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## **The Fraser of Allander Institute 50th Anniversary Conference**

Thursday 18th September - Friday 19th September 2025  
Technology and Innovation Centre, University of Strathclyde

[www.fraserofallander.org](http://www.fraserofallander.org)

## Professor Mairi Spowage

*Director, Fraser of Allander Institute*



*I am delighted to welcome you all to the University of Strathclyde's Technology and Innovation Centre for The Fraser of Allander Institute's inaugural Economic and Social Policy conference to mark our 50th anniversary.*

*This anniversary has provided a good moment to pause and reflect on where the Institute started and to appreciate how much it has grown in size, influence and reputation since its inception in 1975.*

*What began as a small team and an idea to form a research institute focussed on the Scottish economy and input-output modelling has grown to what the Institute is today, with a team of more than 20 producing leading research across the economy and social policy.*

*Whilst today's team keep the momentum going, we know we stand on the shoulders of those who have come before us over the past 50 years. This includes the countless individuals who have contributed to the Institute's success.*

*I want to thank all of our partners, friends and colleagues who have supported and contributed to the success of the Institute over the years.*

*We hope the next couple of days are insightful and engaging for you, and we are excited to celebrate the past 50 years of the Fraser of Allander Institute with you as we look ahead to the next 50.*

# CONFERENCE INFORMATION



Welcome to The University of Strathclyde's Technology and Innovation Centre. We're delighted to celebrate The Fraser of Allander Institute's 50th anniversary with you over the next few days.

## Wi-Fi

The conference venue has its own wifi network. To connect, select TIC Conferences from the list of available networks and enter the password which is visible around the venue. If you are having difficulties, please speak to a member of the Institute team, wearing red lanyards.

## Photography

Please be aware that photographs and video footage will be taken throughout this event, and some sessions will be recorded. These materials will be used by the Fraser of Allander Institute and University of Strathclyde for marketing purposes, and may be posted online.

## Finding Rooms

The conference is spread across multiple rooms and floors within the Technology and Innovation Centre. Our team will be located throughout the venue on both days and can point you towards the right location. Find them wearing red lanyards.

- **Main Auditorium** - *This is where all plenary sessions will be held and is located next to the foyer area of the conference centre. Entrance to the auditorium is available either side of the registration desk.*
- **Fraser Room** - *This is located upstairs on the mezzanine area above the foyer area. Lifts are available across from the registration desk, with stairs located in the foyer.*
- **Allander Room** - *This is located upstairs on the mezzanine area above the foyer area. Lifts are available across from the registration desk, with stairs located in the foyer.*
- **Foyer** - *This is the open space next to the registration area. Lunch and Tea + Coffee will be served here. Whilst sessions are running, this area will also provide a quiet space for work and calls. There are seated areas available both on the ground and upper floor.*



# THURSDAY 18th SEPTEMBER

8:30 - 8:55 Registration + Tea and Coffee

9:00 - 9:30 **Welcome Address**

9:30 - 10:30 **Consulting the numbers: The value of partnership  
between academia and business**

**Chair:** Mairi Spowage

**Panel:** Angela Mitchell, Marc Crothall, Charandeep Singh, Jack Norquoy

10:30 - 10:55 Tea and Coffee

11:00 - 12:30 **Themed Sessions A**

1. Lets get critical (Friend): Constructive Scrutiny in Scottish Policy Debates

2. To Evaluate or Not to Evaluate: That is the rubric

3. What works? Perspectives on the labour market and employability in Scotland

12:30 - 13:25 Lunch

13:30 - 14:15 **Driving demographic accountability: In  
conversation with Michael Marra MSP**

**Chair:** Mairi Spowage

**Panel:** Michael Marra MSP

14:20 - 15:50 **Themed Sessions B**

1. Making it happen: Addressing health inequality through better policy implementation

2. What can we learn from long-term analysis of the UK's fiscal history?

3. Navigating a turbulent world: Taking the pulse of Scottish business

16:00 - 17:30 **Themed Sessions C**

1. Paying for poverty reductions: How can Scotland meet its 2030 child poverty targets?

2. Who gains from trade? Trade and tariffs in a turbulent world

3. Data that delivers: Building a stronger evidence base for policy impact

17:30 - 19:30 Poster Session and Networking Event

# FRIDAY 19th SEPTEMBER



8:45 - 9:10

Registration, Tea + Coffee

9:15 - 9:20

**Welcome Address**

9:20 - 9:45

**First Minister Address, John Swinney MSP**

9:45 - 10:50

**Scottish Health Equity Research Unit Annual  
Report Launch  
Auditor General, Stephen Boyle**

11:00 - 12:30

**Themed Sessions D**

1. How far away is the UK from fiscal sustainability?
2. Scotland's invisible people: Addressing evidence gaps and supporting better futures for underrepresented groups

12:30 - 13:20

Lunch

13:30 - 14:30

**Jargon meets journalism: Making economic  
research easy to understand for the general public**

**Chair:** Peter MacMahon

**Panel:** Douglas Fraser, Gina Davidson, Chris Musson

14:30 - 15:30

**Looking ahead to the Holyrood election in 2026:  
Professor Sir John Curtice**

15:30 - 15:45

Closing Remarks



# PLENARY SESSIONS

## *Consulting the numbers: The value of partnership between academia and business*

Thursday 9:30 - 10:30

*This session chaired by Mairi Spowage will provide perspective from key voices across the business community on the benefits of FAI research for industry. Panellists include Angela Mitchell, Deloitte Practice Senior Partner for Scotland and Northern Ireland; Jack Norquoy, Director of Public Affairs and Communications at Scottish Renewables; Marc Crothall, CEO at The Scottish Tourism Alliance; and Charandeep Singh, Deputy Chief Executive of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce.*

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## *Driving democratic accountability: In conversation with Michael Marra MSP*

Thursday 13:30 - 14:15

*Michael Marra MSP, Deputy Convener of the Finance and Public Administration Committee, is joined by Institute Director Mairi Spowage to discuss the role that parliamentary committees play in holding the Government to account, including the role that research and insight from a body like the FAI can play.*

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## *SHERU annual report launch with Stephen Boyle*

Friday 9:45-10:50

*The Scottish Health Equity Research Unit (SHERU) will launch their annual report for 2025 at our conference. The report provides an update on health and socioeconomic inequality in Scotland featuring a deep dive into prevention and death from drugs, alcohol and suicide among young adult men, and will be presented by Emma Congreve and Kat Smith, co-directors of SHERU. The launch of the report will be followed by insight from the Auditor General for Scotland, Stephen Boyle.*

*There will be a panel session, chaired by Chris Creegan from the Health Foundation, featuring Emma, Kat, Stephen and David Finch from the Health Foundation, to explore questions from the audience.*

# PLENARY SESSIONS



## *Jargon meets journalism: Making economic research easy to understand for the general public*

Friday 13:30-14:30

*This session, chaired by journalist and political commentator Peter MacMahon, will provide insight on the value of timely and clear economic research for journalists. Panellists will reflect on their interactions with the FAI, when these have been most helpful, and how the FAI could further support the media in engaging the public on key economic issues. Peter will be joined by Douglas Fraser, Business and Economic Editor at BBC Scotland; Chris Musson, Associate Editor at The Scottish Sun; and Gina Davidson, Scotland Political Editor with LBC.*

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## *Looking ahead to the Holyrood election in 2026: Professor Sir John Curtice*

Friday 14:30-15:30

*Professor Sir John Curtice provides a look ahead to the 2026 Scottish election including discussion of the latest polling results. There will also be an opportunity for audience Q&A.*



## THEMED SESSIONS

### *A1 - Let's get critical (friend): Constructive scrutiny in scottish policy debates*

Thursday 11:00 - 12:30

*This session provides an overview of the Institute's scrutiny work and the importance of good scrutiny in order to hold policymakers to account. The panel will share insight on what good scrutiny looks like, with an opportunity to provide suggestions on how it could be improved across different policy areas. This will include an audience participation exercise and an opportunity for Q&A. Emma Congreve will be joined by Mick Wilson from Scottish Government and Martin McLauchlan from Audit Scotland.*

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### *A2 - To evaluate or not to evaluate, that is the rubric*

Thursday 11:00 - 12:30

*This session will explore the importance of evaluation in policy setting and programme development. Researchers from the FAI will be joined by Fraser Macdonald of the Data for Children Collaborative and Elaine Wilson of Corra Foundation to reflect on what robust evaluation looks like, why it is important, and the issues faced by third-sector organisations in evaluating their programmes.*

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### *A3 - What works? Perspectives on the labour market and employability programmes in Scotland*

Thursday 11:00 - 12:30

*This panel session will hear from people working in roles across Scotland's employment landscape, discussing opportunities for the employability sector and the labour market as a whole. Researchers from the FAI will be joined by Chris O'Hanlon, Head of Employability Policy and Strategy, Scottish Government; Elizabeth Taylor, CEO at Employment Related Services Organisation (ERSA); Cameron Smith, Development Worker, SCLD; and, Pegs Bailey, National Third Sector Employability Partnership Engagement Manager, TSI Network Scotland.*



## *B1 - Making it happen: Addressing health inequality through policy implementation*

Thursday 14:20 - 15:50

*The Scottish Health Equity Research Unit (SHERU) is an independent research unit, funded by the Health Foundation to provide insight, analysis, and scrutiny on the socio-economic factors driving health inequalities in Scotland. This is a collaboration between the Fraser of Allander Institute and the Centre for Health Policy. This session explores SHERU's work on policy implementation in Scotland and looks at local-level issues, featuring a panel discussion with people working in local authorities to put specific policy initiatives into action.*

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## *B2 - What can we learn from long-term analysis of fiscal data?*

Thursday 14:20 - 15:50

*How have the UK Government's tax and spending priorities changed over time, and how have we ended up with our current fiscal set-up? João Sousa, Deputy Director of the Fraser of Allander Institute is joined by Luke Lanskey, Senior Fiscal Analyst at the OBR, to discuss the long-term history of UK public finances and the historical contingencies that have led to the UK's current approach to fiscal policy – including tax, spend and fiscal rules.*

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## *B3 - Navigating a turbulent world: Taking the pulse of Scottish business*

Thursday 14:20 - 15:50

*Over the past five years, Scottish Businesses have seen energy crises, global turmoil, supply chain crises, inflationary spikes, tax challenges and, of course, tariffs. Through it all, the FAI's Scottish Business Monitor has been asking businesses in Scotland how they are coping through these challenges, gauging sentiment about the recent past and near future. The session will be chaired by Peter Hourston, Policy Manager from Prosper. Brodie Gillan from the Fraser of Allander Institute will present insights from the Business Monitor over this period and will be joined by Michelle Ferguson from CBI Scotland and Colin Borland from the Federation of Small Businesses to discuss the results from different perspectives.*



## THEMED SESSIONS

### *C1 - Paying for poverty reduction: How can Scotland meet its 2030 child poverty targets?*

Thursday 16:00 - 17:30

*Scotland has set child poverty targets to be met by 2030, but evidence shows that current measures are far from enough. How can Scotland meet the targets – and where should the money come from?*

*This session combines presentations from FAI researchers on current spending and policy options with a panel discussion on which policies should be prioritised and where funding can be reallocated or raised under devolved powers.*

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### *C2 - Who gains from trade? Trade and tariffs in a turbulent world*

Thursday 16:00 - 17:30

*International turmoil over recent US trade policy decisions, and the impact on the growth of economies in all regions of the world, has highlighted the importance of trade for the health of the overall global economy. This session explores FAI research as part of the Centre for Inclusive Trade Policy (CITP), which highlights the importance of trade for the prospects of workers in different sectors and regions of the UK, and will be chaired by Ingo Borchert, from University of Sussex. James Black from the FAI and Pinar Gunes from the University of Sussex will present insights on the nature of trade-related employment, trade and gender, and the impact of AI.*

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### *C3 - Data that delivers: Building a stronger evidence base for policy impact*

Thursday 11:30-13:00

*High-quality data is the backbone of effective policy—but too often, gaps, inconsistencies, or blind spots limit our ability to design interventions that truly reflect lived realities. Darren Morgan, Engagement Director at the Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence (ESCoE) and Sharada Davidson, Lecturer at the University of Strathclyde, join FAI researcher David Jack to explore the enablers of meaningful data improvement: from better data design and infrastructure to stronger collaboration between analysts, policymakers, and communities.*

# THEMED SESSIONS

## *D1 - How far away is the UK from fiscal sustainability?*

Friday 11:00 - 12:30

*This session will present new FAI analysis on the long-term sustainability of public finances, showing the critical role of long-term productivity growth and fiscal drag in determining the scale of the challenge facing the UK. João Sousa and Mairi Spowage will lead a discussion with the audience on the new modelling to explore the reality of the fiscal challenge we face.*

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## *D2 - Scotland's invisible people: Addressing evidence gaps and supporting better futures for underrepresented groups*

Friday 11:00 - 12:30

*People with learning disabilities continue to face significant barriers in accessing paid employment, inclusive services, and opportunities to thrive. At the same time, there are critical gaps in the evidence needed to inform policies and practices that truly support this underrepresented group. This session will explore how we can build a stronger understanding of what works—particularly in helping people with learning disabilities find and sustain meaningful work. We'll also consider how research can drive real-world change that promotes genuine inclusion. FAI researchers David Jack and Chirsty McFadyen are joined by Jo Davidson and Jo Hughes from Down Syndrome Scotland and Ruth Callander and Matthew Muirhead from the Scotland Commission for People with Learning Disabilities.*



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