**DEVELOPING OUR STRATEGIC VISION 2025-2030**

***Shaping your movement***

***Our starting point***

109 years on, we remain the largest women’s membership organisation in the country and we have a lot to be proud of.

We are a trusted organisation. We are a driving force in our communities. We continue to be a force to be reckoned with.

However we all know that we have to work hard to recruit new members. The pace of women’s lives, the volume of competing demands on their time, misconceptions about who we are and (in recent times) a decline in our success in maintaining multi-generational WIs have all culminated in an ever-present challenge of reaching more women.

We believe that we all want to be a growing organisation that is for all women and which is an organisation of choice for all women. We want to ensure that the fun and friendship we get from the WI is available to all women. We all want to ultimately hand on our wonderful movement to the next generation of women, as it was handed to us.

So this consultation is looking at just that…how we do we work together to ensure we are enjoying our WI experience *and* ensuring a strong foundation for the future. Like all generations of WI members before us, this is the challenge and we know we can rise to it.

***Why do we need a strategy?***

2020 saw the first NFWI strategy and some of you rightly asked why we needed one. I know for some it felt a bit ‘corporate’ and perhaps remote from our day-to-day experience of the joy of the WI. However, if there is one thing that our rich history teaches us is it is that we influence change most effectively when we all focus together, across our membership, on the same areas. When we work collectively and with one purpose and one voice…then we are unstoppable. The strategic plan aims simply to do just that. We know we need to work hard to keep our organisation growing and evolving and the aim of the plan is to focus on the 3 or 4 areas where you feel we can have the greatest impact if we invest our time and energy.

Our first strategy, which runs until 2025, was a great start and we are already seeing the benefits. We all rose to the challenge. Our thanks to all of your for your positivity and ambition which has moved this plan forward and focused our minds on the challenge ahead. However that plan was just a starting point, and as we continue to measure the impact and reflect on the successes and challenges, we also want to hear from you (as we did in 2020) about your thoughts on where we go next.

***Your role***

Your role is to share your views. Whether you do that individually, collectively as a WI/federation or with friends (WI and non-WI) we are keen to hear your thoughts. You know the organisation best and we want to hear about it. Tell us where you feel we can invest our energy to continue to ensure you get the most out of your WI **and** how we can take that to more women, now and in the future.

Our challenge to you is not only to share your thoughts, but really think about what the WI movement needs to be for you, your WI friends, your community and for all the hundreds of thousands of women who will join the organisation behind you. Think about the women you know around you who aren’t WI members and tell us their stories alongside yours. Together we believe we can find the answer to both reaching them and ensuring that the WI continues to be everything you want it to be.

Like every WI member since 1915, our role is to consider ourselves, our communities and all those women who the WI would benefit - and then work together to build an organisation that reaches them all.

***How do I share my views?***

We are happy for you to share your views in the way that works best for you. We have a dedicated email address where you can email your feedback: [Vision@nfwi.org.uk](mailto:Vision@nfwi.org.uk) but if you prefer to call us or write a letter then feel free to contact us at on 020 7371 9300 or at NFWI, 104 New Kings Road, London, SW6 1LY.

In addition, we would love to come and visit your WI or federation meeting if you would like us to. As NFWI staff and trustees we are out and about in your federations all through the year anyway, but between September 2024 and end of February 2025 we would be particularly keen to come and meet with you to discuss the new strategy. If that is something that might be of interest to you then please let us know (using the contact details above).

***How long have I got?***

The consultation for the next strategic plan will run from WI Day 2024 (16th September) to 1st March 2025. The data collated during that time will inform the final plan which will be launched on WI Day 2025. We hope this gives you enough time to reflect on the consultation and share your views in whichever way works best for you.

***Where do I start?***

We have been collecting your feedback (formal and informal) on our current plan and also hearing your experiences of the WI for the last 4 years. Our thanks go to the hundreds of WIs and our federations who have shared their thoughts so generously and helped shape our thinking.

Based on this feedback we have created a set of 4 draft vision statements (presented below in Appendix A), which pick up on the themes from that feedback and which we hope will act as a starting point for your discussions. They are not the final areas and maybe none of them will appear in the strategy launched in 2025, but we hope they give you a useful starting point and a flavour of the feedback received from fellow members. If you like them, dislike them, have other ideas, then let us know!

We have also included some observations from our existing strategy. The areas we are seeing successes and the areas that remain a challenge. Again these are presented simply to support discussion.

***Thank you***

Thank you for getting involved and for making the WI movement what it is. We know that together we can continue to grow and strengthen our organisation so that as many women as possible get the chance to benefit from and enjoy it, just as we all do.

We look forward to hearing from you.

***NFWI Board of Trustees and staff***

**Appendix A: Draft vision statements**

This is an open consultation and so we want to hear your views on your experience and where your organisation needs to focus. However, as with last time, we have proposed some initial vision statements to generate discussion. These are based on our organisational learning from the last 4 years and feedback from members and partners. They are just some of the themes that have emerged, but of course you may agree, disagree or have completely new areas you want to propose. The important bit is that you have your say!

* **Activism**

We will review and develop our national campaigning approach and nurture and support local activism so the WI continues to be a force for positive change in the 21st Century.

*Example activities:*

* + *We will gather and use data and feedback from women, inside and outside of our membership, to contribute to national conversations and campaigns on the issues that matter to all women*
  + *We will take a stand on societal issues impacting all women, demonstrating a truly intersectional perspective*
  + *We will be the ‘go to’ organisation for media and external organisations on the key issues in our campaigning portfolio*
  + *We will undertake a fundamental review of the WI approach, process and timetable for setting national campaigning priorities.*
* **Belonging**

We will be an active and visible presence in our communities and reinforce and enhance our role in bringing communities together. We will lead targeted initiatives with specific groups of women to include the voices of a wider audience and bring them into the WI family.

*Example activities:*

* + *We will play a proactive role in national coalitions and in partnership with like-minded organisations aimed at creating unity and building relationships in communities.*
  + *We will proactively support federations to build community-level partnerships within the WI and with external organisations*
  + *We will celebrate and showcase our role as community leaders and share this knowledge and expertise with others in our communities to help encourage the next generation of community leaders*
  + *We will identify audiences in our community who have not traditionally engaged with the WI and ensure we create a sense of belonging for all women in our movement.*
  + *We will learn from women who are not in our movement to better understand what they would want from us and how we can welcome them.*
* **Learning**

We will be the ‘go to’ platform of choice for all women to share skills, expand knowledge and forge new friendships. We will empower women to explore what learning means for them and achieve their personal goals.

*Example activities:*

* + *We will ensure that the WI Learning Hub continues to reflect the interests of our members and potential members, providing all women with a place where they can focus on their own personal development and growth*
  + *We will identify the volunteer roles and skills needed to sustain our organisation in the future and develop these in partnership with federations and WIs*
  + *We will continually expand and develop the range of training and information available to support individual volunteer roles and the good governance of the charities within our national network.*
  + *We will proactively seek and develop meaningful national partnerships with relevant organisations and continually increase the access and opportunities available to members as part of their WI membership*
  + *We will seek opportunities to work in our communities and across generations to share our expertise and knowledge, e.g. working with schools, hospitals and care environments.*
* **Informed**

Focussing on the internal management of our charities, we will improve our data collection and management. Making it easier to collect, access, evaluate and use data to inform decision-making across our charities.

*Example activities:*

* + *We will undertake a comprehensive review of our membership data collection and management system (MCS) and develop a new system fit for the future*
  + *We will underpin all our activities with a clearer idea from the outset of what success will look like for the NFWI, federations and WIs and share the evaluation of key initiatives and activities to help encourage a culture of continual improvement*
  + *We will continue to build our knowledge and data on our membership through the ‘Count Me In!’ survey and use this to inform committee workplans and NFWI Board decisions.*
  + *We will invest in what helps our charities run and communicate more effectively at all three levels of the organisation.*

**Appendix B:** ***Some reflections on the past 4 years:***

*A final report will be produced in 2025 outlining the successes and challenges of the current strategic period. This period was impacted of course by the pandemic and the way this changed what we and every other organisation could do, but despite this it has been a period of significant success and progress.*

*We thought it might be helpful to give you a summary of some of the key areas to support your discussions:*

* + Despite the pandemic, recruitment figures have remained strong. In the past year (June23-June 24) we welcomed just over 24,000 new members. This is thanks to the hard work of members and their recruitment activities in their communities.
  + However we continue to see the closure of WIs and the loss of members, often because they can no longer recruit officers or members. These losses mean that we are still not seeing an overall growth in our figures. Early indications are that we are reaching a break-even point, which represents an extraordinary story at local level after 4 decades where this has not been the case, but it means that we need to work even harder to grow and also to ensure we are not losing WIs or members who want to continue to be part of our movement. We know we need a particular focus on the ‘lost generations’, primarily those born since 1980, who are the least represented in our current membership and have not been joining us in huge numbers in recent years. To be a truly multi-generational organisation for all women, which is such a key part of who we are, we need to look at why we are still struggling to reach women from different generations and what we need to do to address this.
  + We have undertaken a major overhaul of our guidance, rules and constitution.

This has resulted in the removal or update to many of our rules to ensure they make it as easy as possible to run WIs. This has included production of the WI Handbook and the launch of training for Federation Trustees and WI Advisers to help ensure the rules and guidance are clear and accessible. This work concludes with the formal review of the constitution which is live now and will be voted on at the 2025 Annual Meeting. You asked us in 2020 to address the ever growing red-tape and remove anything that wasn’t required by legal or regulatory bodies. Our commitment remains with this work long beyond the current strategic plan, but we hope you will have started to see a difference in this area and we encourage you to keep telling us when there are areas you want us to review.

* + As part of the review of the constitution we are proposing changes which will increase representation and open up opportunity for more women to engage with our governance and to ensure we are representative of all women. We are starting to see a greater diversity in our membership and we have proactively highlighted and celebrated our rich diversity in our internal and external messaging. We are proud of this and want those outside the WI to see it. However, we need to continue to focus on this until we can say that we are truly representative of the communities we serve. Our commitment is to maintain a focus on this and work with you to identify the support you need in your communities.
  + We have significantly increased our PR activity and our portfolio of national partnerships to ensure the WI is being recognised and celebrated for its work. We are delighted to see the WI mentioned and celebrated more frequently in the media and through our national partners and we can see the impact this has had on reaching new audiences and challenging perceptions. We would like to thank our national partners for their support and passion for the WI as well as their help in celebrating the achievements of our members.
  + We have worked with non-members to understand the barriers to joining our movement and this continues to inform our work, including the introduction of a range of more flexible ways to join our movement such as our new Supporter Programme and Virtual WIs. These are just the start, but after over 100 years of offering a limited range of ways to join our movement, it is great to see these new options gaining momentum and offering us a new way of bringing women in.
  + Our campaigning activities continue to get the attention of local and national decision makers and the last 5 years has seen a number of new resolutions which reiterate our commitment to improving the world around us and highlighting issues that need amplification. However we know that those outside of the WI don’t always see or hear our messaging or know the impact we have. We also hear from you that the resolutions that come forward are not ground-breaking enough and you want us to regain our campaigning passion and edge. Whilst the content of the resolutions remains in your hands as members, we know that we need to look at the way in which we identify issues, campaign for change and promote this work. From our work to reach new audiences in the past 4 years we know that our campaigning is what interests new members and makes them think again about what we do and what membership can offer them. So ensuring our methods continue to work in the 21st Century is vital and you will know best what you need in your communities and nationally to make the voice of the WI heard.