

# **National Federation of Women's Institutes-Wales**

## **Report of the Public Affairs Conference held on the Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd on 11 October 2018**

Seventy four members attended the Public Affairs Conference. The members represented 11 Federations in Wales and also included members from Worcestershire and Cheshire Federations.

**Mair Stephens, Chair of the Federations of Wales Committee**, welcomed delegates to the meeting. Noting that the first ever WI resolution was passed on 24 October 1918, she said that the Conference was an opportunity to celebrate 100 years of WI campaigning and also the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in February 2018, since some women were given the vote. Over the hundred years since, Mair highlighted that the WI had passed over 400 resolutions and achieved change on hundreds of issues that affected women and their communities. She continued that the Conference was also an opportunity for members to share their passion and commitment to public affairs with fellow members. Working together, she said, members had the capacity to create a strong voice and continue the legacy of the early pioneering members of the WI.

Mair presented an overview of some recent public affairs activities in Wales. She reported that 2 events had been held relating to the Food Matters Campaign – a supermarket food waste debate at the 2017 Royal Welsh Show and an event at the Senedd in March 2018 to discuss food poverty and launch the Great Food Debates II in Wales. Mair shared some of the recent campaigns that the WI had been involved in through the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition and as part of the Show the Love Campaign. She highlighted the urban trees project as a way for members to take practical action to address the threat of climate change by planting, protecting and preserving urban trees for future generations.

Mair reported that NFWI-Wales was encouraging federations and WIs to get involved in taking action during the 16 days of Activism against Gender-based Violence which took place from 25 November – 10 December as part of the Not in my Name Campaign. She reminded federations that, since 2012, federations and WIs had been involved in recruiting male ambassadors from their communities to speak up against VAW. She also noted that a number of federations had been organising candlelight vigils or other awareness raising activities. Mair encouraged members to support the Candlelight Vigil that would be taking place outside the Senedd in Cardiff Bay on 20 November.

Mair told delegates that NFWI-Wales continued to get involved in influencing decision-makers and informed members of recent actions relating to the End Plastic Soup and Link Together Campaigns. Mair informed delegates about a new project 'Our Health in our Hands' in partnership with the Bevan Commission. The aim of the project was to gather members' experiences, knowledge and ideas around health and care services to help create the very best health and healthcare services now and for future generations. Mair urged members to raise awareness of the project at their next WI meeting.

To conclude, Mair thanked members for their commitment to public affairs and in ensuring that the powerful voice of the WI made a difference locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

**Ann Jones, Chair of NFWI's Public Affairs Committee** presented a national campaigns update. Ann reported that 6 resolutions had been shortlisted by members at the Resolutions Selection Meeting in London and thanked the 3 federations from Wales who had attended. She urged more federations to send a representative to future selection meetings as they were an opportunity to get members' voices heard. Ann noted that more than

100,000 members had voted in the resolutions process last year for the first time and said that that she hoped that even more members would vote this year.

Ann Jones spoke about the new campaign Make Time for Mental Health which she said had the potential to see WI members make a real difference to attitudes and behaviour across the country. She reported that on 10 October 2018, to mark World Mental Health Day, the NFWI had launched a postcard action to encourage healthcare professionals to ask patients about their mental health *and* physical health. Members were being encouraged to complete a postcard and send it to their local healthcare service or healthcare professional. Further ideas for action were available in the Action Pack.

In relation to the Food Matters Campaign, Ann informed delegates that a retailer roundup report would be produced outlining the commitments made by supermarkets on food waste as a result of the campaign. As part of the second phase of the campaign on food poverty, she said that members were holding food poverty debates in their communities. Ann added that the NFWI continued to push for the Government to introduce a measurement of food insecurity.

Ann reported that an End Plastic Soup drop-in session had been held at Parliament in July 2018 to give MPs the chance to learn more about the campaign. Ann was pleased to note that some Welsh MPs had attended the meeting including Albert Owen (Ynys Môn), Ben Lake (Ceredigion) and Chris Davies (Brecon & Radnorshire). Ann continued that the results of the NFWI's End Plastic Soup survey would be launched at a Parliamentary event on 30 October and this would be followed by a member educational conference the next day in London.

With regard to the Care not Custody Campaign, the NFWI in partnership with the Prison Reform Trust, continued to press for adequate funding and provision of liaison and diversion schemes, and for a higher level of co-operation between the health and justice sectors.

Ann shared the findings of NFWI's recent survey of WI Climate Ambassadors which showed the vast majority were very concerned about the climate challenge that future generations would face. Ann thanked members who took part in Speak Up Week during the summer by engaging with their MPs, through events and letters, calling for a commitment from the Prime Minister for net zero emissions by 2050. Ann said that members were now being asked to sign special 'Zero Hero birthday cards' to send to their MPs to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UK Climate Change Act. Ann thanked members for their engagement in the Show the Love Campaign which the WI would, once more, be getting involved in next year.

To conclude, Ann stated that WI members could, and did, make real and positive change by working together in creative and determined ways. She thanked members making the WI such a force for good and ended by stating "*One woman may not change the world, but together our efforts can have a ripple effect, and we can make the world a better place for everyone*".

**Mwenya Chimba PhD, Head of Training and Survivor Engagement at Welsh Women's Aid** addressed delegates on **Tackling FGM Together**.

Mwenya told delegates that she had a great passion for tackling FGM after meeting a woman who had experienced FGM first-hand and had lost her daughter to FGM. She shared a quote with members from Waris Dirie, UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador and spokesperson on FGM:-

*"Mama tied a blindfold over my eyes. The next thing I felt my flesh was being cut away. I heard the blade sawing back and forth through my skin. The pain between my legs was so intense I wished I would die"*

Explaining the definition of FGM, Mwenya said that a challenge was faced in terms of the terminology that was used. She said that survivors were not mutilated but cut. FGM was a human rights issue about children and women's rights that were being infringed.

Mwenya explained the 4 classifications of FGM:- type 1 which involved a minor cut, partial or total removal of the clitoris; type 2 which was more severe and could also involve removal of the labia (outer/inner lips that surround the vagina); type 3 which was the most severe involving removal of female genitalia; and type 4 which was unclassified. Mwenya said that there would be scar tissue as wounds shrank resulting in some visible impact. However Mwenya emphasised that it was not about the physical effects, which would heal, that had the greatest impact on women but the psychological effects.

Mwenya discussed the reasons that FGM happened. She said it was carried out for religious reasons stating that people's culture was defined through religion. She spoke of the economic benefits as cutters were paid. Mwenya told delegates that FGM was about power and control. It was ultimately about controlling a woman and using other women to control them as most of the cutters were women and therefore part of the power group.

Mwenya reported that FGM happened in 29 of the 60 African countries. According to the World Health Organisation, it was estimated that approximately 138 million African women had undergone FGM world-wide with a further 2 million at risk annually. Up to 80% had undergone type I or II of FGM. FGM was also practised in parts of the Middle East and Asia, Indonesia, Malaysia, North and Latin America (Columbia), Europe (Immigrant population) and Australia.

Mwenya spoke about the situation in the UK. She highlighted that the BME population had more than doubled in the last 10 years and people were coming to the UK from countries where FGM was practised and was a way of life. It was estimated that 137,000 girls and women were living in the UK with consequences of FGM and over 130 million girls and women worldwide had undergone FGM. 60,000 girls under the age of 15 were at risk of FGM in the UK and approximately 1,200 women and girls were affected by FGM in Cardiff alone.

Mwenya explained that very little was known about the prevalence of FGM in Wales. The City University of London and Equality Now Report in 2015 stated that no local authority in the UK was free from FGM. Women originated from places where FGM was practised and could be survivors of FGM. Mwenya said that part of the solution in tackling FGM was around prevention noting that FGM was usually performed on those aged 2 to 4 years or before a woman got married or had her first child. Secondly, Mwenya highlighted the need to ensure that support was available for victims.

Mwenya highlighted that FGM had been illegal for more than 30 years and stated that it was a concern that people were not being held to account. The first FGM prosecution was in 2004 and since 2012, there have been 36 cases of FGM. Yet only 3 cases had been pursued and charged. Mwenya explained that the reason for this was the close cultures in which FGM was practised. FGM was not spoken about and many women did not disclose. Mwenya noted that there was a review of the legislation in 2008 and that there was another attempt in 2015 to strengthen the legislation through mandatory reporting.

Mwenya shared with delegates the developments that had taken place in Wales. She told delegates that there was a community-based health and safeguarding project, an FGM Forum that brought together practitioners and representatives from affected communities, and an all-Wales FGM Leadership Group. Data was being gathered, which largely related to health, and there had been an increase in the number identified. 271 people were identified and reported by health between April 2017 and March 2018 with 76% of the reports from Cardiff and Vale. Mwenya spoke of the FGM Clinic that had been launched in Cardiff in May 2018 where midwives had been trained to provide counselling and to carry out reversals.

In terms of the way forward, Mwenya said that there was a need for robust data and for greater awareness raising about FGM. There was also a need for long-term resource investment in services to support victims and survivors. Mwenya said that we should not feel bad talking about FGM and there was a need to remove it from being a private issue to a public issue.

**Karen Roberts, Time to Change Wales Programme Manager**, addressed delegates on **Ending Mental Health Stigma in Wales**. She began by asking delegates 'What does mental health mean?' She said that 1 in 4 people suffered mental health and that the mission of the Time to Change Wales (TTCW) was to improve public attitudes; reduce the levels of discrimination in society, empower the numbers of people with lived experience of mental health problems; and advocate for changes to policy, practice and organisational culture. She explained that living with the stigma associated with mental health was worse than living with the illness.

Karen spoke about the work of the TTCW Project which was working with champions, employers and workplaces and through social marketing. TTCW was aimed at ending the stigma and getting people talking about mental health.

Karen highlighted that 1 in 6 workers developed a work-related mental health condition and that people did not talk about it. The TTCW Employer Pledge enabled employers to make a public declaration to take action to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination. Karen added that 115 employers in Wales had pledged to tackle stigma in the workplace.

Karen reported that there were more than 200 active and empowered Champions and Employee Champions supporting the work of TTCW. Karen stated that phase 3 of the project focused on men, the Welsh language and rural areas. In addition, the project was keen to develop strategic employer partnerships and, to date, 14 local authorities had signed the Pledge. She said that the project needed volunteers to get involved in its activities and was keen to develop links with the huge networks of existing volunteers.

**Mary Griffiths, Development Manager at Mid Powys Mind** led a taster session on **Mindfulness** which involved members focusing on mindful breathing. Mary spoke about the benefits of Mindfulness such as helping people to relax and clear their minds. She said that Mindfulness could help people improve their mental and physical health and could be done anywhere.

**Professor Maggie Andrews**, addressed delegates on **100 years of WI Campaigning: Suffrage, Water and Women Police**. She introduced delegates to Lady Isabelle Margesson, who was a member of the militant Women's Social and Political Union, led by Mrs Pankhurst, and was active in the suffrage movement. At the outbreak of the First World War, Lady Margesson's channelled her energies into food production and in 1916 founded the first Worcestershire Women's Institute in Barnt Green.

Maggie spoke of the formation of the WI during the First World War, with support from the Board of Agriculture, to assist those with cottage gardens, allotments, market gardens and farms to grow more food and avoid waste - by either preserving food or selling excess produce through WI stalls. Early WIs, she said, encouraged women to work on the land, run pig and rabbit clubs, collect herbs, organise soup kitchens, support infant welfare, arrange cookery demonstrations and engage in rural industries and crafts such as basket making and cobbling. It was hoped that the WIs would become permanent institutions, contribute to the education of the country woman's life and revive rural life having in their midst a number of women who had been active in women's suffrage campaigns. This, Maggie said, was something that the WI did very much achieve.

Maggie told delegates about some of the early and influential members including Catherine Blair; Elizabeth Robins; Helena Auerbach, Treasurer of the National Union of Women's

Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), the largest suffrage organization, who became the first National Federation treasurer; and Grace Hadow who set up NUWSS in Cirencester and who was responsible for the selection of the Jerusalem as the WI anthem. Maggie said that Jerusalem and the choice of Women's Social and Political Union's colours - green, purple and white - for WI banners, badges and posters consciously asserted the WI's links and sympathy with the fight for women's suffrage.

Maggie continued that in March 1918, Mrs Fawcett, leader of the NUWSS, addressed their annual conference talking of the '*exhilaration of feeling the power of the vote*'. In the years to come, the WI joined with the priorities of the NUWSS and other women's organisations on issues such as extending the franchise to all women, the introduction of women magistrates, women sitting on juries and women police. Maggie told delegates that, although the WI was non-sectarian and non-party political, an AGM resolution in 1918 welcomed both controversial and political issues, providing they could not be described as 'party political'.

Maggie spoke of Margaret Wintringham who was known as 'our institute MP' when she became the first British-born woman to be elected to Parliament in 1921 and who campaigned on a number of women's issues including reducing the voting age for women from 30 to 21, allowing women to sit in the House of Lords, making state education scholarships available to girls as well as boys, female police officers (a key WI campaign in the 1920s) and rural housing.

In the inter-war era, Maggie highlighted that housing and water were important issues for rural women and key campaigns for the WI referring to the first WI resolution passed in 1918 on the provision of a sufficient supply of convenient and sanitary houses. Maggie noted that even in the 1950s, in Britain half the rural homes in Britain had no inside water supply. She said that a lack of piped water and sewage added tremendously to the burden of domestic labour for rural housewives, and demands for a water supply were seen as intrinsic to campaigns for improved rural housing. This led to a resolution in 1930 to address the issue followed by an essay competition on the problems of a lack of village water in Home and Country. Maggie added that in 1935, the NFWI tried unsuccessfully to amend the Public Health Bill to stipulate that no new plans for houses should be passed without a water supply.

Maggie noted that one of the challenges for the leaders of the WI in the inter-war years was to convince the newly enfranchised women that politics mattered and that they could bring about changes. Maggie said that many ordinary women saw the WI as a social organisation and that Home and Country reviewed bills before Parliament which affected women under the title *Voters Awake*, perhaps as an indication of the fears of many who had campaigned for suffrage that many women were not interested in politics. This was, Maggie said, despite an AGM resolution in 1920 encouraging members to take an active part in local politics and urging them to stand for parish and district councils.

Maggie noted that during oral histories that she had undertaken with members in West Sussex, WI members spoke of their interest in local campaigns addressing village-centred issues such as the closure of doctors surgeries. She explained that Janet Courtney's unofficial history of the WI movement written in 1933 likened the WI to a Trade Union for rural women.

Maggie spoke of the role of NFWI's Chair Lady Denman, also Chair of the National Birth Control Council from 1930, in sending out a clear message to all WI members that birth control was both acceptable and respectable; a radical idea in the inter-war period.

Moving on to the Second World War, Maggie spoke of the role of the WI again in producing, preserving and preparing food. She said that the WI also campaigned with the feminist

movement for equal payment for war injuries. They discussed at institutes, county and national levels the sort of post-war world they were fighting for.

Maggie informed delegates that a national survey on housing carried out in 1942 gave women scope to explore their needs and verbalise their demands. A summary of the survey results published by the NFWI highlighted 2 basic needs - the need for an adequate water supply and the need for women architects and for working-class women members on housing committees.

As well as focusing on housing, Maggie spoke of members' desire for housewives to be recognised as skilled workers and equal partners with men. Members wanted to address the perceived low status of domestic labour and *"show that women doing their own traditional and specific job of running a household and bringing up a family should be considered as important, as responsible and as much worthy of respect as women doing the kind of job that can be done equally well by either sex; and that their work is just as vital if not more so."* (Home and Country)

In 1943, a resolution was passed recording *"its appreciation of Sir William Beveridge's great work for social security and particularly of his recognition that health insurance for housewives and family allowances are essential if family life is to be free from want"*. In the 1945 AGM, a resolution was passed requesting cash sickness benefits for all *'non-gainfully employed married women and non-gainfully employed widows'* but this resolution did not succeed in leading to change. Maggie noted that the WI had to wait a long time to achieve success with some campaigns. For example, the WI had joined with other women's organisations to demand equal pay for women (particularly teachers who were in short supply) in wartime but had to wait until the 1970s for the Equal Pay Act.

In post-war Britain, Maggie said that the WI campaigns and those of mainstream feminism continued to overlap. For example, on women's health, as early as the 1960s the WI identified the need for routine smear tests, and in relation to battered wives, WI members called for the provision of nationwide system of refuges. Maggie highlighted the resolution passed at the 1975 AGM resolution which stated that the NFWI *"believes in the principle of equality of opportunity and of legal status for men and women and pledges itself to work to achieve this."* Consistent with this aim, in 1993 the WI called for a review of provocation in the homicide act to include prolonged domestic violence.

Focusing on more recent campaigns, Maggie noted that in the 1990s, the WI undertook a survey on carers. She said that caring remained a concern for the WI and was an increasing issue for women in the UK.

**Selina Moyo, Policy Officer at Community Housing Cymru discussed Housing provision in Wales: developments over the decades and the continued challenges in providing affordable, adequate housing for all.** Selina provided a brief overview of Community Housing Cymru, an umbrella organisation representing over 60 Registered Social Landlords across Wales. Approximately 34 of their members actively engaged in construction of affordable housing and regeneration of their communities.

Selina reported that there were many challenges facing housing in both rural and urban areas. A key challenge she said was to ensure that all houses were built to the same standards.

Selina highlighted the developments in housing over the decades. She explained that housing had always taken central stage and public policy had always looked at housing. Up to 1918, Selina said that private renting was the norm. There was no water in homes and sewage was a major issue. This resulted in a public policy outcry and the Housing Act 1918 where councils provided homes to their communities and 'Homes For Heroes'. Selina noted that World War Two saw the destruction of homes and a move to social housing away from

gentry ownership. She said that by the end of World War Two, prefabricated houses were built to accommodate those who had returned from war. During the 1960s, residential tower blocks were built and regeneration took place to look better or meet standards. The 1960s saw the large residential tower blocks built to accommodate the growing population of people living in slum conditions. Selina highlighted that Right to Buy of council houses was introduced in 1980 under the Housing Act. She continued that in 1985, standards of overcrowding were introduced and the 1990s saw the start of the creation of Housing Associations.

Speaking on the current situation, Selina noted that the housing need was not being met. She said that major demographic changes were expected within the next decade. She reported that there were projections that Wales would need a further 174,000 homes i.e. 8,700 homes per year - 5,200 a year in the market sector and 3,500 in the social sector.

Other implications on housing included the move away from three person families towards two person and one person households. Such changes, Selina said, would have far reaching implications for housing associations in Wales and the homes they develop and adapt. Selina also noted that an older population would mean a need to think about how social welfare, health and housing was provided. The older generation owned their homes and might need to move to supported housing. Selina told delegates about the Welsh Government's Integrated Care Fund, set up to support the integration of health, social care and housing, and explained that the £10m a year fund and would be increased to £105m over three years.

Selina spoke of challenges in providing affordable, adequate housing. These ranged from the availability and cost of viable land, the stigma towards social housing, the planning process, negative attitudes towards affordable housing, skills shortages in the construction industry, and changes in the welfare system with the introduction of Universal Credit.

Looking to the future, Selina stated that housing associations were not only involved in the provisions of social housing but were looking at different tenures such as shared ownership, cooperatives as ways to provide housing for all. Young people could not afford to save for a deposit and the list for social housing was long. Selina stated that the Welsh Government had a major drive to support communities to ensure that young people had somewhere to live. The Welsh Government had different plans for home ownership launched to help different people access housing. Selina noted the rise in the number of homeless people in urban areas and the need to ensure they were rehoused properly. Selina also discussed the challenges of meeting the requirements for homes with reduced energy use (zero carbon homes). She noted that the Future Generations Act challenged us to think about how to create houses with less carbon. Other challenges included empty homes, building vibrant communities and responding to the changes brought on by social welfare reforms.

**Lesley Jones, Chief Executive of Keep Wales Tidy** discussed **Tackling Plastic Pollution Together**. Lesley began by introducing delegates to the work of Keep Wales Tidy. Keep Wales Tidy was an independent environmental charity with strong links to the WI since its inception through the involvement of the WI in the formation of Keep Britain Tidy. Keep Wales Tidy has staff based across Wales who were focused on supporting and encouraging people to take action to protect and care for Wales' wonderful beaches, rivers, green spaces and neighbourhoods. Its vision was for 'a beautiful Wales, cared for and enjoyed by everyone.'

Lesley Jones emphasised that Keep Wales Tidy was about far more than just litter and spoke about some of the initiatives it was currently involved in including Tidy Towns, which worked with and supported communities to take action such as clean-ups, paths, community gardens, orchards, habitat creation, food growing and conservation work. Since 2015, the programme had worked with over 40,000 volunteers and over 670 community groups to deliver more than 20,000 practical improvement projects.

The Long Forest project, being piloted in the Brecon Beacons, involved caring and maintaining community hedgerows. It aimed to engage residents, farmers, schools, groups, landowners in raising awareness of the importance of hedgerows and in carrying out projects to protect existing and create new sections of hedgerow.

Lesley highlighted Keep Wales Tidy's 2 community engagements campaigns namely Spring Clean Cymru and All Wales Beach Clean. She reported that 230 beaches were cleaned this September, involving thousands of volunteers, and thanked WIs who had taken part.

Lesley explained that Keep Wales Tidy was part of the international non-government organisation Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) which involved 76 countries across the world in promoting sustainable development through education. Lesley outlined the 5 programmes that Keep Wales Tidy was involved in namely Blue Flag, Eco-Schools, Green Key and Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE). The Blue Flag initiative, established in 1988, looked at the quality of beaches and marinas. Cefn Sidan was the first beach to be awarded the Blue Flag in 1988 and there were by now 47 beaches including 3 marinas and one boat tour operator. Ninety percent of schools in Wales were involved in the Eco-Schools project which was the largest student/teacher network in the world. Young Reports for the Environment invited young people to speak out about environmental issues close to their heart through investigative reporting, photography or film. The Green Key, operating in 57 countries, was the eco-label for the tourism sector with examples in Wales including Folly Farm and the Imperial Hotel, Llandudno. The Green Flags for Parks provided a benchmark for quality parks and green spaces in the UK and beyond. There were over 200 green spaces in Wales awarded this flag.

Lesley highlighted the global challenge of addressing plastic waste. She reported that up to 12.7 million tonnes of plastic enter the world's ocean every year, equivalent to dumping one bin lorry of plastic per minute into the world's oceans. The most common items included cigarette butts, fishing gear, food and drink containers. Lesley referenced the Ellen McArthur Foundation Report which stated that unless action was taken, there would be more plastic than fish in the oceans by 2050. Lesley noted that 80% of marine debris was from land-based sources.

Lesley spoke about the work being undertaken in Wales to address the challenge through the Wales Clean Seas Partnership which was delivering the Marine Litter Action Plan. She mentioned that organisations were being asked to make a pledge to tackle the issue and noted that NFWI-Wales had signed the UN Clean Seas Pledge.

Discussing what we could do together, Lesley acknowledged that the problem of plastic waste was massive but emphasised that we cannot give up. She said that everyone had a part to play in influencing others, both as individuals and as an organisation, by reducing plastic use and using sustainable alternatives. Lesley also encouraged members to get involved in local initiatives such as beach cleans and to join national campaigns.

To conclude, Lesley showed a film to demonstrate the impact of plastic waste on our sea creatures and to show that doing nothing was not an option.

### **Dr June Milligan, Wales Commissioner, Equality and Human Rights**

**Commission** addressed delegates on **Women in Public Life** and gender equality in the workplace. June began by highlighting the part played by the WI as influencers in public life with reference to a number of the early mandates of the WI such as the 1920 resolution on jury service, the 1921 resolution on 'Standards of films', and the 1943 resolution on women's participation in the 1946 Peace Conference.

June reported that part of the role of the EHRC was to research and report on the world as it was. Annually, the EHRC published the reports *Who Runs Wales?* and *Is Wales Fairer?* demonstrating the gender imbalance in decision-making positions. June noted that just 11

of the 40 Welsh MPs and 26% of Councillors were women. She continued that only 4 Council Leaders in Wales were women and there were currently no female Police and Crime Commissioners nor Chief Constables. On a positive note, June told delegates that the Older People's Commissioner, Future Generations Commissioner, Welsh Language Commissioner and Children's Commissioner were female. June highlighted the important role of the WI in continuing to campaign for equal representation on public bodies as there was much more to achieve to ensure that women were proportionately represented to shape our public services.

June spoke about some of the role models for women in public life including Elin Jones, Presiding Officer at the National Assembly for Wales; Clare Clancy, former Former Chief Executive & Clerk of the Assembly, and Dame Shan Morgan, Permanent Secretary of the Welsh Government. June referred to positive article in the Times about Lady Justice Nicola Davies, the first Welsh woman appointed to the Court of Appeal. Other women mentioned by June included Councillor Debbie Wilcox, the first ever female leader of the WLGA and Tracey Myhill, former Chief Executive of the Ambulance Service who played an instrumental role in building the reputation of the service and had consequently won numerous awards including Public Service Director of the Year. The female Commissioners in Wales, June said, were eminently qualified and brought women's experiences to their work. Women bishops were to be celebrated. June spoke of Fran Targett, CEO of Citizens Advice Centre. Fran had started as a volunteer in 1978 and had been driven by social justice and brought up by a woman who thought she could do anything. In addition, Fran's mother was a WI member. These case studies, June said, reminded us of the importance of women within leadership. June urged WI members to look out for women in leadership positions and to highlight their achievements so that girls could see them.

June discussed the structural and cultural barriers that women faced today. To begin, she noted that as early as 1921, the WI passed a resolution to educate WI members on the powers of the Parish Councils, Rural District Councils and County Councils with a view to getting local women on all these bodies. In 1943, a resolution called for equal access and funding *'from the nursery school to the highest technical and university standard'* of education. Today June said that we did have universal education but still campaigned on women's life chances.

June noted that the gender stereotyping in schools was still an issue that needed to be addressed with girls less likely to continue subjects such as science and maths. She said that 360 construction opportunities were taken up girls compared to 8000 opportunities by boys. In healthcare it was the opposite.

June spoke of the work being undertaken by the EHRC in partnership with the Children's Commissioner to address sexism and sexual harassment. In 2016, she said, 70% of young people had reported experiencing sexism.

June discussed the difficulties faced by women in balancing caring opportunities and work commitments. Speaking of women's maternity rights, she said that 1 in 9 women had been dismissed, faced compulsory redundancy or just left their jobs after taking maternity leave. One in 10 women had been discouraged from attending ante-natal classes. June emphasised the need for exemplary workplaces and gave examples of employers that had made a public commitment.

June told delegates to tell girls that their place was at the heart of public life. She noted that, although equal pay had been illegal since 1970, the EHRC continued to see equal pay challenges against public and private sectors to this day. She noted that gender pay gap reporting was now in place and the 10,000 employers that came under the scope of gender pay gap regulations had published their data. She added that gender pay gaps of 40% were not uncommon and 1,377 employers had a gender pay gap of over 30%. June said that the gender pay gap was exposing how men dominated the highest paid sectors of the economy. Some of the causes, she said, were rooted in the education system and she stressed that it

must be closed. June highlighted some of the WI mandates passed to address violence against women including the 1923 resolution highlighting abuse of children and the 2004 resolution on human trafficking. She noted that Wales had the opportunity to lead the way through the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act passed in 2015. June said that reporting was increasing every year and spoke of the work of the EHRC in supporting workplaces to develop policies.

Members were provided with an opportunity to **reflect, in groups, on the progress achieved over the last 100 years through WI campaigning and to discuss what still needed to change.** Each group reported back on the key issues raised during the discussions. Members discussed the resolutions that they felt had had the greatest impact on society. A number of health-related campaigns were raised by members such as breast cancer screening, pain relief in childbirth, organ tissue donation, cervical cancer screening, prostate screening, HIV/AIDS, smoking in public places, and free family planning. Other resolutions raised included SOS for Honeybees, Keep Britain Tidy, Fairtrade, plastic pollution and housing, equality, visiting children in hospitals, votes for women and food labelling.

During discussions on the challenges that still remain, members raised housing, plastic, inequality such as the gender pay gap, achieve a sustainable world, climate change, food banks (poverty) and attitudes towards women.

In her **closing comments, Mair Stephens** thanked members for attending and the speakers who had provided food for thought. She said that everyone was committed to a sustainable and inclusive WI in Wales and that consideration would be given to holding the next Public Affairs Conference on a Saturday. Mair noted that there were many challenges ahead but the WI would rise to them and do its very best.