

# SCOTTISH WOMEN'S RURAL INSTITUTES

## INSTITUTE CONSTITUTION

**Institute name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Registered charity no. (OSCR) (if applicable)** \_\_\_\_\_

**The institute is part of** \_\_\_\_\_ **Federation** \_\_\_\_\_

### AIMS

The aims of the institute shall be:

**a)** to advance the education and training of women who are members, who live and work in the country or are interested in

- country life
- home skills
- family welfare
- citizenship

**b)** to promote the preservation and development of Scotland's traditions, rural heritage and culture.

## 1. FORMATION

**1.1** Any woman, or group of women, wishing to form an institute, shall apply to the local federation. An institute shall only be formed by the most convenient federation and may not belong to more than one federation. Institutes are represented on the Federation Committee.

**1.1.1** Any Woman may join the organisation as an associate member and, providing the appropriate annual associate fee is paid direct to Headquarters;

- Receive a free copy of the monthly magazine and a membership card.
- Take part in any Federation event that leads to a National final providing the maximum numbers of associate members do not make up more than 25% of the competing team.
- Has the ability to take part in any other education event, including summer school, study tour etc.
- Does not have the ability to vote on any matter or stand for election to any position within the organisation.

**1.2** New institutes must formally adopt the constitution and must inform HM Revenue and Customs that an unincorporated association has been formed.

## 2. FINANCE

**2.1** Each institute sets its own annual subscription. (*The subscription should be reviewed annually to ensure that it covers Central Council and federation levies*).

**2.2** No-one shall be deemed a member of an institute until the subscription for the current year is paid. A member of more than one institute must pay a subscription to each institute.

**2.3** Institutes are responsible for payment of Central Council and federation levies.

**2.4** These Central Council and federation levies shall be based on the membership of the institute for the previous year (as reported at the business meeting) and may be raised in any way the institute prefers.

**2.5** New institutes will be excused ONE payment of Central Council and federation levies (i.e. the whole of the first subscription paid by members of a newly formed institute is retained by the institute).

**2.6** Fundraising for the institute itself must be given priority.

**2.7** Fundraising for other organisations or charities is not one of the organisation's aims. Any donations to other organisations or charities should be specifically raised and not given from institute funds.

### 3. MONTHLY MEETINGS

3.1 Meetings shall be held regularly at a fixed time and date and should be advertised.

3.2 The programme, which should last about two hours, shall include the business:

- minutes of the last monthly meeting;
- notices;
- letters (in a condensed form if necessary).

The remainder of the programme should comply with the aims of the organisation - *for example, an informative talk or practical demonstration, refreshments or some form of entertainment and competition.*

3.3 In order to keep in touch with the work of the organisation at national level, institutes may be visited by a Central Councillor or federation office-bearer at least once in every three years.

3.4 All business shall be referred to the institute members for decision, either in the form of a remit from the committee or directly to the institute as a whole. These decisions shall be arrived at by a definite vote, either by a show of hands or by ballot. The business shall be conducted in a similar way to the committee meeting (Ref. 6.5).

3.5 Visitors should be made welcome at any meeting.

3.6 It is not necessary for institute members to sing at the beginning or end of a meeting.

### 4. ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

4.1 Each institute will hold an annual business meeting.

4.2 At the meeting held the month before the annual business meeting, the following points shall be put to the institute by the President:

- each member of the institute is responsible for the election of the new committee;
- every member of an institute is expected to serve on the committee, if elected;
- the existing committee resigns office at the meeting, but may be eligible for election for another year (*It is advisable that no member should serve on the committee, or hold office, for more than three years without a break of one year*);
- the number of members to be appointed to the committee;
- tellers must be appointed by the institute to count the votes. (*These tellers may be either SWRI members, if possible from another institute, or non-members*);
- each member shall receive a voting paper listing all the members in the institute and their eligibility for election.

#### 4.3 Agenda for annual business meeting

- counting by tellers of votes for new committee;
- minutes of previous business meeting;
- Secretary's report;
- Treasurer's report and independently examined accounts;
- discussion of reports;
- adoption of reports (to be moved and seconded);
- President's address including votes of thanks;
- announcement of names of new committee;
- election of delegate(s) to federation and/or group meetings;
- suggestions from members for next year's programme.

In addition to this, any correspondence or ordinary business that may have arisen shall be dealt with.

#### 4.4 Voting Procedure

a. To vote, each member shall

- put a cross (X) opposite the names of those whom she wishes to elect from those who are eligible;
- bring or send this marked voting paper to the business meeting. (*Care must be taken not to give too many votes – thus, if the committee consists of nine members, not more than nine crosses may be put on the voting paper and not more than one vote may be given to the same person.*) A list is disqualified if too many votes are recorded on it, or if it is signed.

- b.** At the business meeting, all voting papers, duly marked, shall be placed in a ballot box provided for the purpose and given to the tellers. The result of the voting is confidential.
- c.** The members receiving the greatest number of votes form the new committee. A note should be kept of the next three or four names with most votes.
- d.** The number of votes given to each member shall be treated as confidential, and the list of the new committee shall be read out in alphabetical order.
- e.** In the event of a tie, the institute shall decide whether to draw lots or to put the members concerned on the committee.
- f.** While it is desirable to obtain consent in advance, a member who is not present at the business meeting may be elected to the institute committee in her absence.
- g.** In the event of any member elected to the committee being unable to serve, the member with the next highest number of votes shall fill the vacancy.
- h.** Voting papers should be put in a sealed envelope by the tellers and handed to the institute secretary, who should retain them for three months.

**4.5** Membership of the institute committee shall be terminated if three consecutive committee meetings are not attended and no acceptable reason is provided.

#### **4.6 Election of Office-bearers**

- a.** Each institute may decide on the most appropriate term of office for its office-bearers. *(It is recommended that office-bearers should serve for no more than three years in any one office.)*
- b.** The office-bearers shall be elected by ballot vote, either by the entire institute or by the committee.
- c.** No member shall hold office in more than one institute.
- d.** If a vacancy occurs during an office-bearer's term of office, this will be filled by replacing the office-bearer from the elected committee members by progression, ballot vote by the entire institute or by the committee.

### **5. DUTIES OF OFFICE-BEARERS**

- a.** The President shall
  - chair all meetings of the institute and conduct all business impartially;
  - see that all discussions, questions, motions, etc., are addressed to the chair, and, when discussion is wandering from the point, recall it to the matter in hand;
  - put motions in definite form and take the vote of the meeting, but not personally vote except where a casting vote is necessary.
- b.** The Vice-President shall
  - chair meetings in the absence of the President;
  - act for the President when she cannot be present.
- c.** The Secretary shall
  - ensure that the institute is familiar with all current federation and national business;
  - keep a register of the names and addresses of the members;
  - keep correctly the minutes of all meetings of the institute and committee in separate books;
  - communicate, to the committee or institute members, all correspondence received and reply in accordance with their decision, all communications having first been shown to the President in order that she may be conversant with the business;
  - draw up an agenda for each meeting in consultation with the President;
  - call meetings of the committee at the instance of the President (or Vice-President in the absence of the President) or any three members;
  - prepare a report for presentation at the business meeting of the year's activities of the institute;
  - co-operate with the Treasurer in completing the annual reports as required by the federation;
  - write the minutes of the business meeting before handing over to her successor, but the correspondence arising from the meeting is dealt with by the new committee and office-bearers.

Where the institute is a large one, it is desirable that other members be enlisted to help the Secretary. The Secretary's duties may be divided, e.g. Minute Secretary, Organising Secretary.

**d.** The Treasurer shall

- receive all monies belonging to the institute and disburse the same only on the instruction of the committee;
- keep an accurate account of receipts and payments and prepare a statement of accounts to be presented at the business meeting;
- have the statement of accounts independently examined, signed and dated, but not by a member of the institute;
- hand over the books to her successor at the business meeting.

**e.** If the institute is a registered Scottish charity, the Secretary and Treasurer shall

- complete the annual reports and accounts for submission to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), ensuring that they comply with current legislation;
- have the independent examiner sign the declaration required by the current legislation.

**f.** The Press Secretary shall

- write reports of meetings and institute activities;
- send these to the federation Press Secretary for inclusion in "Scottish Home and Country";
- send reports to local papers.

**g.** The Magazine Secretary (*sometimes the duties of Press and Magazine Secretary are combined*) shall

- stimulate interest in "Scottish Home and Country";
- order and, if not directly mailed, distribute copies to members;
- collect payments and pass to the Treasurer for payment into the institute bank account.

**h.** Handcrafts and Housewives Guild delegate(s) (*where appointed*) shall

- be responsible for promoting interest in the work of Handcrafts and Housewives Guild(s);
- bring to the notice of members any activity promoted by the guilds;
- collect fees from guild members and hand over to the Treasurer, if not included in the subscription.

## **6. COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

**6.1** The committee members must remember that

- they are the representatives of their institute elected to carry out the wishes of the majority of the members;
- all matters affecting the general running of the institute shall be decided by the majority vote of the members at a monthly meeting, the committee thereafter carrying out the details.

**6.2** A committee meeting shall be called by the Secretary at the instance of the President, Vice-President (in absence of the President) or any three members who demand it. An agenda should be sent with the notice of the meeting.

**6.3 Agenda for a committee meeting**

- minutes;
- Treasurer's report;
- correspondence;
- business.

**6.4** A majority of the committee constitutes a quorum.

**6.5** Committee meetings shall entail

- reading of the minutes of the last committee meeting, which shall be signed and dated by the chairman of the meeting when passed by the committee;
- reading of a statement of finance by the Treasurer, when required;
- reading of any letters received, either in full or summarised, and put to the committee by the chairman of the meeting. The secretary shall reply in accordance with the decision of the committee;
- all discussions of business at the meeting being addressed to the chairman of the meeting and not to other members of the committee;
- all matters discussed at a committee meeting being kept confidential until reported to the institute.

## **7. SUB COMMITTEES**

The institute committee has power to appoint sub committees. The President, Vice President(s), Secretary and Treasurer shall be ex officio members, with voting powers, of all sub committees.

## **8. HONORARY STATUS**

**8.1** Institutes may confer the status of Honorary President on a retired institute president, or confer Honorary Member on a member, in recognition of exceptional service.

**8.2** Honorary Presidents and Members shall

- take no active part in the general organisation of the institute;
- not attend committee meetings unless invited to do so;
- be allowed to take part in SWRI competitions and to vote in elections;
- receive a special invitation to any function organised by the institute and be given a place of honour at such functions;
- not be eligible to stand for election at any other level, e.g. federation, Central Council.

**8.3** Honorary status should not be conferred on a member who retires in rotation from an office in the institute and is willing to stand again for election when eligible.

**8.4** In all instances where honorary status has been conferred, an institute will not be required to pay the levy when that member is no longer able to attend meetings.

*As an alternative, loyalty certificates and 'Services Rendered' badges are available.*

## **9. DISQUALIFICATION OF OFFICE-BEARERS**

**9.1** The supervision and regulation of charities in Scotland is governed by the terms of section 69 of The Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005. It is a criminal offence under the Act for anyone to be involved in the management or control of a Scottish charity in certain circumstances.

**9.2** SWRI requires that an office-bearer will be disqualified from her post in the event of any of the following circumstances:-

- has an unspent conviction for dishonesty or an offence under the Act;
- is an undischarged bankrupt;
- removal under either Scottish or English Law or the courts from being a charity trustee;
- disqualified from being a company director;
- having been imprisoned;
- has become of unsound mind, as evidenced by a medical certificate;
- grossly neglects the duties as an office-bearer; or
- acts in such a way as to bring the reputation of the Scottish Women's Rural Institutes into disrepute.

**9.3** In any other circumstances, suspension of any institute member is decided by the Federation Executive Committee.

## **10. CLOSURE OF INSTITUTES**

**10.1** If considering closure, the federation must be contacted.

**10.2** Should the institute cease to function, its funds, after all other outstanding accounts have been paid, shall become the property of the federation together with all assets, e.g. property, trophies, etc., cheque books, cash books, minute books and vouchers.

**10.3** If closure is inevitable, and the institute is a registered Scottish charity, prior consent must be obtained from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) to wind up the institute.

## **11. GENERAL**

*While leaving complete freedom to individual members, it is inadvisable for institutes to affiliate, as corporate bodies, to any other organisation.*

Signed on behalf of the Institute Committee (Trustees)

Institute President

Institute Treasurer/Secretary

Date