



Members News – Issue 46

May 2026

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**](http://www.theswi.org.uk)

Scottish Women's Institutes is a SCIO, SC053058

The end of an era: Thank you Mary

I have been attending meetings in my village since I was 14 and have been very fortunate to experience many facets of the SWI. From being part of the initial committee discussions around the Board of Trustees, to serving as Vice President to Anne Kerr and as National President, I have had many opportunities to learn, meet members and give back to an organisation that I truly love.

During my time as President I am proud to have streamlined SWI governance and secured our charitable status, changes that will strengthen the organisation for years to come. I was also fortunate to secure dedicated funding for the SWI Heritage Project, and it has been a joy to watch it flourish. Selling Heriot Row was a significant moment, but one that allowed us to invest in the future of the SWI in a way that truly matters.

Like Presidents before me, it has been a real pleasure to visit towns and villages across Scotland, and I am proud to have visited the majority of Federations during my time in office. My geography has certainly improved along the way. Perhaps most heartening of all has been seeing membership grow for the first time since the 1950s, it is a true reflection of how the organisation is evolving with its members over the decades.

It has been an honour to serve as your National President, and I leave the role with gratitude, pride and great optimism for the future of the SWI and the community at its heart.

I am absolutely thrilled to be passing the baton to Susie as our new National President. She brings so much talent, enthusiasm, and heart to everything she does, and I know she is going to absolutely thrive in this role. The future is in brilliant hands, and I for one cannot wait to cheer her on every step of the way!"

Meet New National President Susie Finlayson

Susie Finlayson from Roxburghshire is our new National President – watch her welcome video here: <https://youtu.be/S3ua3nZYgvY>

Get to know the NEW Board of Trustees

Following a successful AGM on May 16, we're delighted to announce the new Board of Trustees for 2026 – 2029.

Photos from left to right: Heather Coutts (West Lothian), Elizabeth Hay (SCWP), Karen Harrison (Shetland), Rita Storr (Ross-shire & Sutherland), Sybil Stuart (Moray & Nairn), Ann Henderson (Dumfriesshire), Julie Cribb (Ross-shire & Sutherland), Susie Finlayson – National President (Roxburghshire), Clare Greig (Dunbartonshire) and Jane Hogg (Dumfriesshire)

This is an exciting moment for SWI. With new faces around the table comes new energy, new ideas, and a renewed sense of possibility and we can't wait to see everything this brilliant group of people will help us achieve together.

Watch the 2026 AGM

After a fantastic year of membership growth across our Institutes, we're delighted to announce this year's trophy winners. A huge congratulations to everyone involved.

The Barbara Brookshire Trophy for most new members goes to Largs, Ayrshire with an incredible 17 new members!

The Stoneycreek Trophy for the second highest increase in members goes to our joint winners with 13 new members each:

Alloway, Ayrshire

Gartocharn, Dunbartonshire

The Retson Family Trophy for the newest institute with the most members also goes to Largs, Ayrshire with an outstanding 66 members!

A big thanks to all the outgoing board trustees and committee members, an updated list of committees is available on the website.

Watch the AGM on Youtube: <https://youtu.be/nt5ZDnvJ8aI>

Project 1917: Celebrating 110 years of the SWI in 2027

We are pleased to announce the creation of Project 1917, a new member working group focused on recognising and celebrating our upcoming 110th anniversary with both our members and the wider community.

Named after our founding year, Project 1917 will bring members together to share ideas, help shape anniversary activities, and support opportunities to showcase the SWI across the country. As part of the celebrations, we hope to travel to different areas, promote the organisation, recruit new members, and use the anniversary as an opportunity to highlight the impact and importance of the SWI.

We aim to deliver a wide range of events and activities, with members playing a key role in developing ideas and helping create a meaningful and memorable programme of celebrations. The group will honour our history, celebrate our achievements, and recognise the people and communities who have supported us over the past 110 years, while also looking ahead to the future of the organisation.

Further updates and opportunities for members to get involved will be shared in the coming months.

New free member benefit: Meeting space

We're delighted to share an exciting new member benefit. You can now book the meeting room in the Edinburgh Central Office!

Whether you're in town for the day or looking for a peaceful pause between appointments, this welcoming space is yours to enjoy. It's the perfect spot to catch up with fellow members, share ideas, or even host your own workshop in a relaxed and supportive setting.

This fantastic benefit is free to all SWI members, enquire about availability through the SWI website.

Bookable between: Monday - Thursday 9:30 - 17:00

Missed the safeguarding training? Catch-up here!

A recording of our Safeguarding training which took place online on 14 May is now available to watch on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PBklmD45cw>

Download the policy and guidance document, and presentation slides via the Member resources section of the SWI website

Member update: Engagement and consultation following the UK Supreme Court Ruling

Following recent and ongoing discussions regarding the SWI stance on the UK Supreme Court ruling, we want to reassure members that the SWI remains committed to listening carefully, engaging openly, and supporting members throughout this evolving situation.

At present, there is no formal UK-wide guidance available. In recognition of this, 2026 will be a dedicated year of consultation and engagement with SWI members to ensure that all perspectives are heard and considered thoughtfully before any future decisions are made. Throughout this process, the SWI Board will continue to be supported by legal advice.

Engagement Activity and Timeline

March 2026 – Initial Discussions

Continued discussions from 2025 took place within the Federation OBs Peer Groups, where it was agreed that member consultation should begin with a survey to better understand members' views, questions, and concerns.

March 2026 – Membership Survey

Questions relating to the UK Supreme Court ruling were included within the membership survey to gather initial feedback and identify areas where further information and discussion may be helpful.

From June 2026 – Sharing Survey Findings

Survey results will be shared with members in June to ensure transparency and to help inform ongoing conversations across the organisation.

Timeline continued

August–September 2026 – Member Briefing

During August and September, a briefing paper and FAQ will be provided to members to explore the issues in more detail, discuss at Federation and Institute meetings, and invite further feedback.

11–12 September 2026 – Gathering

The September Gathering will provide an additional opportunity for open discussion and share reflections.

November 2026 – Office Bearer Event – Date TBC

Further consultation and engagement will continue at the November OB Event, ensuring members remain central to discussions as guidance and understanding develop.

December 2026 – Strategic Review

At the end of the consultation period, the SWI Board will carefully review all feedback received and consider whether any strategic changes may be required in response to members' views and experiences.

Our Commitment to Members

We recognise that this topic may raise a range of views, questions, and emotions across our community. Our priority is to ensure that members feel informed, respected, listened to, and fully involved in shaping future direction and decision-making.

We encourage all members to participate in the consultation opportunities throughout the year so that the Institute can continue to move forward in a thoughtful, inclusive, and member-led way.

Don't miss out on additional Members' Gathering tickets

We're excited to announce that a limited number of additional Members' Gathering tickets for Friday 11 September (Day & Evening) will be released next week. If you are on the waiting list, you will have exclusive first access, sign up to the waiting list and don't miss out.

Email Beth.spencer@theswi.org.uk for more information

Meet Orhan Elmaz

Orhan Elmaz is a Senior Lecturer at the University of St Andrews, teaching multilingual Digital Humanities and Arabic language, literature, and culture. His research explores how stories, languages, and ideas travel across communities and borders spanning Arabic and Semitic linguistics, *One Thousand and One Nights*, and the spread of feminism across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Orhan will be working with the SWI in an upcoming collaboration focussed on his research with a Scottish twist, keep an eye on future newsletters for more updates.

One week left to fill out the survey

The Membership Experience Survey closes on Friday 30 May, so if you haven't completed it yet please take the time to do so.

Your feedback is important and will help shape the future of the SWI. It only takes around 10 minutes to complete and can be printed off as a paper copy should you wish to fill it out by hand.

RHS: Volunteers needed

Royal Highland Show 18 - 21 June 2026

We're looking for 6 volunteers each day to help at this year's Royal Highland Show. Your role as a volunteer is to help steward the Scottish Handcraft Championship and promote the SWI out to the wider public.

Volunteers will be asked to undertake two 2-hour shifts from the following time slots:

- 9:30am – 11:30am
- 11:30am – 1:30pm
- 1:30pm – 3:30pm
- 3:30pm – 5:30pm

If you wish to express an interest, please email hello@theswi.org.uk for more information.

Please note we have a reduced size of space for volunteers.

If you know a good thing pass it on

Baking & Cooking Tutors Wanted

We're exploring opportunities to introduce baking and cooking experiences in Fife and surrounding areas and are currently looking for members who may be interested in leading or supporting classes. Whether you have experience in baking, cooking, demonstrations, teaching skills, or simply enjoy sharing your knowledge with others, we'd love to hear from you.

Floral Arts & Gardening Workshop Tutors Wanted

We're also beginning an exciting new partnership opportunity and are looking for members across West Lothian, Fife, Dundee and Angus who may be interested in delivering workshops or sharing their skills. We'd love to hear from anyone with experience or enthusiasm in areas such as floral arts, flower arranging, gardening, potting, seasonal planting, or similar creative and horticultural activities.

Email Anna.Bain@theswi.org.uk for more information.

Become an Evelyn Baxter Scholar

We're on the lookout for talented members with skills in Felting (all techniques welcome) or Dorset button making.

Become an Evelyn Baxter Scholar and travel across Scotland to help teach members your specialised craft. Interested? We'd love to hear from you. Simply send an expression of interest to beth.spencer@theswi.org.uk

The craft with the most interest will be selected as the focus for the 2026 scholarship.

Our 2025 scholar, Arwen, has delivered her first class in Fife Federation. We wish her the very best as she continues her tour of 14 Federations over the coming year, sharing her skills and inspiring members across Scotland.

Upcoming Online Events

Online Craft Along: Decoupage Coasters & Candles

Wednesday 27 May | 7pm - 8pm

Join us for an evening of creativity. SWI Board of Trustees member Linda McTurk will guide you step by step in making your own decorative decoupage coasters and pillar candles. Whether you're a crafting newbie or a seasoned pro, this online session is the perfect way to relax, get creative and connect with fellow SWI members.

During this interactive session, you'll learn decoupage techniques to transform everyday items into beautiful home décor. Linda will demonstrate each step, and you'll have the chance to follow along in real time from the comfort of your own home.

Online SWI Health & Wellbeing: Prevent, spot and heal from burnout

Wednesday 10 June | 7pm - 8pm

Join Martyna Jablonska, founder of the Academy of Confidence, for a powerful and practical 60-minute online workshop designed to help women better understand burnout, recognise early warning signs, and begin building sustainable recovery habits.

This is an intimate, small-group workshop with just 12 spaces available, designed for women who want a more personal, supportive experience. The small group size allows for meaningful one-to-one interaction, guided reflection, and the opportunity to feel heard and supported throughout the session.

Upcoming Online Events

Cyanotype Mini Workshop **Sunday 14 June | 12pm - 2pm** **Edinburgh Central Office**

Led by Alina Litvinova, this hands-on Skillshare workshop will introduce you to the fascinating camera-less photographic process of cyanotype. Using paper and textiles coated with a solution of iron salts, you'll create striking white and blue prints by arranging objects, exposing them to UV light, and revealing your designs through water.

During the workshop, you'll have the opportunity to create your own unique prints using herbarium specimens and plants, or experiment with preserving meaningful objects such as jewellery, accessories, keys, and other small keepsakes.

Funding opportunities briefing

We have produced a comprehensive funding briefing pack to help you navigate the community funding opportunities available across Scotland. The guide is a useful resource for understanding the organisations you can contact and some helpful tips to support your funding applications.

SCVO also have an informative 'Meet the Funder' online session on 2 June 2026 at 10am - 11am designed to walk you through the key opportunities, answer your questions, and give you the practical guidance you need to take the next step to secure community funding. Find out more by clicking the button below.

The briefing pack can be download via the member resources section of the SWI website.

Visit this link to sign up to the SCVO session: <https://scvo.scot/events-training/calendar/a1vP10000VhP4XIAV/meet-the-funder-with-scotmid-cooperative>

Member Discounts

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

CODE:SWI5

Rydale: 10% off country clothing – limited to non sale items only

CODE: SWI10

Bloom & Wild: 15% off flowers & Gifts

CODE: THESWI15B&W

Willowberry: 10% off skincare products

CODE: 10offSWI

The Edinburgh Woollen Mill: 20% off all clothing products

CODE: SW25

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

CODE:SWI20

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.