

PUBLIC AFFAIRS MEMO



An update from SWFWI Public Affairs Committee

August 2021 / Issue 1

Together we can make a real difference

Welcome to the first PA Committee Newsletter. This is going to be an ongoing information sheet about the different campaigns on which the WI have a mandate. We will keep you up to date with any current news on the Resolutions and give you ideas of how to get involved yourselves at your own WI. We hope it will make the issues raised a little more relevant to you.

Resolution Mandates

The WI has a long history of campaigning on a wide range of issues that matter to women and their communities. Over the past 100 years, WI members have campaigned to empower and support women within society, exerting their individual and collective influence; brought a series of controversial issues into the public domain and brought about many changes in legislation and government policy.

Each Resolution which is passed at the Annual Meeting becomes a campaign for the WI in all its forms to take forward in the future. There are 6 main areas on which the WI focus:

- Social Policy
- Health
- Agriculture and Food
- Education
- Environment
- International

In Issue 1 the PA Committee is focusing on Environmental Resolutions and issues.

The environment is always important in WI campaigns and the PA Committee and Climate Ambassadors are encouraging members to take forward ideas like the annual February Green Hearts/Show the Love campaign to highlight Climate Change. Watch out for a 'How to make a Green Heart' template in the Hive later this year.

Why is the WI involved? The WI was established to ensure women are able to take an effective part in their communities; to learn together, widen their horizons, improve and develop the quality of their lives and those of their communities, and together influence local, national and international affairs on issues that matter to members. Some of the previous environmental resolutions have led to campaigns and partnership working such as:



The **Keep Britain Tidy** is a slogan we all know. But did you know that it was a 1954 resolution that led to the setting up of Keep Britain Tidy group which is still going strong today? In 1932 initiatives by NFWI led to some leading chocolate and cigarette manufacturers of the day printing anti-litter notices on their products



SOS for Honey Bees – In 2009 members called for increased funding of honey bee health research. Thousands of WI members did and are still embracing the cause by taking action in their own gardens, communities and encouraging local councils to plant friendly plants. In 2014 members' direct action helped to secure the development of a government led national pollinator strategy.



A WI mandate with a big aim of a campaign to better understand the scale of the problem and to push for the development of solutions. The resolution looked at the impact microplastic fibres have on marine life as well as the potential effects of the fibres entering the food chain. Microplastic fibres are small plastic fragments (5mm or smaller) that are shed from synthetic clothes when laundered and end up in the sea and wider environment.

The campaign is not only important in terms of reducing microplastic fibre release, but also in reducing people's individual carbon and water footprint and the NFWI has been encouraging people to wash at a lower temperature and wash their clothing less. As part of the WI's End Plastic Soup campaign, the NFWI Public Affairs Department is acting as the Secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Microplastics (APPG on Microplastics).

Over the last few months, the NFWI Public Affairs Department has been working with the office of Alberto Costa MP, the Chair of the APPG on Microplastics, to put together a detailed report assessing the environmental effects of predominantly synthetic microfibres emitted from clothing during the laundry process, and holistically during the lifecycle of a garment. The report lists six recommendations for Government that if implemented, would significantly reduce the volume of microfibres from laundry emitted into the environment, helping to clean up our rivers, river banks and seas.

The report has been put together with help and advice from 35 different groups, including global domestic appliance corporations; the textiles industry; academia; industry and retail; and the environmental sector. Following the publication of the report, the WI will be working with Alberto Costa MP to secure meetings with high-level DEFRA Ministers to urge Ministers to implement our six policy recommendations. The APPG on Microplastics report will be available on the NFWI's website, where you will be able to obtain a copy.



The Launch of the **Great Big Green Week from 18 - 26 September** with the Climate Coalition has been featured in WI *Life*, PA Digest and the Hive.

Helpful guides, along with more information, have been produced by SWFWI Climate Ambassadors and these are also on the Federation website, under the Committee tab [here](#).

The SWFWI Climate Change Ambassadors are, to date, Lesli Tunbridge, Pat Collison and Jackie Coote. For more information about becoming your WI's Climate Ambassador look on MyWI or do contact Lesli Tunbridge via lesli_tunbridge@hotmail.co.uk

The COP26, the UN conference on climate change, will be held in Glasgow this November. The 'Whole Story' resource pack is available for members on My WI website. This outlines how members can support the WI's campaign for climate agreements that work for women and children at home and overseas. COP stands for Conference of Parties. This is United Nations speak for an annual meeting of nations to discuss climate change and to reach an international strategy to reduce global greenhouse gas omissions.

Finally, we hope each WI will share their ideas and events, whether it's a low-key event for members only or opened up to involve the local community, on how they have got involved with any WI Resolutions. We would love to hear about your event so please share information/posters/photos in The Hive via the Federation office and on the SWFWI Facebook page.

If you would like to learn more about the PA Committee and work that we do, then please come along to observe a PA Meeting and find out for yourself. Meeting dates and venues are on the SWFWI website under the Resolutions tab [here](#) just scroll down and click on the PA Committee link, or contact Gwen Williams via gwenwilliams55@googlemail.com

With very best wishes to you all,

Gwen Williams (Chair of PA), , Annie Phillips (Co-Chair of PA),

Jan McLardy, Val Simpson (ACWW Rep), Lesli Tunbridge (Climate Change Ambassador),

Maggie Glavin, Jill Newell, Joyce Haisledon, Pat Collinson (Climate Change Ambassador).