

Federation of Women's Institutes of Northern Ireland

Trustees' Annual Report
Year ended 31st August 2023

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 2022 to 31 August 2023

Trustees at 31 August 2023:

Margaret Broome (Chairman)	
Kathleen Verner (Vice Chairman)	
Sheelagh McRandal (Treasurer)	
Heather Adamson	Susan Lyons
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

Operations Manager Mary McManus

Auditors: M.B. McGrady & Co.
Suite 2B Cadogan House
322 Lisburn Road
Belfast
BT9 6GH

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 3631 active throughout Northern Ireland. There are 129 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

Like many membership organisations, the pandemic took a toll on FWINI with institutes unable to hold face-to-face meetings. However, we were happy to report, with restrictions lifted the numbers show that our membership has bounced back and is holding its own. The year began with the last of our celebrations of FWINI's 90th birthday, with the first WI having met on 24 April 1942. We held a very enjoyable ecumenical service in Armagh Cathedral which was attended by many members. The service was enriched by the participation of the members, not least by Ballyblack, Quoile, Richhill and Slemish Choirs who provided some memorable music.

In order to help with future planning and modernising, we recruited an Operations Manager and Mary McManus took up post on the 1st of October 2022.

Two well attended meetings of the FWINI 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 in Millbrook Lodge, Ballynahinch on 29th of October. Those attending were treated to a stimulating and entertaining living history performance about the Suffragette Movement in NI by Time Steps. By tradition, the AGM is held in Belfast, and a full meeting was held in the Europa Hotel on 30th of March 2023. A full programme was held, and the six Sub-Committees set up displays of their

work. We also had Advice NI, Women's Aid and the National Lottery Community Fund provide information stands for delegates. Entertainment was provided by Adrian Morrow who provided a presentation on Glenarm Castle.

With all restrictions on meeting in person lifted, 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 Countrywoman, which keeps members up to date on Federation matters.

Much to everyone's disappointment, the much-enjoyed City of Belfast 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. With normal life resumed post Covid-19 they resumed their normal calendar of events. Their diverse activities were:

5.1 Arts

The Sub-Committee was very proud of the wonderful performance of two very special anthems given by the combined Institute Choirs of Ballyblack, Richhill, Quoile and Slemish Areas at the 90th Anniversary service in Armagh cathedral on the 25th of September 2022. The choir members had arranged combined rehearsals to ensure their voices blended. Our thanks to Eileen Hearst from Ballyblack who conducted, and to Kathleen Gill from the Quoile area who played for us.

The Annual Festival of The Spoken Word was held on Saturday 29th October 2022 in Templepatrick Presbyterian Church all. It was a great success with a total of fifty-three entries over six classes. The adjudicator, Shorna Meggitt from The Ballycastle School of Speech and Drama, praised the very high quality of all the entries. Painting took place at WI Headquarters on Saturday 12th November 2022. Anne Black demonstrated how to paint a winter scene on the theme, 'A Place to Wander' chosen for the art competition in February – challenging the class to paint snow and winter

trees. Everyone went away with palettes and paints determined to practice.

Jacquie Brachi held the calligraphy class on Saturday 28th November with all materials supplied from last years' grant money.

The Annual Art Festival and Coffee Morning was held on Friday 10th February 2023 from 10 – 12 noon in WI Headquarters. There were 51 entries in the painting competitions, adjudicated by Janice Lightowler from The Ulster Society of Women's Artists. We had more entries for Jacquie Brachi to judge this year with calligraphy, good handwriting and 3D decoupage all proving popular. Both judges were very impressed with the high standard of our members' artwork and we hope to encourage continuing participation by organising future workshops in varying mediums.

It was just lovely to hold the coffee morning, the first after the Covid restrictions. It was a chance for those who entered to show their work to the friends who came along for support. Our Chairman praised the quality of the exhibition and reminded members that there is an opportunity to display and sell their work at The Balmoral Show in May.

The Annual Music Festival held on Saturday 22nd April 2023 in Templepatrick Presbyterian Church Hall was a great success. The Institute choirs competed in nine different classes from choral folk to sacred, own choice ensembles and solo entrants. The adjudication by Dr. Jayne Moore was excellent. Her constructive and encouraging assessments given after each class were much appreciated.

The Art Sub-Committee arranged a rota to look after the art exhibition and sales during the Balmoral Show and to help in the Tea Room when possible. They are well ahead with the organisation of their upcoming events – appointing adjudicators, venues etc. and continue to promote the arts within the Federation.

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. This year's was the 154th Show. 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. With over 120,000 visitors over 4 days, it provides an ideal showcase for the FWINI enabling it to both highlight the activities members can enjoy and to raise funds for the Federation in our ever- popular Tea Room.

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 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 again 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 with restrictions completely lifted, 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

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 Sub-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 400 members attending. Our demonstrations consisted of floral art, sustainable fashion 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 Farmer's 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 good and everyone worked hard to make it a successful event.

'The WI Against Climate Change' campaign continued, with articles published every month in the Ulster Countrywoman Magazine. The Sub-Committee continues to encourage Institutes and members to reduce their carbon emissions by suggesting practical ways that they can do so.

5.4 Homecraft

The Homecraft Sub-Committee keeps traditional crafts alive and introduces new ones. Through its proficiency ribbon scheme and competitions, members submit work based on a syllabus comprising some 27 categories and a hobby section for beginners. Crafts are taught at one-day schools and a weekend residential event. At WIFI and public events, displays of members work are mounted, there are demonstrations and members are available to answer questions on the crafts displayed.

During the months of October to March, items of members work are submitted for judging. Unfortunately, items for judging were down this year with only 178 craft items received. However, the quality of items was up with 54% gaining the highest mark. 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.

The first Balmoral Show following the pandemic was a great showcase for FWINI and gave us the opportunity to encourage new members into the organisation. It is also an

opportunity to meet members from other areas of the Province. The Homecraft Sub-Committee put on a display of members' work and members were on hand to answer questions and promote craft. We also had a very successful sales table of knitted toys and other items made by the members. Competitions held were for a knitted decorated wreath, a picnic roll, a potholder and a small coin purse. The competitions were well supported. As with the other Sub-committees, the Homecraft Sub-Committee is self-funding except for the spinning wheel awards which are covered by the Federation. We held a one-day school in September and a Christmas one-day school at the end of November. The latter attracted 37 attendees, and each participant went home with 2 items either finished or almost finished. We continue to encourage members to take part in homecrafts.

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. The International Sub-Committee held its Annual Meeting in October 2023.

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 2023, the Evelyn Lord Trophy was awarded to Carnlough WI for their unceasing commitment to raising money for ACWW.

The International Sub-Committee is also responsible for running the Mary Boyd Competition. For 2023, first place was awarded to Christine Rankin, Ards Peninsula Area Executive Member, Chair of the Magazine Sub-Committee. This competition consisted of making a shoe bag and was based on the requirements for the ACWW World Conference competition.

Our members continuously raise donations to support ACWW projects. Some changes have been made to the ACWW funding structure. Rather than having unrestricted funds such as 'Pennies for Friendship' for administration and restricted funds for project

funding, it has now been changed to one overall donation 'pot' – 'Rural Women in Action Fund'. All donations for ACWW now go into this fund. Donations to the fund will support all of ACWW's work including all of the normal running costs.

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 Magazine and Leisure Sub-Committee meets on the first Tuesday of the month; September through to May except for January. Meetings were held face to face and on zoom as necessary.

The main responsibility of this Sub-Committee is the Ulster Countrywoman Magazine, which is an engaging read 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 which involves creating content and choosing and editing member 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 Northern Ireland, various other organisations and also sent by members to friends abroad. During the 2022/23 season 8 magazines were published – September, Autumn, Christmas 2022, New Year/February 23, March, April, May and June 2023.

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 was disappointing with no entries for the Novice Class,

However, the Open Class (Waringstown Cup) was won by Broughshane WI while Mosside WI had a double take in winning the Front Cover and Single Page classes.

In January, the Phyllis Gailey Literary Competition was won by Lorraine Girvan, Downpatrick WI for her story interpreting the title “Don’t Make a Drama Out of a Crisis”. 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.

A One Day Creative Writing Workshop held in April was well supported. The ladies were encouraged to let their imaginative ideas and inspirations bring stories and poems to life.

The Best Magazine Cover competition (Quoile Trophy) was awarded this year to Wilma Buick, Kells and Connor WI. The Best Poem published in the Magazine (Mourne Cup) was awarded to Daphne Wylie, Pomeroy WI and the Dorman Trophy for the Best original article published in the magazine went to Hazel Campbell, Crumlin WI.

After the pandemic, halls have re-opened and we held a very successful bowling competition which attracted 19 Areas competing in the final. The overall winner was Anne Crozier, Collone WI (Gosford Area). 20 teams competed in the Quiz final for the coveted trophy which was won by the Roe Valley Team. Golfer of The Year took place at the lovely setting at Green Acres Golf Club, Ballyclare on a typical Northern Ireland ‘weather’ day in June. The worthy winner was Ann Dean, Garvagh WI.

The Photographic Competition is our last competition of the year with entries submitted by 31st July. The subject this year “Wet & Wild” attracted a good number of entries and was won by Dawn Robinson, Maghaberry WI.

This has been a successful year for a hard-working Sub-Committee and we look forward to organising, participating and meeting our members at our events next year.

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 are not immune to the effects of inflation. Our total incoming resources for the year ended 31 August 2023 were £102,623 (2022 £98,775) and overhead expenses of £144,811 (2022 £147,872) which gave us a reduced deficit of (£42,188) against the previous year's deficit of (£49,097).

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): The membership numbers continue to stabilise. 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 2021/2022 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 continue to encourage members into the scheme.

Balmoral Show: It was business as usual at the Balmoral in May 2023. Despite increasing competition from more food outlets, due to the hard work of the Balmoral Sub-Committee and with support of the members we raised £24,976 an increase of £2,825 on the previous year.

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. The Home and Garden Sub-Committee did particularly well to turn a deficit of some (£5.2k) into a surplus of £2.8k

Ulster Countrywoman: With the improvement in the membership figures and a reorganisation of the Magazine by the Sub-Committee, there has been an increase in of some £2k the total income from the Ulster Countrywoman.

Investments: The Federation's Investments had another bumpy year due to the uncertainty in the Markets and we ended the year with the value of our portfolio down by £30,778. As of 31 August 2023, our investment portfolio was valued at £153,432 (2022 £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: We were very pleased that there was a decrease in running costs despite significant increase in insurance and Executive and Sub-Committee costs. The latter being because many meetings returned to Federation House leading to higher travelling expenses. Zoom meetings are held when appropriate.

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 £2,369, raised by our members, was sent to it.

During the year, our long serving auditors, Dawson & Company, merged with another firm, due to the retirement of its principal, Maurice Dawson. We are most grateful to Maurice for his unstinting service to the Federation over many years. At the Federation AGM in March, members voted to, appoint M.B. McGrady & Co as our auditors.

In conclusion, this has been another difficult year as we worked on reducing the previous year's deficit. Fortunately, one of our major sources of income, the Balmoral

Show showed an increased surplus and the other, the fees from our members have started to stabilise. However, with reluctance we are having to increase the membership fees in the coming year. Difficult times are ahead, and we all need to pull together to get through them.

This Trustees' Report was approved by the Trustees at their meeting on 24 of June 2024.

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Brenda Richardson

Chairman of the Trustees