



The Scottish Women's Convention

ANNUAL UPDATE

2023

Who we are:

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) is funded by Inspiring Scotland to engage with women throughout Scotland in order that their views might influence public policy. This is undertaken in a variety of ways including Roadshow events, Thematic Conferences and regional contact groups.

After consulting with women across the country, the SWC uses their views to respond to a variety of Parliamentary, Governmental and organisational consultation papers at both a Scottish and UK level. This allows for the real lived experiences of women to have a positive impact on the policy making agenda in Scotland and beyond.

Our Main Objectives are to:

- Consult with women and use their voices as part of the engagement process.
- Ensure all policy and decision-making authorities take account of women's equality.
- Recognise and highlight the potential impacts which policies have on women.
- Promote the needs of different groups of women.
- Actively pursue solutions which look to achieve equality for women.

AGNES TOLMIE, SWC CHAIR

As the SWC celebrates its 20 year anniversary, I am compelled to reflect upon our past achievements, and am encouraged to see that women's voices have remained at the forefront of our work. The SWC have been influential in incorporating lived experience across government decision making processes since 2003. It is vital that women's voices continue to be listened to, and the SWC will always strive to provide that service across Scotland.

Furthermore, 2023 has been another busy year for the SWC Team, with visits to Campbeltown and Dundee as well as regular events on a range of topics. During our journeys across Scotland, I have been reassured to see the integral role women play within and around their communities, reaffirming my confidence in women as change-makers. As I look towards the next 20 years, I believe the SWC will continue to highlight these incredible women through our repeated engagement.

And finally... **Happy 20th Birthday to the SWC!**



SWC BOARD

AGNES TOLMIE, CHAIR
SUZANNE CONLIN
SARAH CUMMING
PATRICIA DONNELLY
GIRIJAMBA POLUBOTHU
MARGARET LANCE
MARY EWEN
CAROLINE THOMSON

SWC STAFF

SUSAN MCKELLAR,
MANAGER
JENNA MCGHIE,
EVENTS AND POLICY ADVISOR
EILIDH YOUNG,
POLICY AND EVENTS ADVISOR

Our year at a glance :

January

Attended Cross Party Groups on Human Trafficking, Women's Health and WASPI

March

- International Women's Day 2023 in conjunction with Scottish Parliament
- CSW67 in New York

May

Misogyny Conference

July

- Campbeltown Roadshow
- Volunteer Training Day

September

- Drugs Conference
- Programme for Government Roundtables

November

Women in STEM Conference



February

Housing Conference

April

- 126th STUC Congress
- Misogyny Roundtables

June

Misogyny Report

August

- WASPI Pension Review Roundtable
- A Blether on ... Breastfeeding

October

A Blether on ... Black History Month

December

- Festive Lunch
- Annual Update

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2023

Speakers



Alison Johnstone,
MSP and Presiding Officer



Rt. Hon. Nicola Sturgeon,
Former First Minister
of Scotland



Agnes Tolmie,
Chair, SWC



Dr Radhika Govinda,
Senior Lecturer in Sociology –
University of Edinburgh



Zara De Almeida,
School Pupil



Grace Lennon,
School Pupil

Cross Party Panel



Megan Gallacher,
MSP



Rhoda Grant,
MSP



Kaukab Stewart,
MSP



Beatrice Wishart,
MSP

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2023

On Saturday the 4th of March, we held our annual International Women's Day celebration in the Scottish Parliament. This event was chaired by Alison Johnstone, Presiding Officer, and our theme for the day was 'Breaking the Bias', while also commemorating 20 years of the SWC. We had contributions from multiple speakers, who gave their experience of breaking bias in their personal and professional lives, as well as how we can go on to further develop women's rights in Scotland.

After hearing from our speakers, there was a cross-party panel discussion, and a Q&A with politicians. We also had a special video which heard from women across the country, explaining how the SWC has impacted their lives and public policy over the past 20 years. Attendees then heard a fabulous contribution from Susan Morrison, Scottish comedian and writer. After our chamber event, attendees were invited into the Garden Lobby to hear from Christina McKelvie, MSP, Laura O'Connor from Thompsons Solicitors and Suzanne Bonnar, vocalist and actress.

Finally, we would like to thank all of our speakers, cross-party panellists, and the women who participated on the day.



CONFERENCES 2023

Over the year we have hosted multiple conferences on a range of subjects. These areas of interest were selected to align with the wants of Scottish women, with a focus on direct impact and lived experience. We asked women from across sectors to come and give their expertise, while also asking women to explain their thoughts and opinions.

Women's Experiences of Housing in Scotland

In January 2023 we held a conference which focused on the housing system across Scotland. We hoped to gain a better understanding of women's experience of housing and whether they felt improvements could be made. Our speakers ranged from Shona Robison, MSP, to frontline workers, Tandy Nicole and Linda McCabe who actively tackle housing inequality, with the former working with asylum seekers and the latter focusing on homelessness.

A Misogyny Law for Scotland: What are Women's Views?

May 2023 we hosted a conference which aimed to assess the validity of the proposed misogyny law, recently outlined by the Scottish Government. We wanted to understand how misogyny influenced women's lives, but also if they felt that new law would work to reduce misogyny in Scotland. At the conference, women heard from Eileen Flanagan from the Scottish Government's Equality Unit, Mhairi MacLennan, the Managing Director at the Kyniska Advocacy and Pauline McNeill, Labour MSP. Each discussed their views on the proposed law, and how they felt misogyny interacted with women's lives in Scotland.

The Impact of Drugs on Women & Families in Scotland

Due to the consistently high drug death rates in Scotland, we felt that it was imperative to understand how women are therefore impacted. The Scottish Parliament voted unanimously in March 2021 to declare Scotland's drug related deaths as a public health emergency, however, little progress is apparent, with women also becoming more likely to be within these figures. During our conference on the 2nd of September 2023, women heard from multiple speakers: Gill Harmon from Scottish Families Against Drugs and Alcohol, Liz Nolan from Aberlour and grassroots campaigner, Sally Amor from Families Campaign for Change, as well as a short video presentation from Drugs Minister, Elena Whitham, MSP.

STEMinism: What Needs to Change to Keep Women in STEM?

As we reached the end of 2023, we held a conference on the 11th of November which focused on women's experiences in the STEM industry. Prior to this conference it became apparent that women were entering STEM careers but struggled to fit into the pre-existing cultures. This resulted in fewer women advancing to managerial positions and/or leaving the sector entirely. Therefore, we invited a range of speakers to provide their expertise and lived experience surrounding this issue: Jenny Gilruth, MSP – Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Dilraj Sokhi-Watson from Equate Scotland and Dr Holly Ferguson from Scotland's Rural College.

To read the above conference reports please scan here:



HIGHLIGHTS

Campbeltown Roadshow

From the 3rd to the 7th of July 2023, the SWC team travelled to Campbeltown, meeting women from the town and the wider Kintyre region. The purpose of our visit was to understand the issues that these women face, with key themes arising throughout our conversations. Women explained that mental healthcare provision did not meet the needs of the community, and that there were also gaps in wider healthcare services. They went on to highlight that transport links were insufficient, with inconsistent ferries and long bus journeys adding to the isolation of the area.



Local women also stated that educational and employment opportunities were sub-par, resulting in younger people moving away from the area, which was then worsened by a lack of housing. Overall, women hoped to see a return of services to the area, and that their concerns were taken more seriously by government bodies.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the women who joined us in Campbeltown to give their lived experience. Our work would be impossible without the continued support of women, and we are forever impressed by the strong roles women carry out across rural communities in Scotland.

Misogyny Report

As a result of the proposed Misogyny Law released by the Scottish Government, we felt that it was necessary to understand how women felt about this new law, but also how misogyny affected their lives. We therefore held a conference around misogyny, alongside numerous roundtables and an online survey to gather their lived experience. The findings make for tough reading, with women across Scotland experiencing misogyny first-hand, impacting all aspects of their life. As a result, our final Misogyny Report, focused on four areas in which misogyny plays out: **education, employment, online and sport and exercise.**

Women explained that misogyny prevented them from actively engaging at school and at work, limiting their economic opportunities. They also felt that the online world has been significantly shaped by misogyny, creating an unsafe space for women and girls. Finally, due to previous work we had carried out in 2022 around education and sport, we had found that misogyny was a major barrier to women's active participation in sport and exercise. As such we felt that it was imperative to understand this further, to level out the playing field for women and girls. Our report made multiple recommendations, which were related to the new law, but also how UK Governments can go further to reduce misogyny across the country.

HIGHLIGHTS

Volunteer Day

On the 29th of July 2023, we held our first Volunteer Day for our incredible group of volunteers. The purpose of this event was to ensure that everyone had the knowledge and skills they needed to have the best possible volunteering experience with the SWC. We included information surrounding their role as a volunteer, our policies and procedures, as well as how to appropriately give feedback to staff. The event also allowed volunteers to connect with each other, SWC staff and board members.

Moving forward, we plan on holding an annual in-person Volunteer Day, as well as an online check-in later on in the year. We take this opportunity to thank all of our volunteers for their commitment and support over the past 20 years – we couldn't have done it without you. Thank you!



'A Blether on...' Roundtable Events

Throughout the year we have hosted multiple roundtable events as part of our 'A Blether on...' series. These events aim to create an informal, friendly environment in which women can share their views on a range of issues, and usually coincide with international days of awareness. We have received positive comments surrounding our 'Blether' events, with women highlighting the value in focusing on topics that matter to them.

In 2023 we have discussed...

Widowhood

Breastfeeding

Black History Month

Check out our [website](#) to have a look at the conclusions and recommendations made as a result of these discussions.



Publications: Consultation Responses

Scottish Government

- Feminist Approach to Foreign Policy
- Quality Standards for Adult Secondary Mental Health Services
- Community Wealth Building
- Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan
- Reforming the Criminal Law to Address Misogyny
- Review of the National Outcomes
- Local Living and 20-Minute Neighbourhoods: Draft Planning Guidance
- Self-Harm Draft Action Plan and Strategy
- Human Rights Bill for Scotland
- National Islands Plan Review
- Delivery of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) Education in Scottish Schools – Draft Statutory Guidance

UK Parliament

- Call for Evidence: Cost of Living: Impact on Rural Communities in Scotland
- Call for Evidence: Coronavirus and Scotland Follow-Up
- Call for Evidence: Women's Reproductive Health
- Call for Evidence: The Escalation of VAWG
- Call for Evidence: Impact of the Rising Cost of Living on Women
- Call for Evidence: Rights of Older People

Scottish Parliament

- Disabled Employment Gap Inquiry
- Charities Bill – Detailed Consultation
- Long Covid Inquiry – Your Views
- Inquiry into Public Administration – Effective Scottish Government Decision-Making
- Addressing Child Poverty through Parental Employment
- Gaelic Language Plan/Plana Gàidhlig
- Winter Planning 2023-24
- Victims, Witnesses and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill
- Healthcare in Remote and Rural Areas

UK Government

- Call for Evidence: Exchange of Sexual Relations for Accommodation (Sex-for-Rent)
- Disability Action Plan 2023 to 2024

Other Organisations

- Scottish Labour – How to Change the Future for Women and Girls
- Low Pay Commission – National Minimum Wage 2023
- National Care Service Charter
- Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry – Let's Be Heard: Sharing Scotland's COVID Experience

Thank You

THE SWC EXTENDS OUR GRATITUDE TO:
THE GROSVENOR HOTEL
THE STAFF AT THE ALBANY CENTRE
THE STAFF AT THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT
THE STAFF AT THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT



ARRAN
SENSE of SCOTLAND

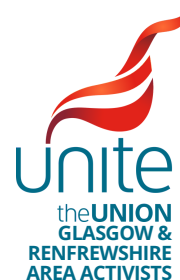


C•NICOL

SCOTTISH • ORGANIC
LIND & LIME
GIN
PROVISIONED WITH LIME



Sheila Fleet.
ORKNEY DESIGNER JEWELLERY



PERF

THE BORDERS
DISTILLERY



BRODIES
ESTD EDINBURGH 1867

DEAR GREEN®

And lastly thank you to our wonderful volunteers, supporters, and the many women we have spoken to throughout the year. Your contribution to the SWC is invaluable and helps us work towards an equal Scotland.



The Scottish Women's Convention
2nd Floor, The Albany Centre,
44 Ashley Street, Glasgow, G3 6DS
0141 339 4797

www.scottishwomensconvention.org
Facebook, Twitter & Instagram: @SWCWomen



The Scottish Women's Convention is a charitable company limited by guarantee.
Registered in Scotland No. SC0327308.
Registered office The Albany Centre, 2nd Floor, 44 Ashley Street, Glasgow, G3 6DS.
The Scottish Women's Convention is a Charity Registered in Scotland, No.SC0398525