



**Federation Annual Meeting Minutes
Thursday 10 April 2025
Thurston Community College**

- 1. Meeting opened by Federation Secretary – Rachel Hows.**
- 2. Jerusalem**
- 3. Welcome by Suffolk West Federation of WIs Chair - Maggie Glavin:**
 - Maggie welcomed members and invited guests to SWFWI's 105th annual meeting.
- 4. Apologies:**
 - Rachel Baldwin (Hammond & Ford Accountant).
- 5. Minutes of the Federation Annual Meeting held on 11 April 2024:** Circulated in advance on the meeting with WI Secretaries via email.
 - Proposed to be taken as read by Maggie Glavin (SWFWI Chair)
 - The proposal was seconded and WI Delegates voted in favour
- 6. Adoption of Standing Orders of Council:** Also, circulated in advance on the meeting with WIs via email.
 - Proposed by Maggie Glavin (SWFWI Chair)
 - The proposal was seconded and WI Delegates voted in favour
- 7. Introduction to 2023/24 SWFWI Board of Trustees and staff:** Rachel Hows (Federation Secretary) gave a short presentation on the SWFWI team:
 - Maggie Glavin (SWFWI Chair)
 - Sue Archer (SWFWI Treasurer)
 - Helen Lindfield (Vice Chair)
 - Anne Ling (VC & Web Editor)
 - Tina Walker (SWFWI Safeguarding Officer)
 - June Bryant
 - Linda Gridley
 - Julie Higgins
 - Shirley Rogers
 - Yvonne King

- Sheila Deare, (co-opted in April 2025)
- Rachel Sparks (Finance Assistant)

Rachel also introduced:

- Lesli Tunbridge (SWFWI Climate Ambassador)
- Alison Shawcross (SWFWI Health & Safety).

8. Finance: Appendix 1 Presented by Sue Archer, SWFWI Treasurer.

9. Adoption of Federation Accounts:

- Proposed by Sue Archer (SWFWI Treasurer)
- The proposal was seconded and WI Delegates voted in favour

10. Appointment of Hammond Ford (Auditors) for year end 30 September 2024:

- Proposed by Sue Archer (SWFWI Treasurer)
- The proposal was seconded and WI Delegates voted in favour

11. Morning Speaker: Grow My Wellbeing – Chantal Dawson:

- Grow My Wellbeing (GMW), founded by Chantal, promotes mental health awareness through plants.
- Chantal gave a presentation on how GMW started and has grown into a successful business working alongside community groups and local businesses.
- She then gave a potting demonstration and held a raffle for a WI member to win a Plant You Own kit.

12. Interactive Session: ActivLives

- ActivLives is a local independent charity working in Ipswich and across Suffolk to keep people active.
- They provided a seat dance exercise to Blame it on the Boogie by the Jackson Five which had members in fits of giggles.

13. SWFWI Climate Ambassador – Lesli Tunbridge:

- Lesli spoke about the work of the SWFWI Climate Ambassador team and encouraged all members to be climate ambassadors to help raise awareness of climate change.

14. Morning Speaker: Bury In Bloom – Chris Wiley

- Bury in Bloom was founded by the Bury Society in 1986 and is instrumental in confirming Bury St Edmunds as one of the country's foremost Floral Towns.
- Chris is the Co-Ordinator for Bury in Bloom and he gave a presentation on how members can get involved with the scheme, and how the charity works alongside local authorities, businesses, community & educational representatives to keep on improving the townscape.

- Chris is also the founder of the Sustainable Plant Store which specialises in selling sustainable, eco-friendly alternatives to popular plants and garden products, delivered in 100% recyclable/compostable packaging.

15. Chairs Cup of Excellence:

- Presented by Maggie Glavin to Alison Shawcross (SWFWI Health & Safety). Unfortunately, Alison was unable to attend so Gwen Williams (Public Affairs Chair) accepted it on her behalf to present to Alison at their next WI meeting.

16. Retiring roles:

- Flowers were presented to Sue Archer (SWFWI Treasurer) and Anne Ling (SWFWI Vice Chair), both who would be retiring from their roles after the meeting closed.

LUNCH BREAK

17. Chairs Address: **Appendix 2** Presented by Maggie Glavin, SWFWI Chair.

18. Afternoon Speaker: BBC Gardeners' World Presenter – Adam Frost

- Adam Frost is an award-winning British garden designer and one of the best-known faces on BBC Gardeners' World.
- Renowned for seven Gold Medals at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, Adam told his story of how he was influenced by his Grandparents and fell in love with gardening as a child.
- He shared his journey from amateur to the face of Gardeners' World, as well as his gardening hints and tips.

19. Golden Ticket Club £50 Draw:

- The winner was Diana Aberly (Risby WI).

20. Raffle: Prizes included

- Bannatyne Spa Day for Two
- Ickworth Hotel Afternoon Tea for Two
- Abbeygate Cinema tickets
- Adam Frost book
- 70cl Heart of Suffolk Distillery Gin
- Grow My Wellbeing Plant
- £10 Old Cannon Brewery gift voucher
- Beta Bee Beekeeping Experience for Two

21. Introduction to 2024/25 SWFWI Chair: Rachel Hows (Federation Secretary) announced that the 2025/26 Chair would be Maggie Glavin. The vote was held at

the April Board of Trustees meeting specifically so it could be announced to the members at the annual meeting.

22. Chair's Closing Speech: Maggie thanked the SWFWI Trustees, staff, WI Advisers and the Federation Annual Meeting team who had assisted Rachel Hows in organising the meeting. She also thanked Aidan Standish (Thurston Community College Events Manager) who had been very supportive with the running of the meeting.

23. National Anthem: The meeting closed at approx. 3.40PM with the singing of the National Anthem and a book signing by Adam Frost.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 1: Finance Report

Good morning, everyone. It is my pleasure to present to you the Federation's accounts for the year ended 30 September 2024 for your approval. Every WI has received a copy of the summary of the accounts. If anyone has any questions, they are welcome to email me or phone the office.

This has been another challenging year financially and the accounts show a deficit of £21,685, but this IS an improvement on the previous year.

With the loss of membership and income during and after the pandemic, and the significant increase in the cost of living, it is unsurprising that in 2024 we found ourselves in this situation.

In this current financial year, the Federation will receive £12.05 from your subscription. With our current level of membership we will receive in the region £14,500. This income combined with interest and dividends on our investments, plus the income generated by Federation events, is insufficient to meet the fixed costs of the Federation Office.

The challenge is to return to a break even.

In 2023-24 our investments had performed well and had recouped the funds we had withdrawn but this could not be guaranteed. Investing through Barratt & Cooke, our investment company who specialise in charity accounts, has proved to have been a wise move. All our investments are in medium risk areas with quite a broad spread of companies. The companies include some which maybe familiar names to you:

Government Gilts

Fixed Interest funds like Blackrock,

Companies like Pepsico, Unilever, Shell, Astrazeneca, Microsoft, JP Morgan,, Proctor & Gamble and The Renewables Infrastructure group. Our investments are spread to give income in dividends and in some instances to make money on the shares.

As you know, world events have affected the stock market. By having that broad spread we hoped to be protected. However, in the last week, with global financial changes to the economy, our investments have reduced in value. With subscriptions due on 1 April we should be able to avoid withdrawing funds and hope that the stock market stabilises to a reasonable level if, or when we need to make withdrawals. So treasurers please send in whatever subs you have as soon as possible. .

Following enquiries from some WI's, the Federation has taken out Employment Practices Liability (EPL) to protect the Board, WI's committees and all volunteers against personal liabilities. We already had cover for Business liabilities, and

public liability but some WI's have been asked by members, if they were on the committee, what are the legal protections. We hope that this insurance will re-assure prospective committee members, volunteers and their families that their homes etc are not at risk. There is of course a cost to this and this year, being the first year we added 15p per member but this will need to be considered in the future.

The Board of Trustees has a new Strategic Planning team, to focus on the next three to five years. They will evaluate the needs of the Federation Office and members, to ensure a sustainable future. You'll agree that we want to see Suffolk West continue into the 3rd millennial.

You may have noticed that we are encouraging members to use Ticketsource to book tickets for most Federation events. There is no extra charge if you book in this way and tickets can be booked at any time to suit you. If you wish, you can still continue to call the office, email or pop in to buy your tickets.

Other ways you can help support your Federation are:

Selling the National Federations raffle tickets and joining the new National Federation Lottery.

Register for Easyfundraising. This is an easy way for supporters of the Federation to raise funds on on-line shopping but this could be better with more members using the service. Just register, put the reminder on your device and each time you visit a site it will pop up with the question "do you want to donate"? It doesn't cost you anything but the company you are buying from donate to the federation. Donations vary from company to company, some just a few pence but every little helps. My husband, a techno phobe raised £3.15 on airport parking the other day. Even your online weekly shop from major supermarkets or insurances will generate income for the Federation. Friends and family can be a supporter too.

The details of how sign up are in today's agenda or contact me or one of the Rachels at the office to help.

Have you bought your Golden ticket yet? For each £5 ticket you buy you will be in today's draw to win £50. After today tickets will be in the monthly draw and each month a lucky winner receives £15. Tickets will be available at lunchtime, and you can buy more than one to increase your chances. You need to be in it to win it!!

Members continue to support smaller events at Park Farm like Soup & Natter (Thank you Yvonne), Craft & Chat (Thanks you Margaret & Sally), Mahjong (thank you Christine). Those events are very sociable and enjoyable and represent the essence of the WI.

Please check the Hive and support the bigger Federation events and let us know what events or workshops you would us to organize.

As a special announcement we will be running a trip to see Cirque du Soleil in January/February 2026 but the tickets are likely to be in the region of £140 each. The prices have not been released and we don't have an exact date yet but it will be a Friday matinee performance (3.30PM) in late January/early February and open to members and non-members. More details will be in the Hive in June or July for this amazing and spectacular show.

As with your own WI committees, the Board of Trustees is jointly responsible for the finances of the Federation, so I will take this opportunity to thank our Board and sub-committees and other volunteers for their time and energy given for meetings and events.

Thank you to the Independent Examiners (IFE's) who examine WI accounts and can help treasurers through the year to ensure their accounts run smoothly. IFE's are mostly WI members, but they don't **have** to be members. If anyone is interested in being an IFE for next year's accounts, or knows of anyone, please get in touch with the office to find out more.

My thanks also to the WI treasurers who do so much to keep WIs running. Do please contact the office if you need help. Don't forget that we're all volunteers and all here to help each other.

Thank you to our Finance Assistant, Rachel Sparks for your continued hard work, reminding me what needs to be done and putting it into action, and to Rachel Baldwin whose help with Quickbooks in particular has been invaluable. And finally thank you very much for your attention.

Appendix 2: Chairs Address

Good afternoon everyone,

Last year when standing here the emphasis of my report very much centred around the Federation office, welcoming new roles to the Board of Trustees, office housekeeping and innovative ways of promoting the WI.

This year when looking back, it is the significant contribution from our WIs that has made me feel quite honoured to be standing here as your Chair, I'd like to take a few minutes to reflect on those achievements.

This year we welcomed a new WI, Women Inspired, who meet in Fornham St Martin, all the women who came along to the first couple of meetings were new to the WI, but very quickly we had volunteers to form a committee, and before long speakers and activities planned for the coming months, an enthusiastic start to their WI life. They are attracting a steady flow of new members of all ages who enjoy the relaxed and friendly meetings. Well done Women Inspired!

Our existing WIs are also welcoming new members, with membership since the beginning of the subscription year increasing by about 180 plus new members. The Membership and Media Team regularly promote the Organisation, the office frequently receives requests for information, but it is within the WIs that the interest is turned into membership. Your warm and friendly welcome, the encouragement to join by making the process easy and engaging, your interesting programme of speakers and activities, have all contributed to this growth in membership. A huge thank you from me and do keep up this amazing effort. It is important to remember as much as we need new members, we must ensure our core members continue to enjoy the WI.

Every month I enjoy reading the Daisy Chain, it's jam packed with reports and pictures of the wide-ranging activities taking place. There really is something for everyone, and here I must take the opportunity to thank our hard working WI committees, I really appreciate the commitment on a daily basis you give to the WI, thank you.

I must add my thanks here to Rachel Hows on the excellent job she does every month in producing the Hive, it is a great source of information on everything WI, particularly, of course, our Suffolk West WIs, also my thanks to Val Simpson, Haverhill Owls WI who proof reads the Hive to ensure there are no typos. We could all do with a Val by our side.

This time last year Alison Shawcross had recently been appointed as the H & S Officer, she had a wealth of experience and in the coming months carried out risk assessments and wrote policies for the Federation Office leaving us all in awe of her capabilities. We started to talk about the need for WIs to carry out risk assessments, Alison did a lot of work in preparation including a two part video on YouTube and helpful hand-outs. We agreed to launch the initiative in September, and with Alison firmly at the helm WIs were sent all the relevant paperwork with the added assurance of Alison's support. By the end of January all 43 WIs had completed their risk assessments and returned a copy to the Federation. I am so delighted with this outcome and today is an opportunity for me to thank our WIs who were called upon to help, this is truly a fantastic achievement, not only in mastering the technicalities required to complete the documentation but for taking to heart the need to keep our members safe.

I appreciate it isn't always easy to motivate members to join the committee or consider taking on an Officer's role. With annual meetings only a month away I suspect there are members sitting here today or in your WI who have enjoyed their time on the committee, served as president, secretary or treasurer or all three, but now feel they want to step down. Please, if you are struggling with finding members to join your

committee or take office, let the Membership and Media Team know before your annual meeting. One of us will be more than happy to help resolve the problem and better to sort now than wait until your AM when it could be a greater issue. Flexibility is a key word in the WI dictionary these days, and I'm positive we will be able to help, just send an email to the office or give Helen Linfield, the MT Chair, or Rachel Hows a call.

This leads me to saying a thank you to all our WI presidents, secretaries and treasurers, for their commitment and loyalty, please know I fully appreciate the time you give freely and frequently, without you we wouldn't have your WI.

All in all a very pleasing year.

I'd like to talk now about the coming year, my focus for this new year is building a sustainable future for the Suffolk West Federation, the Federation is all of us here today and our fellow members, we are the Federation.

A sustainable future must have a sound financial base, and here my focus is on the Federation Office. Sue has reported a deficit once again in 2024, although an improvement on the previous year, we must find a way to return to a break-even position.

We have an opportunity in the coming to review our financial commitments, with the lease on Park Farm expiring in May 2026, it is the right time to completely evaluate the Federation's future needs.

A small team met for the first time in February tasked with delivering a strategic plan to the Board of Trustees and ultimately all members, defining objectives needed to support our future direction and the actions required to achieve them over a three to five year period.

The strategic plan is so much more than a financial tool, it offers us the opportunity to review all aspects of the Federation Office, membership, income and resources and communications. Looking ahead it will be used to assess our progress.

The Federation objectives will support our WIs, by making sure we listen to you, organising events you want to attend, offering appropriate support for WI committees and officers, making better use of your subscription and the recruitment of more members.

The Board of Trustees recognises that SWFWI needs to safeguard and grow membership, members are key to our success, both our core members and new members. In growing membership, it will boost funding opening up greater opportunities for activities we all will enjoy. It will provide a wider pool of members to call upon to join WI committees and support the teams at the Federation Office.

Finally, the strategic plan will strengthen relationships between members and the Federation teams, so together we can build a sustainable, meaningful and most of all an enjoyable future for us all.

Thank you.

Before I introduce our speaker, Adam Frost, I'd like to take two minutes to remind you all to book your tickets for National Annual Meeting, as you know we are working together with the Suffolk East and Norfolk Federations to watch the event on a big screen at the Theatre Royal in Norwich. There will be stalls available for some retail therapy, a raffle, plenty of places to eat either in the theatre or close by and best of all you will be amongst friends to enjoy the day. Two speakers have been announced, Angela Strawbridge who found fame with her husband Dick in *Escape to the Chateau* and Emma Bridgewater, who doesn't love her beautiful pottery. I'm sure like me you were disappointed when National announced the 2025 Annual Meeting would be virtual, but this is an excellent alternative, don't miss the opportunity, book your ticket, it will be great day.