

Q: Will the subscription fee still be increased in 2021?

A: Yes. The 2021 fee has already been agreed by federations and the NFWI, and budgets across the organisation will have been agreed based on this.

The cost of the three-month extension to the organisation as a whole (all three levels) is £1.7m, which comes with considerable financial challenges, particularly to our federations, and reducing the subscription fee for 2021 would put all three tiers of the organisation in an even more precarious financial position. It would also in all likelihood necessitate large increases to the subscription in subsequent years.

The NFWI Board of Trustees works hard to keep subscription increases as low as possible. Despite the predicted economic downturn, the costs incurred by WIs, federations and the NFWI will not go down. If membership fees do not keep pace with annual costs, it will financially destabilise all parts of the organisation. This will not only create a deficit position but will also decrease the organisation's resilience to future issues and disruption, such as those faced during the Covid-19 period. There would also inevitably be a need to exponentially raise fees in later years, above the cost of inflation, which would no doubt result in a drop in membership.

The 2021 subscription cost will be £44. Of this, 49.3% (£21.70) will go to the WI, 23.20% (£10.20) to the federation, and 27.50% (£12.10) to the NFWI. Out of the £1 increase, only 20% is going to the NFWI, 20% to the federation, with the large majority of the increase remaining within the WI (60%).

Q: Will the new subscription payment date (April) be kept in place permanently?

A: Yes. A change of payment date away from January, a financially challenging month for many, will hopefully be a welcome change for members and reflect the feedback many of you shared with us during the recent Strategic Vision consultation. As we move out of this Covid-19 period and look to the future of the WI, our aims to be more inclusive and flexible are central to all considerations and we are delighted to be making this permanent change to what many of you have told us you feel to be a practical barrier to membership.

Q: Is a decision on this matter being taken too soon?

A: It would not be appropriate to ignore the many enquiries we have received from members, and it is important that you, our WI members, know we are listening and acknowledging the disruption to your WI experience.

Even at this stage, we do not know the full extent of disruption Covid-19 will have on WI meetings and events, and even as we emerge from strict lockdown, we are very aware that 'normality' is still a long way off and WIs may be unable to meet for the foreseeable future.

However, after considerable financial analysis by our Finance Department, we are aware that it would not be possible to offer any further financial assistance without crippling the organisation, so it would not be fair to wait any longer without acknowledging the disruption. Many charities are not offering any compensation at all, so although we are aware that three months is not reflective of the full extent of disruption, we hope members will appreciate the reason behind this.

Q: English Heritage has offered a membership extension with an ‘opt-out’ scheme. Is this against the WI constitution?

A: Yes. English Heritage (and National Trust) are not federated charities and therefore adhere to different charity rules. A central principle of our constitution is that all members pay the same membership subscription each year which is set by the NFWI in consultation with the National Council. If changes are made to the subscription they must be applied to all members equally.

Q: Some WIs are considering collecting fees for national and federation but not for themselves. Is this permissible?

A: No. Constitutionally every WI member must pay an equal subscription fee, and it would not be fair or in line with our constitution for some members to be offered a lower fee, but not others. Although many WIs will be saving money during this lockdown period there are others that have fixed costs. There are also many WIs who have adapted online meeting programmes and are incurring regular costs, such as speaker fees. We also know that many WIs are looking at ways in which they can use any savings accrued during the lockdown period to enhance the experience of members once normal activities are resumed and to compensate for the disruption to their programme.

Q: How will small WIs with no cash reserves cope with the financial hit?

A: Many WIs will have reduced expenses over this period and will, therefore, be making savings. If your WI has not been able to save on fixed costs during this period, we encourage you to explore what government grants may be available, in particular those WIs who own their own halls. If you have any concerns regarding your financial position then please contact your federation team in the first instance for support. NFWI are continuing to monitor the financial situation of all three levels of the organisation and proactively identifying ways in which we can identify savings.

Q: Will all members be notified directly of the change?

A: We are aiming to ensure that this message reaches all members as soon as possible. A formal notification was sent from Julia Roberts, NFWI Honorary Treasurer, to federations, there is a memo in the July WI Life magazine, posts on social media, this page on My WI, and a letter in the July WI mailing. We hope that by ensuring the message is consistent across all our channels of communications, it will reach all members; but please do ensure you share the news with all the members in your WI too.

Q: Does this also apply to Associates?

A: Yes, the extension to the current year membership year also applies to all our Associate

members.

Q: How would pro-rata membership work with the proposed new payment dates?

A: The pro-rated fees will remain the same, except for members who will join from January to March 2021 who will pay the same rate as those who joined in the quarter 1 October to 31 December 2020. The rates are as follows:

Date of joining 2020	Total subscription	WI share	Federation share	NFWI share
1 Jan-31 March	£43.00	£21.10	£10.00	£11.90
1 April-30 June	£32.25	£15.83	£7.50	£8.92
1 July-30 Sept	£21.50	£10.55	£5.00	£5.95
1 Oct-31 Dec	£10.75	£5.28	£2.50	£2.97
1 Jan -31 Mar 2021	£10.75	£5.28	£2.50	£2.97