



# Norfolk Federation of WIs

Charity Number: 227411

8th August 2023

TO: All WI Members

Dear Member

## **National Annual Meeting – 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

As I had previously let you know, the National Annual Meeting 2023 is to be held in Cardiff.

Within the last few days we have been advised by National that they are adjusting the Delegate to WI ratio to 1:8 – it was 1:4. This year we had 35 Delegates representing groups of 4 WIs and with the proposed ratio this will reduce to 16 or 17 Delegates, each representing 8 WIs. I have tried to find out how many observer tickets we will be allocated (56 in 2022) but have been told that this information will be sent out in a few months.

I need this information, as Federations must book at this time of year in order to get the best deals and a convenient hotel. Because of the difficulties hospitality has experienced in the last two years, hotels now only hold rooms for a very short time and insist that a contract is signed immediately, together with payment of a 10% non-refundable deposit.

In the past, because we had some idea of the ticket allocation we were able to estimate how many hotel rooms would be needed. I am sure you can see our dilemma in not knowing quite how many tickets we will have. We cannot afford to risk Federation (and therefore members') money by booking unnecessary rooms.

There is also the problem (and it is a problem) of how to arrange transport which, again, we have to book at this time. Every WI in the country pays "Pooling of Fares", which goes to National to refund Federations for their coach costs. There are strict rules about transport claims and we have always been able to claim for 2 coaches because of the number of members attending. On such reduced numbers we undoubtedly will not be able to have two coaches, so how do we get everyone to reduced pick-up points without the Federation, WIs and observers having to incur additional costs?

The Board of Trustees have therefore, extremely reluctantly, decided that the Federation will not be organising coaches and a hotel to take members to the Annual Meeting. They know that this will be very disappointing, particularly because Norfolk members have been enthusiastic supporters – we normally take at least 90 members to the Meeting – but hope that having explained the position we find ourselves in, you will understand.

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Constitutionally, however, members have the right to physically (as well as virtually) attend the Annual Meeting and National have confirmed that we have a legal duty formally to offer *delegates* the opportunity to attend in-person. When we write to WIs in November with the Linking List, we will of course detail the arrangements, offering delegates the option to attend virtually or physically, and what provisions will be in place if they wish to go to Cardiff.

Because there is now the option to attend the Meeting virtually, we will be organising a large venue where we can watch the Meeting live and all have lunch together. Virtual delegates can cast the votes for their WIs if they wish to attend the day (as there is the option to stay at home!). It will also mean that WIs could send several members as observers – who could report back to their WI, thus helping out their Delegate. (Even with a virtual Norfolk attendance, it will not be possible to obtain additional Delegate tickets.)

The Board of Trustees have written to National expressing their considerable disappointment at the reduced ratio, not least because of the additional work and pressure on a Delegate in having to report to 8 WIs (especially as it may not be possible for Delegates to visit all the WIs they are representing). They have also pointed out that not knowing the allocation at this time makes booking hotels and arranging transport impossible. The Trustees have advised National that the Federation will be organising a virtual attendance in Norfolk.

We realise that there are cost implications regarding delegate expenses, etc.; we will be working these out and will be in touch with Treasurers in due course.

The Trustees and I thought it was important that we let you know about the difficulties we are experiencing, and the reasons behind the decision taken, now, well in advance.

As I say, we know that many members will be disappointed, and we regret that the Federation has had to take this decision. However, we are determined to make our virtual attendance a good day, so save the date and look out for full details.



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