



FESTIVAL OF POLITICS

AN FHÈIS PHOILITIGS

BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW AT [FESTIVALOFPOLITICS.SCOT](https://festivalofpolitics.scot)

**Wed 20 — Fri 22
August 2025**



Scotland's Futures Forum
Fòram Alba air Thoiseach



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



PRESIDING OFFICER'S WELCOME

I am delighted to introduce the programme for the 2025 Festival of Politics.

We present a varied programme of issues that matter and affect you and provide a platform to actively discuss issues that impact people in Scotland and across the world.

From international politics and conflict, to the wonders of crofting, the rise of misogyny; and an analysis of the big debates that lie ahead as we approach the Holyrood 2026 election; academics and experts in the field give their perspective and invite your participation.

We are also delighted to welcome award winning journalist and BBC foreign correspondent Clive Myrie to discuss his incredible career; and the well-known academic and author Professor Danny Dorling as two of the many respected speakers at this year's Festival.

We have a lively free programme of choirs, music, visual art exhibitions, and even robots in the Festival Café Bar. We look forward to welcoming you all at your Scottish Parliament.

Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP
Presiding Officer

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FÀILTE BHON OIFIGEAR RIAGHLAIDH

Tha mi air leth toilichte prògram Fèis Phoilitigs 2025 a thaisbeanadh dhuibh.

Tha iomadh cuspair eadar-dhealaichte a tha cudromach agus a' toirt buaidh oirbh sa phrògram againn, a bhios na chothrom beachdachaidh air gnothaichean a bheir buaidh air daoine ann an Alba agus air feadh an t-saoghail. Bho phoilitigs agus còmhstri eadar-nàiseanta, gu iongantasan saoghal na croitearachd, èirigh ann an gràin-bhoireann agus sùil gheur air na deasbadan mòra a tha romhainn agus sinn a' dlùthachadh air taghadh Taigh an Ròid 2026, bidh acadaimigich agus eòlaichean a' toirt seachad am beachd agus a' toirt cuireadh dhuibh pàirt a ghabhail sa chùis.

Am measg iomadh neach-labhairt ainmeil aig Fèis na bliadhna sa, tha sinn air leth toilichte fàilte a chur air an neach-naidheachd agus neach-aithris cliùiteach air cùisean cèin aig a' BhBC Clive Myrie gus beachdachadh air a bheatha-obrach iongantach, agus air an sgoilear agus ùghdar ainmeil, an t-Àrd-ollamh Danny Dorling.

Tha prògram beòthail an-asgaidh againn de chòisirean, ceòl, taisbeanaidhean ealain lèirsinneach, agus fiù robotan ann am Bàr Cafaidh na Fèise. Tha sinn a' dèanamh fiughair ri fàilte a chur oirbh uile aig ur Pàrlamaid na h-Alba.

Am Fìor Urr. Alison Johnstone BPA
Oifigear Riaghlaidh



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WEDNESDAY 20 AUGUST




Who gets a say? Environmental justice and the law	10:30am – 11:45am
Reshaping local government: a vision for Scotland's future	10:30am – 12:00pm
Peace in the Middle East?	10:45am – 12:15pm
Croft creation	12:30pm – 1:45pm
Making America Great Again BSL 	1:00pm – 2:30pm
The future of health: innovations in preventive care and wellbeing	1:15pm – 2:45pm
Scotland's drugs problem BSL 	3:15pm – 4:45pm
Action, not words: how to be an anti-racist country	3:30pm – 5:00pm
The Atomics: the story of Dounreay's people	4:00pm – 5:15pm
In Conversation with Clive Myrie BSL 	5:30pm – 7:00pm

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THURSDAY 21 AUGUST

Does transport work for disabled people in Scotland?	10:30am – 11:45am
FREE BSL 	
How do we make things last?	10:30am – 11:45am
In Conversation with Professor Danny Dorling	11:00am – 12:30pm
Does Scotland care enough about older people?	1:00pm – 2:15pm
The rise of misogyny	1:00pm – 2:30pm
Smartphone-free childhood? BSL 	1:00pm – 2:30pm
Journalists under fire	3:00pm – 4:15pm
Gen Z and politics BSL 	3:00pm – 4:30pm
Apocalyptic climate optimism	4:45pm – 6:15pm
Climate Café®	All day

FRIDAY 22 AUGUST

Dreaming of a fairer future for culture	10:30am – 11:45am
Holyrood 2026: the big issues BSL 	10:30am – 12:00pm
Will AI and robots save our economy and planet?	10:45am – 12:15pm
Give me some credit! FREE	12:30pm – 1:45pm
Oligarchs or philanthropists?	12:30pm – 2:00pm
Junk vs Jabs: our relationship with food BSL 	12:45pm – 2:15pm
Freedom of information: falling short after 20 years?	2:30pm – 3:45pm
Fact-free information	2:30pm – 4:00pm
Do we value social care? BSL 	2:45pm – 4:15pm
Can social work save communities and democracy?	4:15pm – 5:30pm
How safe is Europe?	4:30pm – 6:00pm

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WEDNESDAY

20 AUGUST 2025

Who gets a say? Environmental justice and the law

In partnership with the Cross-Party Group on Nature and Climate

10:30am – 11:45am / £7.50, £5.00

Who is hit hardest by pollution, climate change and environmental degradation? Who decides how we respond? Join the conversation on rights, the law and participation in environmental justice.

Reshaping local government: a vision for Scotland's future

In partnership with Scotland's Futures Forum and COSLA

10:30am – 12:00pm / £7.50, £5.00

Reflecting on 30 years since the last reorganisation, this panel explores if Scotland's local government structure is fit for the future, considering historical lessons, innovative ideas, and power-sharing models.

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Peace in the Middle East?

In partnership with The Scottish Council on Global Affairs

10:45am – 12:15pm / £7.50, £5.00

Will a tentative peace plan between Israel and Gaza ever hold and what of the humanitarian crisis that has displaced millions? Where are the pathways to peace and stability in the Middle East and what is the role of the international community?



Croft creation

In partnership with the Cross-Party Group on Crofting

12:30pm – 1:45pm / £7.50, £5.00

Could crofting be the answer to the most pressing problems of our time? By creating new crofts across Scotland, do we hold vast potential for nature and climate, food system resilience, and population retention?

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Making America Great Again?

In partnership with the University of the West of Scotland

1:00pm – 2:30pm / £7.50, £5.00

President Trump is back, and the world is adapting to his radical “America first” agenda. From immigration and healthcare at home, to global implications of trade tariffs, where does Scotland and the UK stand on our transatlantic partner?



The future of health: innovations in preventive care and wellbeing

In partnership with Scotland's Futures Forum

1:15pm – 2:45pm / £7.50, £5.00

Discover how cutting-edge innovations in preventive health are shaping our future. Join this lively discussion on technology, policy, and community-driven health solutions.

Scotland's drugs problem

In partnership with the University of Stirling

3:15pm – 4:45pm / £7.50, £5.00

Scotland retains the unwelcome title of the country with the worst rate of drug deaths in Europe. How brave and bold do politicians need to be to address a situation that owes much to historical, social and economic reasons?



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Action, not words: how to be an anti-racist country

In partnership with the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights

3:30pm – 5:00pm / £7.50, £5.00

Can racism and racial inequality be eradicated across a country? The Welsh Government believes so, pledging that by 2030, Wales will be anti-racist. What is Scotland doing?

The Atomics: the story of Dounreay's people

In partnership with the Cross-Party Group on Civil Nuclear Industry

4:00pm – 5:15pm / £7.50, £5.00

With the 70th anniversary of the famous Dounreay golf-ball landmark this year, join the panel to discuss the social and economic impact the former nuclear site has had on generations of Scots.

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In Conversation with Clive Myrie

In partnership with BBC Scotland

5:30pm – 7:00pm / £10.00, £8.00

Join the **Deputy Presiding Officer Liam McArthur MSP** in conversation with the multi-award-winning journalist and seasoned BBC foreign correspondent and news presenter **Clive Myrie** to discuss his incredible 30-year career reporting from conflict zones and his autobiography, *Everything Is Everything*. From his memorable reports in Ukraine, to covering presidential races and from the Iraq war and investigations into Mexican drug cartels to safer ground as host of Mastermind and travel programmes about Italy and the Caribbean. Myrie's memoir also gives an insight into his dealing with the challenges of race and class to succeed at the highest levels in his broadcasting career.

There will be a book signing after this event in the Festival Café Bar.

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THURSDAY

21 AUGUST

2025



Does transport work for disabled people in Scotland?

In partnership with the Cross-Party Group on Disability

10:30am – 11:45am / **FREE**

Stories of disabled people left stranded on planes and trains trigger the question, how much progress has been made in the 30 years since the Disability Discrimination Act? Is accessible transport planning a reality in Scotland?

BSL



How do we make things last?

In partnership with the Cross-Party Group on the Circular Economy

10:30am – 11:45am / £7.50, £5.00

How do we ensure that Scotland becomes a circular economy? How do we recycle at home and on the move and how do we buy more sustainably?

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In Conversation with Professor Danny Dorling

In partnership with Scotland's Futures Forum
and The David Hume Institute

11:00am – 12:30pm / £10.00, £8.00

Join the **Deputy Presiding Officer Liam McArthur MSP** in conversation with **Professor Danny Dorling**, Professor of Human Geography at the University of Oxford and the UK's best-known social geographer. In his latest book, *The Next Crisis: What We Think About the Future*, Professor Dorling uses the most up-to-date research to redraw our assumptions about where our greatest threats come from and the solutions that lie in politics and collective social organisation to tackle our uncertain future. His books *Peak Injustice*, *Seven Children*, *Shattered Nation* and *All That Is Solid* are crucial reading for anyone interested in the impact politics has had on the UK's housing, education, poverty and inequality levels, and offer robust solutions on how to address these challenges of our age.

There will be a book signing after this event in the Festival Café Bar.

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Does Scotland care enough about older people?

In partnership with the Cross-Party Group
on Older People, Age and Ageing

1:00pm – 2:15pm / £7.50, £5.00

Very few older people feel valued by society and many feel it's hard to be heard by decision makers. What should governments do to support our ageing population?

Smartphone-free childhood?

1:00pm – 2:30pm / £7.50, £5.00

Screen use is now impacting the development, educational attainment, sleep, mental and physical health of children and young people. What are politicians and social media platforms doing to address this?



The rise of misogyny

In partnership with the University of Edinburgh

1:00pm – 2:30pm / £7.50, £5.00

Misogynistic thinking and behaviours are fuelling an epidemic of violence against women and girls. What are our political, legal and societal leaders doing to tackle this gender-based abuse and who is protecting women and girls?



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Journalists under fire

In partnership with the Cross-Party Group on Palestine

3:00pm – 4:15pm / £7.50, £5.00

In an age of unprecedented conflict, how do we protect journalists' right to report and uphold the judicial standards that underpin journalism in an age where the rules-based order no longer seems to protect them?



Gen Z and politics

In partnership with the John Smith Centre

3:00pm – 4:30pm / £7.50, £5.00

How do young people engage with politics? Are they disillusioned or redefining what political participation looks like? And how important is trust in the conventional political system compared to what community activism offers?



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Apocalyptic climate optimism

In partnership with the Royal Scottish Geographical Society

4:45pm – 6:15pm / £7.50, £5.00

Many scientists believe that only personal climate shock and loss will mobilise communities to make the shift to activism on the climate crisis. Are they right?

Join the Climate Café®

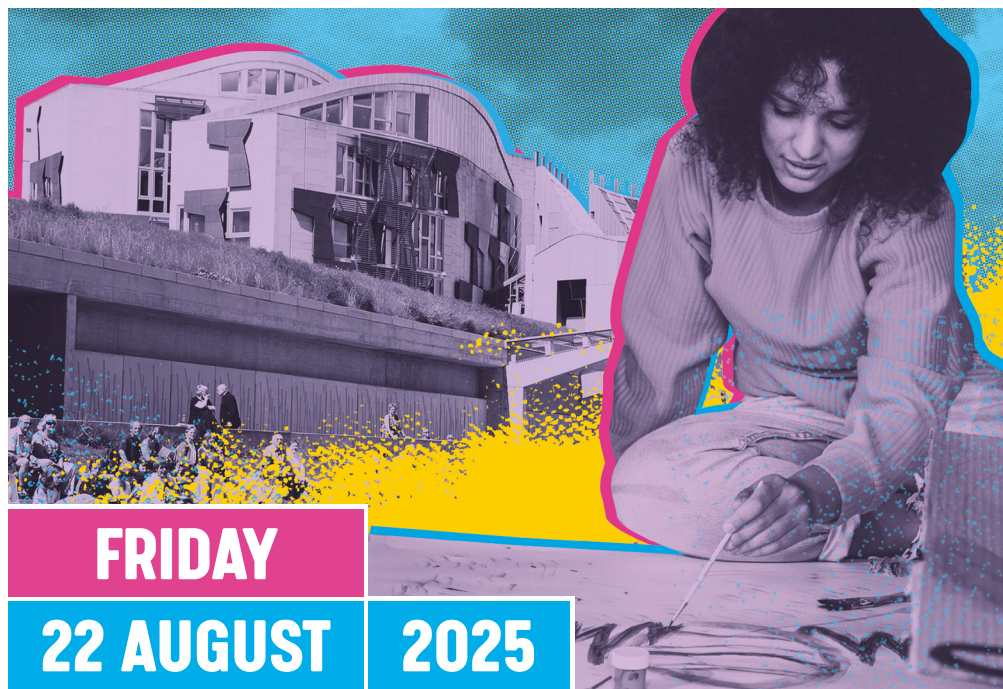
All day / **FREE**

Welcome to the pop-up, safe space to chat and act on climate change. No need to be a climate expert as all perspectives are welcomed in a very inclusive space. Free refreshments and biscuits will be provided.

See festivalofpolitics.scot for more information.

climatecafé®

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Dreaming of a fairer future for culture

In partnership with the Cross-Party Group on Culture and Communities

10:30am – 11:45am / £7.50, £5.00

'Culture should be like salt, not caviar'. Join the panel to explore the artist Harry Mould's vision of a world where creative opportunity is freely shared, enjoyed and experienced by everyone.

Holyrood 2026: the big issues

In partnership with The Centre for Public Policy, University of Glasgow

10:30am – 12:00pm / £7.50, £5.00

Ahead of the 2026 Holyrood election, join leading academics exploring key challenges – demographic shifts, AI, fiscal complexity, and social policy – that future politicians must prioritise in the coming decade.

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Will AI and robots save our economy and planet?

In partnership with The National Robotarium

10:45am – 12:15pm / £7.50, £5.00

From the economy to climate, public services and security, the development pace is warp speed. Are we ready and how do we negotiate safe, responsible AI to achieve societal advances?



Give me some credit!

In partnership with the Cross-Party Group on Poverty

12:30pm – 1:45pm / **FREE**

The cost-of-living crisis continues to squeeze households beyond their means. What are the impacts of financial exclusion on individuals, families and communities and how can fair banking help?

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Oligarchs or philanthropists?

In partnership with the University of
St Andrews

12:30pm – 2:00pm / £7.50, £5.00

What are the democratic and societal implications when the super-wealthy and powerful ignore what Andrew Carnegie dubbed 'the moral obligations that come with huge wealth', and who are today's new 'philanthrocapitalists'?

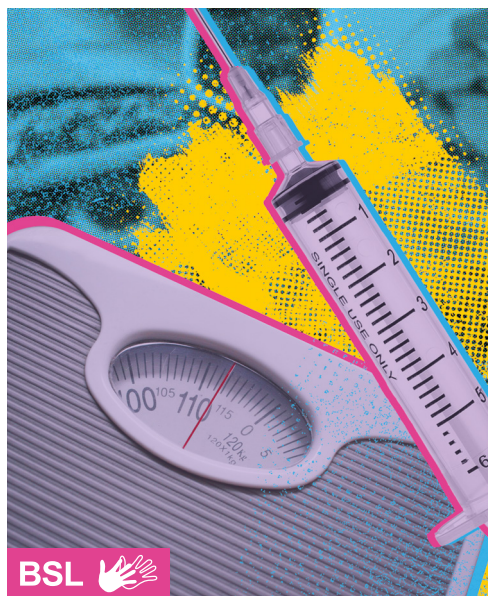


Junk vs Jabs: our relationship with food

In partnership with the University of Aberdeen

12:45pm – 2:15pm / £7.50, £5.00

Adult obesity levels are rising but with 'miracle' diet drugs available will Big Food merely adapt to Big Pharma and continue to produce convenient fibre- and protein-enriched foods instead? And what happened to cooking and eating fresh food?



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Freedom of information: falling short after 20 years?

In partnership with the Scottish
Information Commissioner

2:30pm – 3:45pm / £7.50, £5.00

Freedom of information requests have been used to reveal 'hidden' facts and stories about public bodies, but have they increased public trust and transparency and what challenges lie ahead in the digital age?

Fact-free information

In partnership with the Scottish Youth
Film Foundation

2:30pm – 4:00pm / £7.50, £5.00

What is misinformation and how it is substantiated in politics? Will rhetoric and propaganda always be a part of democracy, and what role do critical thinking and fact-checking play in an AI-generated world?

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Do we value social care?

In partnership with Scottish Care

2:45pm – 4:15pm / £7.50, £5.00

Amidst challenging demographics and declining birth-rates, how can we achieve a policy settlement that meets the rising social need for care and attention, and properly rewards and recognises those who provide it?

BSL 

How safe is Europe?

In partnership with the University of Strathclyde

4:30pm – 6:00pm / £7.50, £5.00

Given this year is the 80th anniversary of VE Day, how realistic is the prospect of European conflict in light of the current threats and instability in current geopolitics and how do we stop escalation?

Can social work save communities and democracy?

In partnership with the Cross-Party Group on Social Work

4:15pm – 5:30pm / £7.50, £5.00

Explore how social work can help communities overcome the barriers of poverty, disability and discrimination that exclude many from participating fully in the decisions that affect their own lives and shape their communities.



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EXHIBITIONS

Give me some credit!

This powerful photographic exhibition highlights the impact on families when affordable credit is denied, as curated by The Poverty Alliance and Fair by Design.

The National Robotarium

Find out more about human-robot interaction through this exhibition from the UK's centre for Robotics and Artificial Intelligence based at the Edinburgh campus of Heriot-Watt University and meet one of their robotic innovations.

Visualising the Scottish Parliament

Robert Gordon University present their 3D digital representation work, featuring the architecture of the Scottish Parliament and Debating Chamber.



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TICKETING INFO

All tickets can be booked online at **festivalofpolitics.scot** and will be available to buy up to **one hour** before each event.

A limited number of tickets can be booked in-person on the day at the Ticket Desk in the Festival Café Bar. Arrival at least 30 minutes prior to the event starting is advised.

Other information

Information is correct at the time of going to print but please check the online programme in advance of attending at **festivalofpolitics.scot**

We reserve the right to change or cancel any event. We cannot offer refunds or exchanges unless an event is cancelled.

Pricing

Concessions are available to children aged 5–16 years, Young Scot card holders, people aged 60 and over, students, unemployed people and disabled people.

Access to the Festival Café Bar is **FREE**.

Contact us

You can call us Monday to Friday 10:00am – 4:00pm on **0800 092 7500** or email **festivalofpolitics@parliament.scot**

Privacy

Our privacy and data-sharing policy can be found at **parliament.scot/privacy**



CRÈCHE

The crèche will be open on Wednesday 20 and Thursday 21 August between 10:00am and 6:00pm for anyone who wishes to book a place.

Please contact **0131 348 6192** or email **creche@parliament.scot**

FESTIVAL CAFÉ BAR

Join us in the lively FREE Festival Café Bar for a programme of choirs, exhibitions and robots as part of the free entertainment.

For the full line-up please visit **festivalofpolitics.scot**

Thank you to all our partners:



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Join In

Gabh Pàirt

Discover the Scottish Parliament

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this iconic Scottish landmark.

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and discover the Debating Chamber. You can also
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