello & get our latest news on Open World Conference Special!

In Inverness Iain Smith, Sally Robertson and Douglas MacDonald were catching curious conference goers for a chat. Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP, Wendy Chamberlain MP, Angus MacDonald MP and Sir Graham Watson checked in.

# Mobile phones in times of war

We cannot live without the small, portable mobile phones anymore. But in times of war smart phones represent a unique problem since they can be useful but also very harmful.

One recent incident made headlines around the world. Fifteen Palestinian Red Crescent medics were shot dead by the Israeli army in Gaza in March 2025. Initially the Israel Defence Force (IDF) claimed that the ambulances didn't have emergency lights on and that they were advancing "suspiciously". For the IDF this meant one thing: there had to be a connection with Hamas. The men were attacked, shot dead and buried in a mass grave.

When aid workers eventually found the burial site, they discovered that one of the medics, Refat Radwan, had filmed the incident. The video, first published in the New York Times, revealed that the clearly marked ambulances had been using emergency lights and that the workers wore reflective vests. This wasn't Hamas but a humanitarian mission. The IDF was forced to admit that they had made a mistake. Without the mobile phone footage the truth might never have come out.

Mobile phone footage has been especially useful when investigating military attacks and in collecting evidence for war crimes. Bellingcat, for example, uses open source intelligence and someone's mobile phone video clip published in their Facebook account or posted on X might give the crucial, missing piece needed to prove what really happened.

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*Mobile phones represent a unique problem. They can be useful but also very harmful.*

Civilians increasingly have direct access in a crisis situation. Anyone can become a witness of street fights, be present in the aftermath of drone attacks or be in a hospital receiving victims of bombing. Live streaming, videoing or photographing these events can be vital evidence of war crimes. Grief, distress and anger are beamed to millions in a matter of minutes.

But there is a downside. Mobile phone can effectively be used to spread misinformation, false accusations or propaganda. Even more of a concern is the behaviour of ordinary soldiers, who have grown up with mobile phones glued to their pockets and are emotionally dependent on being always available. Careless use can, however, reveal the position of troops. A cluster of phone signals could be a useful piece of knowledge to those who wish to exploit it. Signal jamming is now common practice.

The military around the world are aware of these vulnerabilities and new technologies are being used to prevent accidental communication mishap. Many countries (Britain, China, India and Turkey to name a few) have banned or restricted mobile phone use in their armies. Soldiers are now being educated about the dangers of mobile phone use, their phones are actively monitored and often alternative, military-grade, secure devices are offered.

*Outi Määttänen- Bourke*



On the Reading List: fiction and facts for those who seek

## Philippe Sands: 38 Londres Street

*by Sally Pattle, LI Scotland member*

**I first came across Philippe Sands in the phenomenal East West Street and have greatly admired his writing ever since – he's also a fantastic speaker if you get the chance to attend a talk by him.**



In 38 Londres Street, Sands returns to the lives of Nazis after the end of the Second World War, this time uncovering the connections between an ex-SS Officer who ended up in Patagonia, and the Chilean dictator, Augusto Pinochet.

Sands himself had a walk-on part in this extraordinary story as he was initially approached by Pinochet to be his legal representative following the Chilean's arrest in London in 1998. Sands ended up representing the human rights organisation acting against Pinochet, but years later while working on The Ratline, he discovered an unexpected link to Pinochet and 38 Londres Street began.

Ostensibly about the interconnected lives of a former SS Officer, Walther Rauff, who fled Germany to Patagonia and was later reported to be a part of Pinochet's feared secret police the DINA, and Pinochet himself, his writing draws out much more than the coincidences of history and their consequences. Instead, the reader will find themselves considering the themes of law, history, politics and literature – and where the line between fact and fiction blurs in these areas.

I also found myself questioning memory, and the old adage that 'history is written by the victors'. It is certainly true that two people can go through the same experience and yet come away with entirely different recollections about what has occurred, and Sands is clear throughout this fascinating book that while he has done everything he can to research the two men's stories and reflect what happened accurately, this is his version of events.

38 Londres Street is an absorbing read, a book that will stay with the reader long after they've finished. Sands' work once again uncovers the afterlife of someone intimately connected to the Second World War and their terrible second act after fleeing the fall of the Third Reich. It also raises some uncomfortable questions for anyone who defended Pinochet following his arrest in London. More than anything, it's a really important book in a world where we are increasingly questioning the 'official' line being released by some of the most powerful countries on earth.

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### FUTURE EVENTS

#### Panel Discussion and Lunch

**Saturday 6 September 2025**

**Royal Scots Club,  
Edinburgh**

#### Annual General Meeting Online

**Tuesday 11 November 2025**

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