



SWI Skills & Events Committee – 2025 AGM Report

The Skills & Events Committee has had a productive and engaging 2024, working to enhance opportunities for learning, competitions, and social activities for our members. Over the past year, the committee has met 10 times, maintaining a strong attendance rate of 77.5%. Additionally, a subcommittee of 10 SWI members was established in 2024, meeting online monthly to look at modernising the Proficiency and Judges tests, with the aim of encouraging members to update their skills, maintain standards and gain credits which are recognised outside the SWI.

National Events & Activities

A key focus of the committee has been the delivery of national events and competitions, which continue to be well received by our members. Sporting events included Indoor and Outdoor Bowling, as well as the Ruralympics, fostering both competition and camaraderie among participants. The national competitions, such as Variations on a Theme, Photography, the Warnock Trophy, and the Evelyn Baxter competition, provided members with opportunities to showcase their creativity and skills.

Two significant educational events took place this year:

- **The SWI Study Tour to the Peak District** – Attended by 50 members, this event was facilitated by Skills and Event Convenor Anne Howat, with strong support from members, ensuring an enriching and enjoyable experience.
- **The SWI Summer School** – A highlight of the year, welcoming 120 attendees. The event featured evening entertainment coordinated by National President Mary Burney and Anne Howat, creating a vibrant and engaging atmosphere.

Committee Developments & Initiatives

This year, the committee focused on strengthening existing programmes and launching new initiatives to enhance learning and participation.

Evelyn Baxter Scholarship Enhancements

One of the most notable developments has been the expansion of the **Evelyn Baxter Scholarship**, a flagship programme within SWI. The number of scholars has increased for 2024/2025, and a new workshop component has been introduced to further enrich the learning experience.

SWIFTS Development programme

The **SWIFTS (SWI Framework for Textile Skills / SWI Food Techniques)** is designed to provide members with recognised qualifications and clear learning pathways to earn credits. By offering structured training from beginner to advanced levels, the initiative aims to encourage more members to sit proficiency tests and become qualified judges.

Exploring New Sporting Events



In response to member interest, the committee has been exploring the introduction of **short-mat and ten-pin bowling** as new sporting events. A survey was conducted to gauge Federation interest, and further discussions are underway to assess feasibility and logistics.

Enhancing Competitions & Accessibility

- **Updating competition guidelines** – Efforts have been made to standardise and modernise the guidelines for national competitions, ensuring clarity for host Federations.
- **Introducing spectator fees** – A proposal is being explored to introduce **modest spectator fees** at sporting events, which could help offset costs and contribute to financial sustainability.
- **Transitioning events online** – Due to low participation, some competitions, such as Variations on a Theme, have been moved to an online format to encourage greater engagement.

Improving Communications & Event Promotion

To better reach members and ensure strong participation, the committee has expanded its use of **social media and digital communication channels**. Additionally, clear **online event guidance** has been produced to streamline event registration and cancellations.

Financial & Strategic Planning

A key priority for the committee has been ensuring that all events remain **financially viable** while continuing to provide value for members. Some of the steps taken include:

- Increasing the **entry fees for sporting competitions** and **Evelyn Baxter classes** across Federations to help cover rising costs.
- Ensuring that all national events at least **break even** to maintain financial sustainability.
- Phasing out the **Action Appeal grant**, ensuring a structured transition away from reliance on additional funding sources.

Assessments & Future Planning

The committee has been actively reviewing feedback from members and making adjustments accordingly. Some competitions, such as **Matter of Opinion**, have been paused due to low participation. Similarly, **Indoor Bowling and Curling competitions will not take place in 2025** following survey feedback from Federations.

Looking ahead, the committee's key objectives include:

- **Attracting younger members** by introducing contemporary events such as **craft workshops, and beginner-friendly classes**.
- **Ensuring national competitions remain viable** by monitoring participation levels and making adjustments as needed.
- **Promoting traditional SWI events** to new members by increasing awareness of competitions
- Aligning to the **SWI Strategic Plan**, the committee will continue to focus on **engagement, accessibility, and innovation** to ensure that SWI's events remain relevant and enjoyable for all members.



Conclusion

The past year has been one of growth, innovation, and adaptation. Through careful planning, improved communication, and thoughtful programme development, the Skills & Events Committee has made significant strides in **enhancing SWI's offerings**. Looking forward, we remain committed to strengthening existing initiatives, exploring new opportunities, and ensuring that SWI events continue to be engaging, inclusive, and financially sustainable.

Thank you to all members for your continued support and participation.