

Federation of Women's Institutes of Northern Ireland

Trustees' Annual Report
Year ended 31st August 2022

Women Involved
In Family, Friendship and Community

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NIC 101656

1.0 Essential Facts

Charity name: Federation of Women's Institutes of Northern Ireland
Charity Registration Number: NIC101656
Registered Office: 209/211 Upper Lisburn Road
Belfast
BT10 0LL

Governing Document: Constitution and Rules, 2019 Edition

Financial Year reporting on: 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2022

Trustees at 31 August 2021:

Margaret Broome (Chairman)	
Kathleen Verner (Vice Chairman)	
Sheelagh McRandal (Treasurer)	
Heather Adamson	
Joan Beattie	Rosemary McAllister
Ruth Carroll	Lorna McClure
Marie Darrah	Margaret McCracken
Lesley Dowds	Christine Rankin
Rhoda Farrelly	Brenda Richardson
Teresa Feeney	Pamela Robinson
Sandra Ledlie	Lynd Roper
Violet Little	Rosemary Savage

Acting General Secretary Kathleen Dickey

One Trustee, Margaret Kelso, died during the period.

Auditors: Dawson & Company
Chartered Accountants
171 University Street
Belfast
BT7 1HR

2.0 Mission Statement

“To unite in promoting any work which makes for the betterment of our homes, and the development and improvement of rural and urban life through social and educational activities.”

3.0 Objects

The object of the Federation is to provide an organisation and structure to enable women to take a more effective part in the life of the rural and urban community. This is achieved by providing opportunities for lifelong learning by encouraging participation in arts, handcrafts, home skills, leisure pursuits, sport and other activities.

These objectives comply with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 legal requirement that all charities have purposes that are for the public benefit.

4.0 Structure

The Federation of Women’s Institutes of Northern Ireland (The Federation) is an organisation which encourages women to take a more effective part in the community. This is done through a network of Women’s Institutes, with a total membership of some 3,631 active throughout Northern Ireland. There are 132 Institutes, grouped in twenty-one Areas, registered with the Federation and they operate in accordance with the Constitution and Rules for Women’s Institutes laid down by the Council of the Federation. Each member pays a membership subscription to the Federation, and all are covered by insurance arranged by the Federation. Each Area Executive member is responsible for overseeing the correct management of her Institutes.

Comprising a delegate from each Institute and the members of the Executive Committee, the Council forms the policy of the movement, the administration of which is carried out by the Executive Committee made up of an elected representative from each Area; they are the Trustees.

There is one representative from each of the Ulster Farmers’ Union and the Young Farmers’ Clubs of Ulster on the Executive Committee and the Federation has a representative on NICVA and the Women’s Forum.

The FWINI is an active constituent member of The Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW), which is an International Non-Governmental Organisation, registered with the United Nations, that pursues its charitable objectives, the relief of poverty, the relief of sickness and the protection and preservation of health and the advancement of education, through its member societies, individual members and networks of other non-member Non-Governmental Organisations. In 2018, ACWW launched the Women Empowered Fund, focusing donations into six Priority Focus Areas which reflect the charitable aims and objectives of ACWW. This funding model allows members and donors to choose one or more specific Focus Area(s) to support, whilst ensuring the sustainability of ACWW Projects.

5.0 Activities

This was a special year for the Federation as it celebrated its 90th birthday, having first met on 24 April 1942 with the Duchess of Abercorn presiding. The celebrations, though muted, brought much relief after the austerity of the covid pandemic which we were still recovering from. Many Institutes had their own events, at the Balmoral Show, which we were delighted to take part in again, we received much media attention and in August we had an open week at Federation House welcoming Institute and members, past and present, to visit us. Events will conclude with an ecumenical service in September. Federation House opened again, and staff got back to work. The Institutes cautiously started to meet but this has still been another difficult year for the Federation. The Sub-committees started to organise reduced programmes and thankfully much needed maintenance on the house was carried out.

A major change happened on 1 September 2021 when Kathleen Dickey took office as Acting General Secretary, on the retirement of Irene Sproule. This was a mammoth task which Kathleen ably undertook with good humour.

Two well attended meetings of the Council are normally held every year - the Autumn Council Meeting and the Annual General Meeting (AGM). These are excellent opportunities for the Institutes to come together and exchange news and ideas. The Autumn Council takes place in a different location throughout the country each year,

and we were delighted to be able to hold it again in the Drummond Hotel, Ballykelly on 23 October. The ninety odd attendees were entertained by Joe Mahon, the well-known television presenter. By tradition, the AGM is held in Belfast, and a full meeting was held in the Europa Hotel on 31 March 2022. A full programme was held, and the six Sub-committees set up displays of their work. In the afternoon the farmer, poet, Brian Rankin, read a selection of his work, to the great enjoyment of all.

The Executive and the Sub-committees resumed the majority of their meetings in person although the advantages of having some meetings on Zoom learned during the pandemic were not lost. A major concern continues to be communication with the members with so many not being IT confident. Our main vehicle for communication is our excellent magazine, The Ulster Country Woman, which keeps members up to date with Federation matters. A grant from the TNL Community Fund has enabled us to work on a new website.

Much to everyone's disappointment, the much-enjoyed City of Belfast's Autumn Flower Show, held in the Botanic Gardens, Belfast was not held again this year. We look forward to it starting again as it is a major opportunity for the WI to display its work to the public and attracts considerable interest.

With a wide range of activities to oversee, the Executive Committee is assisted by six sub-committees. Despite the problems brought by the pandemic in curtailing their activities in during the year, they turned to Zoom to keep their meetings going in an attempt to plan for an uncertain future. Their diverse activities were:

5.1 Arts

The Arts sub-committee organises a wide range of events that all members of FWINI can participate in either individually or as an Institute team. These events include Art, Drama, Music and the Spoken Word competitions and festivals.

Our Autumn series of eight grant funded One Day Schools began Saturday the 4th of October 2021. Places on The Acrylic Painting classes were all filled with members asking for them to run again in the Spring.

The calligraphy classes ran fortnightly with a beginner's class alternating with a follow on one. We followed up on an idea put forward by a member to produce FWINI notelets to sell as merchandise. The committee decided on 6x4 inch cards printed with pencil sketches of a landmark from each of the six counties. We received a good quote from our magazine printers, and these have proved very successful.

The lifting of some COVID-19 restrictions by February 2022 allowed us to go ahead with the annual Art Competition but without the Coffee Morning. The entries in all classes were of a very high standard and made for a wonderful exhibition of our members' talents.

The winner of the Scarf Competition was Therese Mageen from Saintfield WI, and we hoped to have the scarves printed in time for sale at the AGM at the end of March. The leaders of the institute choirs agreed that The Annual Music Festival would be viable if held in May rather than the usual month of March, as most could not practice before January. It was well attended, and the standard of entries marked by the adjudicator was exceptional, making for a wonderful, varied, and enjoyable festival. We are very proud of our members who come together as choirs or enter as individuals to represent their institutes or areas. It was lovely to hear that the choirs intended to combine and rehearse for the 90th Anniversary Service to be held in Armagh Cathedral in September.

On Thursday 18th August 2022, it was The Arts Committee's turn to host the morning session of the series of open days at FWINI Headquarters. It was a great opportunity to promote the work of the committee to the visiting members with the opportunity to come together, tour the facilities, enjoy the artwork on display and have welcoming refreshments. We are looking forward to future festivals and continuing friendships.

5.2 Balmoral

The Balmoral Show organised by the RUAS is held every year in May and is the major event in the FWINI Calendar. It is the one occasion in the year in which the entire membership has the opportunity to contribute or participate by volunteering in the Tea Room, staffing the stalls, baking and making jam and preserves for the Market Stall, baking for the Tea Room, taking part in competitions, exhibiting craft

work and art and visiting the Show and the WI Pavilion with family and friends.

Spearheading all this is the Balmoral sub-committee, an exceptionally hard-working group of members who spend many months preparing for the event and attend on every day of the Show. They are assisted by all the other sub-committees; see their individual entries in this report.

This year we were situated in the new Annex - a permanent building near our previous location in the showgrounds. Approximately half of this building was allocated to us. It provided us with additional space for the Tea Room with adjoining kitchen, an exhibition area where the Market Stall was located together with the Sub-committees' exhibits and displays highlighting their activities and the competition entries. With the Show spread over four days, an extra effort was necessary to ensure sufficient produce for the Tea Room and Market Stall. Members responded magnificently to the challenge.

This year we celebrated our 90th birthday, the First Institute having been formed in Garvagh in 1922. This occasion was highlighted by the R.U.A.S. and we were delighted when television presenters and cameras chose to visit the hall to interview members. One brave lady allowed them into her home to video the making and decoration of an anniversary cake - one of our competition entries for the show. With the nation still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, tables were spaced out within the hall and staff took every precaution possible to keep everyone safe. It was lovely to see and greet regular customers back to our Tea Rooms and to be told that we 'were missed' at the 'reduced' Show held the previous September.

Ladies who remember visiting the W.I. Tea Rooms as a child with their parents, now return with their own children - we hope that this tradition will continue for many years to come!

5.3 Home and Garden Sub-committee

The Home and Garden Sub-committee is charged with advising the Executive Committee on relevant developments in Home Skills. It organises events on its own

and others in co-operation with The Homecraft Sub-committee. During the year the committee met regularly in person and via Zoom.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 The City of Belfast Autumn Flower show, held annually in the Botanic Gardens, did not take place. Hopefully, Belfast City Council will reinstate this festival in the coming year.

In November, the popular Home and Garden Christmas Event was held with over 200 members attending. Although, attendance was down on pre-covid years, an enjoyable day was had by all. Our demonstrations consisted of floral art, upcycling furniture and a cookery demonstration. We also had a great range of stalls which gave everyone ample opportunity for shopping.

Every year the Sub-committee helps the Young Farmers Clubs with their Home Management Competitions. This year was no exception, with members setting questions for its junior and senior papers.

The final event of the Home and Garden Year is the Balmoral Show. We were delighted to take part once again. Competition entries were down but everyone worked hard to make it a successful event.

'The WI Against Climate Change' campaign continued, with articles published every month in the Ulster Country Woman Magazine. The, 'Plant a Tree' project was a great success with Institutes throughout NI planting over 8000 Trees. The Sub-committee continues to encourage Institutes and members to reduce their carbon emissions by suggesting practical ways they can do so.

5.4 Homecraft

The Homecraft Sub-committee keeps traditional crafts alive and introduces new crafts to FWINI members. Through its proficiency Ribbon Scheme and competitions, members submit work based on a syllabus comprising of some 27 categories and a hobby section for beginners. Crafts are taught at one-day schools and at a weekend residential event. At FWINI, and public events, displays of member's work are

mounted. These events often include demonstrations and members are available to answer questions on the crafts displayed.

During the months of October to March, items of member's work were submitted for judging. Judging is slowly getting back to normal following the pandemic, with 258 craft items received for judging.

We introduced a new syllabus in September 2021. Members are awarded a ribbon for each category of craft submitted. A silver spinning wheel is awarded when a member has obtained 6 ribbons, a gold spinning wheel for 12 ribbons and a full circle for 25 ribbons. One gold spinning wheel and 3 full circles were awarded at the AGM in March 2022. Members also have the opportunity to enter competitions for trophies. Homecraft, offers a total of 22 categories, unfortunately only 11 of these received entries this year.

This year saw a return to the Balmoral Show following the pandemic. The Homecraft sub-committee put on a display of member's work and members were on hand to answer questions and promote craft. We also had a successful sales table of knitted toys and other items made by the members. Competitions held were for a pair of knitted work boot socks, farm animal - any medium, quilted mug bag to celebrate 90 years of WI and an egg cosy to celebrate 90 years of WI.

As with the other sub-committees, the Homecraft sub-committee is self-funding except for the spinning wheel and gold circle awards which are covered by the Federation.

Despite the setbacks and disappointments of the pandemic the Homecraft sub-committee are working hard with lots of new ideas for the coming year.

5.5 International

FWINI is concerned not only with the promotion of activities in support of the development of women in Northern Ireland but also concerned with the lives of women elsewhere. It is an active constituent member of the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW), a body which is registered with the United Nations, serving on its committees and reporting on Federation activities to the ACWW Triennial Conference. The International Sub-committee looks after these activities on behalf of the Executive. Due to Covid restrictions, the International Sub-committee decided not to hold its

Annual Meeting in October 2021.

Each year, the International Sub-committee chooses the recipient of the Evelyn Lord Award. This award is normally presented to a WI member, Institute or Area that has made a great contribution to an international cause or who has carried out impressive work at an international level. In 2022, the Evelyn Lord Trophy was awarded to Ann Eccleston of Jerretzpass WI for her amazing banner creation depicting a visual representation of 'Women and Armed Conflict'.

Each year, we support the ACWW Women Empowered Fund (WE Fund). Our donations support projects in four of the six focus areas, which are Sustainable Agriculture, Training and Development; Nutrition, Good Health & Wellbeing; Maternal & Reproductive Health and Sustainable Water, Sanitation & Energy. During 2021-2022, the Sub-committee decided to support only one project Sustainable Water, Sanitation and Energy.

Pennies for Friendship, which goes towards the administration of ACWW, continued to be collected by our members.

Through ACWW we ensure that the donations of our members are monitored and used to better the lives of women and children worldwide.

5.6 Magazine and Leisure

The Magazine and Leisure Sub-committee is responsible for the publication of our monthly magazine, The Ulster Countrywoman, and the organisation and running of the following sporting events and competitions:

- *Sporting Events:* Bowls, Quiz, and Golf.
- *Competitions:* Photographic, Literary, Scrapbook, Best Magazine Cover and Best Poem published in the Magazine.

The committee meets the first Tuesday of the month September through to May with the exception of January. Meetings were held face to face and on zoom as appropriate as we were coming to terms with coming out of the pandemic.

The main responsibility of this Sub-committee is to produce the Ulster Countrywoman as an engaging read by providing interesting articles, stories, monthly book reviews, competitions, puzzles, photographs and other news items including those sent in by our WI members. Our Editor, Caroline Hamilton, is responsible for the finished publication choosing and editing these items. The front cover is chosen from photographs sent in by the members, which is also a competition (The Quoile Trophy). A monthly competition attracts on average around 60 entries and the winner receives a nominal prize. The magazine is distributed to members throughout NI, various other organisations and also sent by members to friends abroad. During the 2021/22 season only 7 magazines could be published – September, Autumn, Christmas 2021, New Year, Spring, May and Summer 2022.

In October, a fireside quiz is sent out to all the Institutes. This quiz helps fund the running and purchase of prizes for our various competitions and was well supported. The Scrapbook Competition had a small number of entries due to Institutes being unable to meet but it was very encouraging that some Institutes were able to participate in the competition. The Open Section (Waringstown Cup) was won by Broughshane WI who also took the single page class and the Front Cover Class. In January, the Phyllis Gailey Literary Competition was won by Lynn Colgan, Ballyclare WI for her story interpreting the title, "It Never Rains but It Pours". This apt title was deliberately left quite open to interpretation, with writers encouraged to let their imagination take flight, and a variety of very different intriguing tales were submitted.

The Best Magazine Cover competition (Quoile Trophy) was not awarded this year due to the limited number of photographs to choose from. The Best Poem published in the Magazine (Mourne Cup) was awarded to Lesley Dowds, Ballysallagh WI and the Dorman Trophy for the Best original article published in the magazine went to Frances Rodgers, Ben Madigan WI.

Many halls have remained closed due to Covid-19, disappointedly the bowls and quiz finals had to be cancelled again this year. Golfer of The Year took place at the idyllic setting of Newtown Stewart Golf Club on a glorious day in June and the worthy winner was Christine Duddy, Armoy WI.

The Photographic Competition is our last competition of the year with entries submitted by 26th August. The subject this year “Summer Days” attracted a good number of entries and was won by Merle Campbell, Cullybackey WI.

This was a much better year for a hard-working Committee. With the rolling out of the vaccination programme and the subsequent easing of Covid-19 restrictions we can now look forward on a more positive note to getting the Magazine and our other events back on track again in 2023.

All the activities of all the Federation and all its Sub-committees have been in support of the aims and objectives of the Federation. They were organised on behalf of all the WI members and, on some occasions the public, who all enjoyed participating in them.

6.0 Mitigation of Harm

All adjudicators, experts and tutors employed by the Federation for its many activities are properly qualified. No harm has been identified as flowing from the purposes and activities of the Federation.

7.0 Financial Report

We continue to face many financial challenges as we continue to feel the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, higher than usual inflation and the impact on the market of the Russian invasion of the Ukraine. Our total incoming resources for the year ended 31 August 2022 were £98,125, (2021, £110,948) and overhead expenses of £147,032 (2020, £101,203) which gave us a deficit of (£48,907) against the previous year’s surplus of £9,745. An exceptional ex-gratia staff payment of £15k contributed to this deficit.

The Executive Committee has had to make many difficult decisions and is very aware of its duty to manage the FWINI finances prudently taking a long term as well as a short-term view, decisions must be in the best interests of the charity.

7.1 Income

The Federation benefits from the following main sources of income:

Membership Fees (including institute contributions to insurance): Thankfully, the unprecedented decline in membership caused by the pandemic has stopped and figures are starting to recover resulting in an uplift in the income from membership fees. However, we must continue with our efforts to promote the WINI and attract new members.

Contributions to Federation Funds: This income from the Institutes has shown a slight increase on 2021 but is still considerably down on previous years. These funds are used for the general running of the Federation as well as the upkeep of Federation House.

Gift Aid: The Gift Aid Scheme generates approximately 5% of the overall income and major efforts to encourage members into this scheme continues.

Grant Income: We are most grateful for the £10k from the National Lottery Community Fund to fund a new website.

Balmoral Show: In May 2022 we were very pleased to be back at the Balmoral Show again, due to the hard work of the Balmoral Sub-committee with support of the members we raised £22,151.

Sub-committees: All the Sub-committees use the income they generate to support their own activities. However, if needed the Federation will support them as it does the Homecraft Sub-committee which gets funding from Federation Funds for its Spinning Wheel Awards. The form of these awards is being reviewed and cheaper alternatives sought.

Ulster Countrywoman: With the improvement in the membership figures there has been an increase in the total income from the Ulster Countrywoman of £6,440 however, with 7 issues being printed during the year printing costs went up so our surplus was down £1,635.

Investments: The Federation's Investments had a bumpy year due to the uncertainty in the Markets and we ended the year with the value of our portfolio down by £16,584. Dividends plus the interest paid on investments and bank deposits held by the Federation generated £4,945 and there was gain of £4,148 on disposal of investments. However, a loss of £15,811 was recorded on the revaluation of the

investments. As of 31 August 2022, our investment portfolio was valued at £184,210. The portfolio continues to be managed by Investec Wealth & Investment and we remain grateful to them for all their support.

7.2 Expenditure

We are fortunate that we own, with no mortgage, our Headquarters Federation House, and that as we are a registered charity, we are exempt from paying rates.

Overheads: As was to be expected the opening of Federation House again lead to an increase in running costs, the insurance increased and we had the costs of the reinstated ACM and AGM. Executive and Sub-committee meetings returning to Federation House lead to higher travelling expenses although whenever possible they are now held by Zoom.

Stock: The value of the stock held, is down slightly on the previous year due to the revaluation of the Cookery Books, the large stock of which continues to be a problem. However, sales have started to increase.

International Outreach: The International Sub-committee is different to the others in that it raises funds for the Federation's external charity, the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW). A total of £5,700 was sent to it including our annual membership fee of £110. To help the ACWW with its administration costs, Institutes participated in the Pennies for Friendship project in which members are encouraged to collect loose change, £1,300 was raised. The Institutes also raised £4,290 including £2,143 which was raised in the Women Walk the World Events, to support ACWW Women Empowered funds in the project area of Sustainable Water, Sanitation & Energy.

In conclusion, this has been a difficult year as we worked our way through the aftereffects of the Covid 19 Pandemic. Fortunately, one of our major sources of income, the Balmoral Show opened again and the other, the fees from our members have started to stabilise. However, due to volatile markets caused by the Ukraine situation and inflation we had a reduced income from our investments. Difficult times are ahead, and we all need to pull together to get us through them.

This Trustees' Report was approved by the Trustees at their meeting on 1st of June 2023.

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Margaret Broome

Chairman of the Trustees