

FAQs on new NFWI mailings system

What are the changes being made to the NFWI Mailings?

From 2022 onward, NFWI Mailings will move from being physical paper copies to digital copies, sent to WI Secretaries via email rather than via post. The one exception will be the March mailing which will continue to be sent as a paper copy via post. In 2022, the March mailing is the first one of the year, so the first digital mailing will be in July 2022.

Currently there are 4 mailings sent out by the NFWI each year, with an extra one sent during NFWI Board election years.

Why are these changes being made?

The two factors which have led the NFWI Board of Trustees to make this decision are financial and environmental. Paper NFWI Mailings cost the NFWI up to £45,000 per annum; therefore switching to digital mailings with one paper mailing per year is a huge saving for the organisation. With the decision to freeze membership fees in the year ahead, the NFWI is continually looking for ways to reduce central costs. For comparison, the cost of a digital mailing sent to all WI Secretaries is approximately 50p and the cost of a single physical mailing is around £9,000. Including the modest one-off MCS development costs to enable this functionality we could send digital mailings for the next **2,600 years** at today's pricing, for the cost of a single hard-copy mailing. The MCS indicates that approximately 8% of WIs do not have an email address listed for their secretary, which will be addressed before this change is implemented to ensure that no WI is left out of receiving the digital mailings.

With 4-5 mailings per year each containing several different papers and booklets, going out to 6,000 WIs, this is a huge amount of paper. The NFWI has several mandates on protection of the environment and tackling climate change has been a commitment of the organisation for a number of years. We have to consider our own actions when addressing the problem and what we can all do to reduce our carbon footprint. With this in mind, we believe switching to digital mailings is a necessary and feasible change for the organisation.

How will the mailings be sent out?

We will utilise the MCS for these mailings. The MCS already sends out hundreds of emails a day, so we know it is capable. It also means WIs will continue to only have one system to keep up-to-date.

As long as the WI has an active Secretary, and that Secretary has a valid email address listed, it will be included in every mailing.

When a Secretary receives the email, it will contain introductory text outlining the content of a mailing and a clear link to click. The link will download the mailing.

Each email will also include clear instructions on opening the mailing on your device – desktop computer, iPad, Android phone etc.

Unless stated otherwise, WI Secretaries will be free to forward the email on to any members also wishing to receive it.

Why can't some WI Secretaries opt in to receive hard-copy mailings?

With such a small percentage of WIs currently without email addresses in the MCS, it would not be worth the cost of printing for this number. For any secretaries that would prefer printed copies, the digital mailing documents will be sent as printable PDFs.

What about the WI Secretaries that don't have email addresses in the MCS?

We will work with federations between now and the end of January to help them try and collect email addresses for the 400 or so WIs without secretary email addresses currently listed in the MCS.

We can provide a breakdown to each federation of the WIs currently lacking email addresses in their federation.

With 438 missing email addresses across 69 federations we hope that this won't be a time consuming job for any federation. In 48 federations, 95+% of their WIs have email addresses for their secretaries, and two federations – the Isle of Ely and Guernsey have email addresses for all of their secretaries already.

Although we'd consider it important for WI Secretaries to have an email address to be able to really perform their role – for example receive queries from potential members, access WI Training etc. we do appreciate that some people, especially older members might not be online.

The Office for National Statistics reports that 95% of adults aged 18-64 have internet access, and 80% of adults aged 65+. That's a 21% growth for adults over 65 in only two years. With that in mind we expect ALL WIs will have one or more members with internet access. We will be asking one of those members to step in, and receive emailed copies of the mailings on behalf of the Secretary. That information can then be shared digitally to other interested members, and could be shared at a WI meeting on a laptop or tablet with the Secretary.

When is the deadline for collecting email addresses from WIs who don't have any registered in the MCS?

The deadline for federations to collect WI email addresses is 14 February 2022, to allow enough time to ensure all WIs are reachable by email before the first digital mailing is sent out.

Why aren't you using My WI for this?

We will continue to upload mailing documents to My WI. Unfortunately, only 42% of WI secretaries are currently active on My WI so we can't only rely on using My WI alone to distribute information it's important WIs receive.

Can WIs be informed about this change?

This information is not confidential but WIs have not formally been told yet to allow federations time to contact those WIs without email addresses. There will be a notice reminding WIs in the March mailing (which will be sent out as a hard copy mailing). The change will also be put on My WI in the New Year.

What about the WIs that are not digitally connected?

The paper mailings currently only go to the WI Secretary, who will disseminate the information to the rest of her WI in whichever way suits them. Therefore as long as one member of the WI does have an available email address to receive the digital mailing, the information can still be disseminated in the same way as before. The Secretary can choose to print the mailing if she wishes as the copies will all be sent as printable PDFs.

Where will members see the benefit of these savings?

While some members will be sorry to lose the hard copy mailings, we hope that they will appreciate the work we are doing between NFWI and federations to keep costs as low as possible and to ensure those costs are not passed on to members. Change is always challenging, but we hope this change will feel like the right one both financially and environmentally. We do receive regular feedback from members about the hard copy mailings. This feedback notes how antiquated the hard copy mailings feel, how wasteful and how they are often put straight into recycling. We have considered an opt in or opt out system, but the costs of designing and administer this kind of approach are disproportionate.

Aren't you just passing the printing costs on to WIs?

No. There's no need to print the majority of mailings, the same content can be viewed digitally. If members are interested then mailing documents could be shared digitally – emailed out to members, shown on a tablet at a meeting etc. Our role as leaders of the organisation is to consider how we can support this change as part of a wider move across the organisation to improve efficiency, reduce costs and

become more sustainable. Therefore we encourage you to support WIs to find a way to access and share electronic documents as opposed to finding a way to revert to hard copies.

Will this make the mailings less accessible?

It shouldn't do. If anything, digital mailings should be more accessible. PDFs can be zoomed in on, to increase font size and PDFs work with screen readers, allowing the content to be read out if required.

Are there any GDPR concerns?

As a federation you might have your own mailing lists – if you're aware you have a WI secretary's email address, but that it isn't in the MCS you should check they're happy for it to be added prior to amending their record.

Receiving communications from the NFWI is part of the role of being a WI Secretary, so WIs will not be able opt out of receiving these. They are not marketing.