

the **WI** Hertfordshire  
**HERTFORDSHIRE**  
**FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S INSTITUTES**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

For the year from 01 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

FEDERATION CHAIR: Jill Profit - **Royston WI**  
Kestrels, Church End, Barley, Royston, SG8 8JN

FEDERATION VICE-CHAIRMAN: Pat Kingsland - **Knebworth WI**  
13 Shackledell, Stevenage, SG2 9AE

FEDERATION VICE-CHAIRMAN: Joanna Defries - **Colney Heath WI**  
The Willow, Church Lane, Colney Heath, AL4 0NH

HONORARY TREASURER: Caroline Ellis - **Bricket Wood WI**  
(Until 12 October 2024) 8 Broomfield, Park Street, St Albans, AL2 2HY

VICE TREASURER: (Until 12 October 2024) Rahat Aboobaker - **Potters Bar Gems WI**  
HONORARY TREASURER: (From 13 October 2024) 38 SanTERS Lane, Potters Bar, EN6 2BX

FEDERATION SECRETARY: (Until 12 April 2024) Hayley Tapp  
FEDERATION SECRETARY: (From 13 April 2024) Lorraine Stapleton – **Wheathampstead WI**

COUNTY HOUSE: 29 High Street, Wheathampstead, AL4 8BB  
Tel: 01582 834010 Email: office.herts.wi@gmail.com

**MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Rahat Aboobaker 38 SanTERS Lane, Potters Bar, Herts, EN6 2BX  
**Potters Bar Gems WI**

Hannah Costin 63 Caesars Road, Wheathampstead, AL4 8NR  
**Wheathampstead WI**

Joanna DeFries The Willow, Church Lane, Colney Heath, AL4 0NH  
**Colney Heath WI**

Margaret Eccleston 3 Lindsey Road, Bishops Stortford, CM23 2TA  
**Bishops Stortford WI**

Caroline Ellis 8 Broomfield, Park Street, St Albans, AL2 2HY  
**Bricket Wood WI** (Until 12 October 2024)

Pamela Kershaw 4 Icknield Close, St Albans, AL3 4NQ  
**The Causeway WI**

Pat Kingsland 13 Shackledell, Stevenage, SG2 9AE  
**Knebworth WI**

Phillippa MacKinnon 210 Rumley Road, Luton, Beds. LU1 1UB  
**St Albans City WI**

Lorraine Mead 68 Longacres, St Albans, AL4 0DR  
**The Causeway WI**

Rita Powell 34 Fulling Mill Lane, Welwyn, AL6 9NS  
**Codicote WI** (co-opted 14 October 2024 – 08 April 2025)

Jill Profit Kestrels, Church End, Barley, Royston, SG8 8JN  
**Royston WI**

Joyce Spackman Standon Green End Farm, High Cross, Ware, SG11 1BW  
**Much Hadham WI**

Anne Styles Robbers Cottage, The Street, Braughing, SG11 2QF  
**Braughing WI** (Until 12 October 2024)

Jackie Westlake Wickham Cottage, Church Lane, Much Hadham, SG10 6DH  
**Much Hadham Evening WI** (From 10 December 2024)

Pamela Wright 29 The Walk, Potters Bar, EN6 1QG  
**Oakmere WI** (Until 12 October 2024)

**WI ADVISERS**

Margaret Eccleston 3 Lindsey Road, Bishops Stortford, CM23 2TA  
**Bishops Stortford WI Chair**

Pamela Kershaw 4 Icknield Close, St Albans, AL3 4NQ  
**The Causeway WI**

**NON-BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPOINTMENTS**

**FEDERATION ARCHIVIST**

Catherine Abrahams (Bricket Wood WI)

**FEDERATION EDITOR OF WI NEWS**

Beverley Hayes (Codicote WI)

**INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL EXAMINERS (IFEs)**

Catherine Abrahams (Bricket Wood WI)

Caroline Ellis (Bricket Wood WI)

Carrie Lennon (Tring WI)

Jayne Hale (Great Gatsby of Great Ashby WI)

Sara Evans (Great Gatsby of Great Ashby WI)

**BOARD OF TRUSTEE APPOINTMENTS**

**WI CAMPAIGNS OFFICER**

Jackie Westlake (Much Hadham Evening WI)

**CLIMATE CHANGE OFFICERS**

Phillippa MacKinnon (St Albans City WI)

Jackie Westlake (Much Hadham Evening WI)

#### **DATA PROTECTION OFFICER**

Rahat Aboobaker (Potters Bar Gems WI)

#### **EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT TEAM**

Rahat Aboobaker (Potters Bar Gems WI)

Margaret Eccleston (Bishops Stortford WI)

Jill Profit (Royston WI)

#### **FEDERATION & INTER-COUNTY QUIZ**

Pamela Wright (Oakmere WI) (Until 12 October 2024)

Pauline Baycroft (Oakmere WI) (From 13 October 2024)

#### **FINANCE TEAM**

Rahat Aboobaker (Potters Bar Gems WI)

Catherine Abrahams (Bricket Wood WI)

Caroline Ellis (Bricket Wood WI)

Sara Evans (Great Gatsby of Great Ashby WI)

Jayne Hale (Great Gatsby of Great Ashby WI)

Pat Kingsland (Knebworth WI)

Carrie Lennon (Tring WI)

Jill Profit (Royston WI)

#### **HEALTH & SAFETY OFFICER**

Rita Powell (Codicote WI) (14 October 2024 – 08 April 2025)

#### **IFE COORDINATOR**

Rahat Aboobaker (Potters Bar Gems WI)

#### **MUTLIMEDIA OFFICER**

Hannah Costin (Wheathampstead WI)

#### **RESOLUTION OFFICERS**

Margaret Eccleston (Bishops Stortford WI)

Jackie Westlake (Much Hadham Evening WI)

(From 10 December 2024)

#### **SAFEGUARDING OFFICER**

Lorraine Mead (The Causeway WI)

NUMBER OF INSTITUTES:

NUMBER OF MEMBERS:

Meetings held: 12 Board of Trustees, 1 Appointment Meeting, 1 Annual Council Meeting and 1 Special Meeting.

#### **REPORT FOR THE CHAIR FOR THE YEAR TO MARCH 2025**

**Meetings in person: 8**

**Meeting via Video Conferencing (Zoom): 2**

**Hybrid meetings (In-person and Zoom): 2**

#### **REPORT FOR THE CHAIR FOR THE YEAR TO MARCH 2025**

**Meetings in person: 8**

I am serving my third year in office as Chair of the Federation. It is a great honour and a role that I am very pleased to be fulfilling.

Our annual meeting was held in October 2024. We were pleased to welcome Annie Brewster, JP, High Sheriff of Hertfordshire and Esme Young, from BBC One's Great British Sewing Bee judging duo. We hold one business meeting a year, which is our Annual Meeting in October, whereas we used to hold two, one in the spring too. Our spring meeting has changed into "An Afternoon with...". In April 2024, we held a musical event entitled "An Afternoon at the Musicals" with performers from the West End. The spring event will be an annual fundraiser for the Federation.

Our teams are organising entertaining and educational events for you all to enjoy. Although our larger events attract a good audience, we must not forget all our Team events too, whether large or small gatherings. It is not all about fundraising, although we must, but offering our members the hand of friendship, education or enjoyment in a group suited to that activity. We hope to provide something for everyone.

We are pleased our membership remains constant, sadly we have had WIs suspend, which is always sad, very often not through lack of members but lack of members willing to stand as Officers. Remember, you can share Officers' roles and it is not too onerous a task, worth stepping up and giving it a try rather than see your Institute suspended. We, as the Board of Trustees are here to support you. We have welcomed new institutes, whose membership quickly grows due, in a large part, to the power of social media. It is so encouraging to see our members, younger or more mature, enjoying the ethos of this wonderful organisation. Learning from each other and sharing friendship. You are never alone when you enter a room of WI ladies.

We had a successful letting of our County Room at our Headquarters at 29 High Street, Wheathampstead from April 2023 to the present day.

It is a major part of our income, added to returned support for our Team and Federation events, which has led to a healthier financial year. The proportion of your subscription that the Federation receives is not enough to cover the

Federation expenses of running our Headquarters in Wheathampstead or cover the staff salaries etc. All Board of Trustees are volunteers claiming only for their expenses.

We need your continued support, either as a member or as a member of our Team or Board of Trustees. Our success depends on you.

We look to move positively into our next financial year.

**Jill Profit**  
**Chair from October 2022**

## **COMBINED ARTS TEAM**

### **Meetings in person**

Pauline Baycroft (Oakmere WI)  
Hannah Costin (Wheathampstead WI)  
Joanna DeFries, Chair (Colney Heath WI)  
Patricia Gale (Potten End WI)  
Joyce Gray (Kings Langley WI)  
Rita Powell (Codicote WI) (14 October 2024 – 08 April 2025)  
Pam Wright (Oakmere WI) Until 12 October 2024

Last year, we scheduled the Kimpton Tea Party for 4<sup>th</sup> July, following the feedback we collected, an earlier date than usual – but we were cancelled by the General Election!

The next event was the (usually biennial) Literary Lunch. It was a sell out and with only hours to our speaker author had to pull out due to illness. With a huge stroke of luck, the author Gill Paul was able to step in and she was terrific.

We are having another Literary Lunch on 6<sup>th</sup> November when our original speaker, Maggie Brookes-Butt, will talk to us.

Next event, the Christmas Carol Party, we plan to hold another, early December this year.

Next event, this year on 9<sup>th</sup> July is a watercolour painting afternoon with tea and cake, run by an experienced artist and teacher.

**Joanna DeFries**  
**Chair, Combined Arts Team**  
**(formerly Performing Arts Committee)**

## **CRAFTS, CULINARY & BLOOMS TEAM**

### **Meetings in person**

Ann Chance Read (Wheathampstead WI) From October 2024  
Emma Golding (Herts Belles WI)  
Marilyn Hornsby (Hertford Heath WI)  
Wendy Kersey (Hertford Heath WI)  
Lorraine Mead, Chair (The Causeway WI)  
Janet Rogers (Boxmoor WI)  
Eileen Walker (Boxmoor WI)

Crafts, Culinary & Blooms (formerly known as

Arts & Crafts) saw a new team leader and new team member in October 2024. This brought about some slight changes to our events. Try A Craft moved from November to February, having a spring theme for a change. There was a smaller in attendance, however, fun was had by all.

Homecraft Day was also moved to a later date from March to May. Members listened to two very good speakers. The morning speaker was Annie Godfrey, from Daisy Roots, Hertford, who took us on a journey through the gardening year with delightful pictures of all seasons. A wonderful display of potted plants, large and small, were on offer for members to buy.

We had a lunch break and members were able to purchase items from two vendors, Madeline, Ulla, and of course, Annie's wonderful plants. In addition, we had our usual Bring & Buy Haberdashery table.

Monita from Communities 1<sup>st</sup> talked to us about Air fryers and how they have changed some peoples' cooking habits. Monita demonstrated how to make muffins in the Air fryer using oil and yoghurt. They were very tasty, and members had the opportunity to taste them too, if they wished. Feedback was very positive.

A note for your diaries, Try A Craft will now be known as Dabble Day. This will be held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2025, from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm at Woolmer Green Village Hall. Homecraft Day will be back in March 2026, with date and venue to be confirmed.

**Lorraine Mead**  
**Chair of Crafts, Culinary & Blooms Team**  
**(formerly Arts & Crafts Committee)**

## **CURRENT & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS TEAM**

### **Meetings in person**

Margaret Eccleston (Bishops Stortford WI)  
Pat Kingsland (Knebworth WI)  
Phillippa MacKinnon (St Albans City WI)  
Pat Murray (Buntingford WI)  
Joyce Spackman, Chair (Much Hadham WI)  
Barbara Wedgbrow (Bishops Stortford WI)  
Jackie Westlake (Much Hadham Evening WI)  
(From 10 December 2024)

We have welcomed Jackie Westlake, OBE, to our team in December, her interests are the resolutions and how we can be more involved in them.

Our first wonderful event of the year was with Adam Frost in March 2024, who told us about his life in horticulture, his passion for gardening and about his work on the Coronation Gardens.

Our spring meeting was to visit the lambing sheds at Standon Green Farm; always a popular visit with members.

Next came a guided walk around Hitchin in April, a fascinating old town. This was later followed by another walk in September, this time around the village of Ashwell with a guide showing members the historical parts of the village.

In September, the team met to discuss the resolutions for 2025.

Our next big meeting was at the end of March 2025 when three farmers joined us, giving an insight into their farms and then answered members non-political questions.

We are having an indoor meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> September when it is hoped that a speaker from Hertfordshire County Council will tell us about Waste Aware in the county plus a speaker to talk about recycling.

We hope to see you there!

**Joyce Spackman**

**Chair of Current & International Affairs Team**

#### **EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT TEAM**

Rahat Aboobaker, Chair (Potters Bar Gems WI)  
Ann Chance Read (Wheathampstead WI)  
Margaret Eccleston (Bishops Stortford WI)  
Jill Profit (Royston WI)

We have launched an exciting new initiative. WIs have been invited to apply for educational opportunities which will be supported by the HFWI Restricted Fund of £5,000.

The first round of applications will open on June 1, 2025. Information and application forms were circulated to WIs earlier in the year. The Team will initially review applications and WIs will be informed of HFWI Board decisions later in the year.

The Federation has applied for grant funding of £10,000 from the Denman Education Trust Fund. The Team decided on a proposal aimed at 'Bridging Our Digital Divide'.

Underpinning the proposal is to offer a range of IT training. WIs were surveyed to prove member needs and requirements. If successful, HFWI will use the funding to buy IT equipment, support services, and external training providers.

We are also hoping to encourage peer to peer mentoring and appoint volunteer digital ambassadors to support IT skills and learning within our membership.

**Rahat Aboobaker**

**Chair of Education & Development Team**

#### **FINANCE TEAM**

Rahat Aboobaker, Treasurer (Potters Bar Gems WI)  
Catherine Abrahams (Bricket Wood WI)  
Margaret Eccleston (Bishops Stortford WI)  
Caroline Ellis (Bricket Wood WI)  
Pamela Kershaw (The Causeway WI)  
Pat Kingsland (Knebworth WI)  
Carrie Lennon (Tring WI)  
Jill Profit (Royston WI)

The recently formed team concentrated their efforts in two areas.

A comprehensive review of the 2023/2024 end of year Financial Statements sent from WIs was undertaken. The main purpose of this exercise was to highlight areas where further training for Treasurers' might be necessary to support and build skills and knowledge.

The second is an ongoing initiative to set up and join the Independent Financial Examiner (IFE) training, to encourage and promote recruitment to the HFWI IFE programme.

We currently have a team of six examiners who have undertaken several examinations for WIs. We believe the robust training and appointment of an in-house team ensures a consistent approach and provides expert support to WIs.

The Federation is keen for more members to join our current team:

Caroline Ellis, Carrie Lennon, Catherine Abrahams, Jayne Hale and Sara Evans.

**Rahat Aboobaker**

**Treasurer**



## **HOUSE TEAM**

### **Meetings in person**

We continue to monitor all aspects of the maintenance of the house in the past year, and have undertaken any repairs or servicing of equipment that was required. The County Room (shop) has been rented out for the past 12 months and continues to be so for another 12 months.

During the past year, it was considered by the Board of Trustees that the House Team no longer needed to meet separately, as all team members were also Board of Trustee members, therefore, House business could be included at Board Meetings. Provision was agreed that if required, a special meeting could be called to discuss House business.

### **Pat Kingsland**

#### **Chair of House Team**

## **MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT TEAM (MST)**

### **Meetings in person & Zoom**

#### **WI Advisers:**

Margaret Eccleston (Bishops Stortford WI)

Pamela Kershaw (The Causeway WI)

#### **Ex-Officio:**

Jill Profit (Royston WI)

Lorraine Mead (The Causeway WI)

During 2024/25, the members of the Membership Support Team (MST) met regularly, either in person, or kept in touch virtually or by telephone. Latterly, joined by Lorraine Mead, The Causeway WI.

Following a national review, the WI Adviser role changed significantly in 2024. Concluding that the 6-month training period was off-putting to potential recruits to the role, NFWI cancelled future courses and relinquished their responsibility for training Advisers to Federations. Now, any member can self-enrol for an online course and after successfully completing the 6 x 30-minute modules will receive a certificate. They should then tell Federation, who will invite them to join the Membership Support Team where they can receive practical experience shadowing other Advisers.

A second major change was in the responsibilities of the role. In future, WI Advisers will focus on opening new WIs (including working with their committees for a period of months until they are established), helping WIs that wish to merge or “enlarge”, advising WIs that run into difficulties

and suspending WIs prior to closure. Thirdly, Advisers would no longer handle giving advice about finances, this responsibility passed to the Federation Finance Team with whom the MST work closely.

MST discussions regularly focus on the health of our WIs, particularly those finding it difficult to encourage members to take on the officer roles of President, Vice President, Treasurer or Secretary. This has become more problematic since NFWI gave 3 months grace on fees in 2020 thus moving the start of the subscription year to 1<sup>st</sup> April. While not a universal issue, in some Hertfordshire WIs, where the annual election of officers occur in May, members became reluctant to rejoin in April if they could not foresee anyone willing to take up the required roles in May potentially leading to early suspension.

HFWI faced this again in March 2025. Kimpton WI, which had narrowly escaped suspension in 2024, was suspended in March 2025. They were joined by: Chorleywood WI, Letchworth Garden City WI, Hinxworth & Edworth WI and Offley WI. Each WI had a long history, and we were sorry to see them suspended despite their members’ valiant efforts to continue. Many members said they would join other WIs close by. HFWI has recognised this issue and recently suggested to WIs that they may wish to be more flexible in choosing the month of their Annual Meeting in future years.

There is no doubt that those WIs continuously take in and support new members, try new ideas and continuously evolve are more likely to prosper. Once again, we must congratulate Codicote WI as they were rewarded nationally for a further increase in membership numbers.

In June 2024, the MST received a positive response to an interactive workshop it hosted for new committee members and officers.

During April and May 2024, with help from other Board Trustees, we attended 15 Annual Meetings, running their elections and speaking on the proposed resolution “Dental Health Matters”. In a move to encourage more WIs to ask an Adviser or Board Member to attend their Annual Meeting in 2025, the Board of Trustees agreed to no longer charge WIs. This is an ideal meeting for members to focus on the role of the WI in society and one where a board member can bring a wider perspective, highlighting current activities at

federation and national level.

Throughout the year, we have spontaneously answered members' questions, some of which were later used for articles in HFWI News. We have often worked with WI Committees to find solutions to problems and will continue to do so.

**Margaret Eccleston**  
**Chair of Member Support Team**  
 (formerly Members Advisory Committee)

## **SPORTS & LEISURE TEAM**

### **Meetings in person**

Ann Chance Read (Wheathampstead WI)  
 Lorraine Mead, Chair (The Causeway WI)  
 Jill Profit (Royston WI)  
 Jean Thomas (The Causeway WI)

Walking Netball held at Stanborough School, Welwyn Garden City, continues to be very popular and enjoyed by all attendees. A free netball taster day will be held on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2025. The event was attended by Walking Netball England coaches. Hopefully, this will encourage more members to start up their own Institute teams with the help of Federation Walking Netball, England. Thank you, Jean Thomas, our netball team captain for organising the event.

Several members are going to brave taking to the skies in a gilder from Cambridge Gliding Centre in July. The evening has been organised by Jill Profit and we are really looking forward to it.

A Golf Taster Day at Redbourn Golf Club with a two course lunch has been organised for any member that wishes to try golf in a relaxed and fun atmosphere.

In the future, we hope to be able to offer members a range of exciting sports activities including, dance, low impact fun exercise classes, fencing, Croquet, Boules to name but a few.

**Lorraine Mead**  
**Chair of Sports & Leisure Team**