

Ladies

This is my resume of the NFWI Annual Meeting for 2025.

As you may know this was the first of a set of three totally virtual annual meetings for the NFWI. If you have ever been to a meeting in person, you would find this meeting a little flat compared, with some uncomfortable pauses for technical glitches etc.

However, that aside it was a huge undertaking, and went well once we realised there would be these pauses and awkward silences !

Jeryl Stone our National Chair did an amazing job.

Once we had all managed to get into the two voting systems via zoom and election buddy we were all good !

The initial issues around the constitution were presented with a few, although not many questions. There have been a few changes which you all would have received earlier via your secretary, as proposals.

At our grass roots local WI level, we need to know a few important changes which have now come into effect.

### **Dual members.**

Dual Members are now to be known as 'multi members'.

This is just a name change as we have always had the option of belonging to more than one WI.

### **New change for multi members**

As a multi member, you will now be able to vote at all, and any of your WI's, on **ANY** matter..

This is a notable change for those dual members that couldn't vote on constitutional matters in the past.

Also any multimember can join any committee and / or be an officer in any of her WI's. A byelaw for this is no longer required.

So there be occasions where a multi member can be an officer in more than one WI, for example she could be president for two WI's or even three, or be a treasurer in one and Secretary in another etc.

The only caveat is that you must be a full member to be a delegate. So any delegates must represent her primary WI only.

## **Tenure for National and Federation Board members**

There has been a new ruling tenure set for Federation and NFWI levels. This will not affect your local WI.

The new tenure will be 9 years. It will be 3 sets of 3 and then you must step down from office for at least 3 years before you can restart your 9 year cycle. Local Federations can lower the amount of time but it can never be made more than.

**IF** this is seen to it work there is a discussion that they may try and bring this down to local level WI's, but it's not for us at the moment. They are basing these decisions on other successful charity models.

## **WI suspensions**

There has been no change in the amount of time the Federation hold your funds should you have to suspend.

This will be a 3 year period once you have discharged all your debts. The remainder of your WI funds will be held by the Federation for 3 years. This can be used to assist another WI opening up in your locality.

If no new WI is formed, after 3 years the money can be used by the Federation to further our WI charitable aims.

You must not spend this money if your WI is close to suspending, as it is still charitable funds, and must be used only in accordance with the Charity Commission guidelines and our Constitution.

So no big parties or gifts for members etc!

## **Non WI members at National and Federation Levels.**

One of the largest changes, is that NFWI have decided that they will accept trustees at NFWI and Federation level, who are NOT WI members, eg. business professionals / executives.

They may have specific skills that will help the Board but for example do not have enough time to enjoy the full benefits of membership.

There are certain regulations about what they can and can't do, and again they cannot be delegates, nor can they chair an annual meeting. This for me on a personal level I felt uncomfortable with, however they have said that only 1/3 of the total board can be made up of non WI membership.

I was not able to vote against this as we had a relatively long list of different changes, but they were all gathered together into one vote yes or no, which made it very very difficult to separate what we would prefer, and what bits we didn't like.

I voted for the changes as I felt the majority of them were favourable and common sense.

### **Financial matters**

We had an in-depth and itemised rundown of the finances.

The reasons why, and how beneficial the ongoing collaboration with outside agencies such as Teemill and Hobbycraft and now Emma Bridgewater are, to keep us financially viable. The exact figures I'm sure will be available to you later in the meeting minutes if you wish to see them in detail.

The Learning Hub was discussed favourably.

The Denman Grant has been launched.

The NFWI Podcast is available to all members and has nationwide coverage.

News on future subscriptions, and that NFWI will be looking at subscription allocations. There may be changes as to what percentage goes to whom.

Also there was a major decision that within five years 104 Kings Road, the NFWI HQ, will be sold and the NFWI will look for a different premises. In the mean time they will continue to upkeep the building so it reaches its saleable potential and they will continue to rent out space there to tenants, to enhance funds.

Jeryl talked briefly about previous Resolutions, clean rivers and dentists etc, and how the WI can raise the volume on important issues and especially where it affects women.

She also talked about 'Not in my Name' and various vigils, the England Rugby partnership and how it's helped with fitness, fostered local connected and enabled use of community spaces.

### **Emma Bridgewater**

We had a lovely talk from Emma Bridgewater who was interviewed by our CEO Melissa Green.

I think most ladies had hoped that Emma would talk for longer as she was so interesting, and about the processes of her pottery making. She mainly talked about being a woman, a woman in business and how things have come to pass for her. She explained what a fantastic place she found Stoke to be, the potteries generally, and how her business was formed from one idea and a passion for mismatched pottery. Her inspiration came mainly from her mother.

She promised to join her local WI. She's currently a WI supporter.. The new WI Emma Bridgewater mug is on sale and £3 for each mug will come to the WI. So far there are 1,200 of preorders. They are very nice but do cost £25 each!

### **Resolution Vote**

After a break for lunch, we listened to very eloquent and heartfelt presentation for 'bystanders can be lifesavers'.

The numbers of fatalities from heart attacks away from home or hospital is sobering, and also the fact that women have a far less chance of survival than men.

There was a real problem for NFWI to find somebody who was prepared to talk against the Resolution, however they always need balance, so an NFWI board member took on this responsibility to try and find the 'against' argument.

The argument against was not convincing or very in depth, although a little thought provoking. Should we should direct our efforts into heart health as opposed to what happens should you have a heart attack? It did appear that she was fighting a losing battle and the motion was passed by a huge number of votes.

So this is our new Resolution for this year  
'Bystanders can be lifesavers'.

Please do take a look at the app  
'Defibfinder' which will help you locate your nearest defib device.

### **Angel Strawbridge**

We followed the vote with an interesting and very bubbly talk from Angel Strawbridge, who was talking on zoom from her home in France. Angel was very enthusiastic, quite full on, and seems to have found her place life as an entrepreneur. She said she is a woman who has always tried to battle against tradition, and stand up for herself. She was very confident, exuberant, very outgoing and seems to want to have a collaboration with a WI. Her talk was very well received followed by quite a lot of questions.

The new NFWI trustees were announced and amongst them Erika Brichta our current Chair was been appointed as chair of Public Affairs and she will also be on the Membership Team. Yvonne Price has stood down from NFWI Board.

The meeting finally ended after seeing the National Anthem and Jerusalem in Welsh. Interestingly everybody stood, which was rather lovely. Despite being on zoom which was a little odd.

If anyone does have any questions or queries or I may have missed something, then please do get in touch and I'm sure I will have noted it down somewhere or I can pass your question on to someone who does know the answer for you.

Lastly thank you for voting, and for allowing me to be your chosen delegate.

Next year will be on zoom again and if you do get the chance to attend a watch party or view from home please do, as it's a great experience.

With best wishes

Fiona O'Leary. WSFWI Adviser / Board of Trustees

