



Welcome to Members' News – February 2026 – Issue 43

This is a print-friendly version of the Scottish Women's Institutes monthly member newsletter.

Scottish Women's Institutes was established in 1917 and is an inclusive and inspirational membership-based organisation. We are here to build an inclusive community, to have fun and form friendships, to campaign, to learn, to share and to socialise. We provide a platform for social activities and networking, and champion women's issues.

Find out more about us at **www.theswi.org.uk**

Scottish Women's Institutes is a SCIO, SC053058

If You Know a Good Thing Pass It On

The Knitting for Beginners classes in Banffshire and Perth have now started, with six members learning under the guidance of SWI tutors Dorothy Morris and Susan Clarke. While numbers were lower than hoped, we ran these sessions to give members the opportunity to learn and to keep SWIFTS moving forward.

We're looking to expand SWIFTS across Scotland! If you'd like to see courses in your area, let us know your preferred craft skill level, and Federation. Current crafts include:

- Knitting, Crochet, Embroidery, Sugarcraft, Baking, Preserves, Floral Art
- Skill levels: Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced

Some courses and levels are still in development, but expressing interest helps us target areas with the most demand.

Interested in a SWIFTS Programme, email: Beth.spencer@theswi.org.uk

Supporting Safe and Welcoming Spaces

A new safeguarding initiative is being rolled out across the membership in Scotland to support the safe and welcoming spaces you help create. We'll be sharing clear guidance, an easy-to-use policy template for individual Institutes and Federations, and follow-up training to make sure everyone feels supported. For most members, this won't feel new – it simply puts into writing the steps you already take when looking out for each other and helps us meet our legal responsibilities.

Members will receive the safeguarding document in February, followed by a one-hour online training session in March. The session will be recorded and available to anyone who isn't able to attend on the day.

If you have any questions, please contact hello@theswi.org.uk

Our Focus for the Months Ahead

SWI's Board and staff met in January to carefully consider the organisation's strategic priorities for the months ahead. Recognising the Triennium is a period of transition, the day focused on creating a clear and realistic plan that supports stability while continuing to meet the needs of members.

This interim six-month strategy explains how SWI will remain focused and steady as we prepare to welcome a new Board and committees. It outlines the key priorities that will guide our work while ensuring members continue to feel supported, valued, and well informed. Behind this summary is a detailed action plan used by staff to deliver these priorities and manage day-to-day activity.

By sharing this summary, we aim to keep members informed about our direction, build confidence in the organisation, and ensure SWI continues to meet members' needs as we move positively into the next phase.

Read the interim strategy:
<https://www.theswi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/SWI-Interim-Strategy-Feb-2026-Member-Summary-.pdf>

Download the Members' Gathering Toolkit

Are you attending this year's Members' Gathering and keen to spread the word to friends, family and colleagues?

To make it easy, we've created a member toolkit packed with ready-to-use resources. Inside, you'll find eye-catching flyers and posters, social media graphics and cover images, suggested copy for posts and emails, and more.

We've also included a practical guide with helpful hints and tips to support you in promoting the event and building excitement in your networks.

Everything is designed to save you time while helping you amplify the buzz around this year's Members' Gathering.

Learn a New Skill With Arwen

Arwen Yuill is our newest Evelyn Baxter scholar! Trained by expert tutor Annette Reed, Arwen is now ready to deliver 2-day beginner courses in traditional broad-edged calligraphy around the country. If you'd like to attend a class in your area, contact your Federation to express interest.

A Huge Thank You!

We're incredibly grateful to Perth & Kinross Federation for their generous donation to the Evelyn Baxter Scholarship Programme. Members support is helping keep this special programme alive and thriving for SWI members across Scotland.

We're excited to see member Arwen begin her journey as this year's scholar.

Volunteers Wanted - Creative Crafts 2026

We're looking for tutors to lead make and take sessions and member helpers for the Creative Craft Show at the SEC in Glasgow, 5th-7th March 2026.

If you've got a craft you'd love to share, or would be interested in chatting to prospective members about all the amazing benefits you get as an SWI member we'd love to hear from you.

We'd need two hours of your time and you'll receive free access to the Creative Crafts Show on the day you volunteer.

Email Anna for more information: Anna.bain@theswi.org.uk

The Power of Community in the SWI

On behalf of the Mountainview School for the Deaf, we extend our deepest thanks to all our members that have generously donated a total of £2,071.82 to the project.

The Mountain View School for the Deaf, located in the Thyolo district of Malawi, is a specialized boarding school for around 160 deaf students. Your donations play a vital role in creating an inclusive, accessible environment for deaf children to receive quality education and develop practical skills.

Going forward, any members who wish to fundraise can choose to support the Associated Country Women of the World's Rural Action Fund (previously known as Pennies for Friendship), helping to sustain ACWW's vital work with women and communities across the globe. Donations may also be directed to the Evelyn Baxter Scholarship Fund, which provides valuable learning opportunities for members.

We are deeply grateful for the generosity, enthusiasm, and continued support of our members. By fundraising for these initiatives, you are making a real difference and helping to create stronger futures both locally and internationally.

Get Competitive – Competition Entries Now Open

Spoken Word Competition

Theme: "Nostalgia" – Kindly hosted by Angus Federation, the event will celebrate members' creativity and performance skills.

Sign up: <https://www.theswi.org.uk/events/national-spoken-word-competition/>

National Golf Competition

Hosted by Renfrewshire Federation on Monday 8th June 2026 at Gleddoch Hotel, Golf & Country Club.

Sign up: <https://www.theswi.org.uk/events/national-golf-competition/>

Photography Competition – Theme: "Hands at Work"

Capture people's hands in action:

crafting, gardening, cooking, knitting and tell a story through your lens.

Sign up: <https://www.theswi.org.uk/events/national-photography-competition-2026/>

Writing Competition – Theme: "All Things SWI"

Submit a 250–300 word newspaper-style article (including a headline) exploring the memory, meaning, or magic behind anything SWI related.

Sign up:

<https://www.theswi.org.uk/events/national-writing-competition-2026-the-warnock-trophy/>

New for 2026: National Ruralympics and National Outdoor Bowling Competition – more information coming soon!

Members' Gathering – Selling Fast

We're delighted by the incredible response to this event, tickets are disappearing quickly, with fewer than 100 now remaining! Workshops are filling beautifully, with several already close to capacity, and we're excited to announce that even more inspiring speakers and special guests will be revealed soon. It's all coming together to create a truly uplifting programme centred on fun, friendship and learning.

We would love for you to be part of it, so be sure to secure your place and join us for two of the event's standout activities:

Sign up to the Vaughan Nash Competition:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5X59ZX6>

Sign up to SWI's Got Talent:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WFWWZDS>

Events You Don't Want to Miss

Online Talk: Pearls of Wisdom

February 16th – 7pm

Join Frances Carlaw, The Pearl Lady, for a lively, illustrated talk about pearls, the only living gemstone. Learn about The history and science of pearls over 5,000 years, how pearls are formed, sourced and receive expert care advice. Perfect for pearl enthusiasts, jewellery lovers, or the simply curious.

Sign up: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1975278059850?aff=oddttdtcreator>

Online Talk: Victorian Costume Balls

March 23rd – 7pm

Melissa, founder of the Historical Crafts Society, for a fascinating online session on Victorian costume balls. This light-hearted inquiry into the extravagant fancy dress of the 19th century is perfect for history and textile fanatics alike. Melissa encourages you to occupy your hands while you enjoy her talk, so feel free to knit, crochet, sew or draw along!

Sign up:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/swi-expert-talk-victorian-costume-balls-tickets-1981853128056?aff=oddttdtcreator>

Missed an event like last night's cooking for one session with Board Trustee Jane Hogg or the brilliant online talk about all things wool, with Ailsa Stephen? You can watch all our past events on the SWI Youtube channel!

Please note: videos are usually uploaded one week after the online event takes place.

Help us Build an Incredible Raffle – Prize Donations Welcome

Federations your raffle tickets for the upcoming Members' Gathering should have landed.

The prize list is growing by the day, and it's looking very exciting! We'll be sharing regular updates on our website and Facebook page, so keep your eyes peeled to see what's up for grabs.

Would your federation like to add to the fun by donating a raffle prize? We'd be absolutely delighted! Just get in touch with Anna to arrange it.

Please note: at the moment, we're only able to accept digital prizes.

Email Anna: Anna.bain@theswi.org.uk

View the prize list:

<https://www.theswi.org.uk/members-gathering-2026-national-raffle/>

Wendy Wu Tours Exclusive Offers

Our membership discount partner Wendy Wu Tours, have some exciting offers available for members, on top of the 5% discount they offer.

BOOK BY FEB 28

Offers include:

Free flights or partner flies free:

Save up to £1000 per person across all destinations and tours, selected dates across 2026 & 2027

Solo Traveller Sale:

Save up to £1680 per person

Solo travellers can enjoy up to 50% off airfares or free or half price single supplements. Across all destinations and tours, selected dates across 2026 & 2027.

No Regional Flight Supplements:

Save up to £250 per person

fly from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, Belfast and Dublin with no flight supplement T&C's apply

Free Premium and Business Class Upgrades With British Airways

Free return premium economy upgrades to India & free return business class upgrades to Joran & Egypt

Email for more information: Keith@wendywutours.co.uk

Member Discounts

Wendy Wu Tours: 5% off all tours, can be used in conjunction with other offers

CODE:SWI5

Take a look – <https://www.wendywutours.co.uk/>

Bloom & Wild: 15% off flowers & Gifts

CODE: THESWI15B&W

Take a look – <https://www.bloomandwild.com/>

Willowberry: 10% off skincare products

CODE: 10offSWI

Take a look – <https://www.willowberry.co.uk/>

The Edinburgh Woollen Mill: 20% off all clothing products

CODE: SW25

Take a look – <https://www.ewm.co.uk/>

The Crafty Kit Company: 20% off craft kits, supplies and gifts

CODE:SWI20

Take a look – <https://www.craftykitcompany.co.uk>

Please Note that all discounts are only available online and are not for in store use.

Member Support & Benefits

National Benefits:

- Take part in national events – From the SWI Summer School and Study Tour to the Members' Gathering and competitions.
- Learn new skills online – Enjoy free online events, a library of YouTube "how-to" videos, and scholarship opportunities.
- Use the membership toolkit – Access ready-made templates and ideas to promote your Institute and celebrate members' achievements
- Enjoy exclusive discounts – Take advantage of great savings and special offers just for members.
- Stay connected – Receive our monthly members' e-newsletter and quarterly Heritage Project updates.

SWI Member Insurance

Members are covered through SWI public liability insurance when working with non-members (children and adults) such as the Junior Dippers workshops.

Please note: It's important to ensure that any event involving non-members (adults or children) is branded as a SWI event, and it is recommended to confirm that any event venue you use has public liability insurance.

Access to SWI events

Keep up-to-date with the exciting range of in-person and online events [here](#).

Communities on Facebook

Don't miss out, join us on Facebook and keep abreast of what's happening for the SWI and across the membership in Scotland. Follow us [here](#)

Do you want to receive event alerts?

Subscribe to SWI's Eventbrite page and never miss a thing.

Do you want general news?

Visit www.theswi.org.uk for updates.

Contact us for any further information at SWI, Unit 8, 1 Carmichael Place, Edinburgh EH6 5PH or hello@theswi.org.uk or call 0131 225 1724

Alternatively, if you have a grumble to share, please follow our complaints procedure to ensure that you receive an appropriate and timely response.
