

31 January 2023

Dear WI member,

We are writing to introduce you to a new national initiative to help us engage with a wider audience, and ultimately, to inspire more women. In April 2023 we will be launching two WI Supporter options alongside our existing membership offer.

WI members have always been at the heart of the WI, and this is not changing. We are committed to ensuring our membership remains as special as it has always been. However, to ensure this experience is protected and future-proofed, something must change, as we are not currently reaching all women, or offering something that all women are able to, or want to, engage with. This means we are not being inclusive to all women. Nor are we being flexible when it comes to the diverse range of priorities and commitments that we must compete with to remain relevant to women today. By offering only one type of engagement, we are missing out on a huge audience – a growing group of inspiring women who support our cause, champion our campaigns, and want to be part of what we offer, but who cannot commit to WI membership at the current time.

It is important to emphasise that those who engage with us at Supporter levels will not be members of the WI. They will not have the same rights or benefits as members. They will not have monthly meetings, they will not be able to vote on resolutions or other constitutional matters, nor put forward new resolutions. They will not take anything away from our membership, but will benefit members for many reasons.

The two options are outlined below:

Option 1 - Supporter

This will be an introduction to the WI on a very basic donatory level, with a minimum donation of £5. In return they will receive a package of promotional materials, including information about our campaigns. They will also have an opportunity to complete research questionnaires when we are looking to engage with more women. Our experience of having a WI presence at events has shown us that there are a large group of people who are hugely supportive of what we do and want to give something to support this. Of course we could simply suggest they give us a donation, which anyone is able to, but this would be missing a huge opportunity to engage further with this group.

Option 2 - Supporter Plus

This will be more of a taster membership for women who are interested in being involved in the WI but don't know where to start or cannot find a suitable group. The minimum donation is £18 and will include limited access to My WI (relevant content only), a subscription to WI Life magazine, more campaign resources, and access to two Denman courses, one live and one on-demand.

There will also be an opportunity to gift both these supporter options, which we hope many of you will consider for your friends and family who are not currently able to commit to WI membership.

Many of you helped us to find out what women want from the WI by sharing our recent non-member survey with family and friends. Of those who responded, most women said they had heard of the WI and would consider joining. But for a woman to go from being interested in the WI to joining there may be a huge gap, where she must find a group that fits with what she wants from the WI and works alongside her existing commitments. With these new options we will have something to offer immediately.

We believe introducing these options will be beneficial to you, our members, for many reasons. First and foremost because it gives the WI a wider audience and louder voice. Although WI Supporters will not be able to determine the agenda of the organisation or the campaigns we work on, their support will add more weight and more impact. This will also bring more women into the WI sphere, which may lead to them becoming members at a time that better suits them.

This model may be familiar to those of you with memberships of other national organisations. Introducing different ranges of options is a well-established path many groups have taken to engage with a wider audience. Those of you with other memberships will also be aware that, just because someone else is paying for a different experience, it does not detract from your own.

The WI Strategic Vision demonstrates our collective goal to provide the WI with a sustainable and exciting future. We are all committed to being Growing and Relevant, Bold and Inspiring, Inclusive, and Flexible, and we believe the introduction of these new options takes us closer to these aims. The Strategic Vision was a collective effort from all our members, and we know you are committed to seeing the WI thrive, grow, and remain relevant.

This is the biggest change to the way we reach out to women in our 108-year history and it is a change you have inspired by sharing your stories of daughters, mothers, aunts, colleagues and friends who want to be in the WI but can't make it work for them right now. We all know the joy of being part of that WI family and want other women to benefit from that too.

There was a time in our history when it was the norm for women to be involved with the WI and in 2023, the WI is more relevant than ever, and women need us. It is time for us to reach out to and inspire even more women.

Although these new options will not impact you or your membership experience, it is important to us that our members are involved in this journey. As this is such a big change, we know you may have questions about the new offers and how this will work in practice. In order to give you as much information as possible, we have put together some FAQs, which are attached. These FAQs will also be available on My



WI, where we will add to them as necessary. If you have any questions not covered here, you can get in touch with us at membership@nfwl.org.uk

With very best wishes,

Melissa Green
Chief Executive