



Northumberland Federation of WIs

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To all Members
of the Northumberland Federation of WIs

Hello ladies,

ANNUAL MEETING 2021

I am sure that you all remember that the 2020 Annual Meeting due to take place at the Royal Albert Hall was cancelled and National later informed us that they had been very lucky in securing the venue for this year's meeting but that it would be held in April 2021.

We were later informed that due to the then Covid situation the meeting had been postponed until 8th June which is in fact only seven weeks after the April date. As you would imagine there were to be strict distancing rules and delegates would have to be one to every eight WIs not four as is usual.

We were also informed that delegates would not be voting on this year's resolutions which of course have only just been sent to National, as that voting would take place later this year and we would receive more information on that in due course.

This means that we would be sending delegates who would only be voting on the "business" issues such as appointment of auditors for the coming year, but of course there would be debate on the resolutions and notable speakers.

You are all aware that in Northumberland we cannot attend anything in London or further south for less than a two night stay for all the logistical reasons that have been set out many times in the past. This year all delegates, albeit less of them, would by nature of the guidelines on mixing, have to be given a room to themselves and this would incur the single supplement which, as I am sure you will understand, is quite large in London. Out of pocket expenses also have to be given to each delegate to cover the cost of coffees and lunch on the way down and back home. This is all worked out very fairly and a cost per WI member is levied on each WI based on the up-to-date figures that your MCS representative has put on to the MCS database.

The past year has been difficult in the extreme for all of us at home, work and at leisure and it has been exactly the same for the organisation with no income at any level from fundraising. For all of these reasons I contacted all the Board members and Advisers to ask them for their thoughts and the unanimous feeling was that by taking only those practical facts into account it was not feasible to attend. Added to this were all the concerns over travel, limited numbers of attendees who will have been vaccinated and the new variants that have cropped up alongside every week bringing more calls for tighter restrictions on schools reopening, hospitality opening up and ever more calls to observe all the guidelines even after vaccination. Many of our younger members will not

even have had their first vaccination until September and we may be asking some of them to go to an inside event for a full day and return home possibly carrying the virus.

I have contacted the eleven neighbouring Federations for their views which basically are the same as ours and I have sent various messages to National setting out our concerns and thoughts and have even had a lengthy conversation with Melissa Green, the National Secretary last week.

It is therefore very regretfully that I am letting you know that Northumberland will not be sending any delegates or Advisers this year and I will be notifying National of our apologies. The Board and I all agree that to ask individual WIs to make a contribution to a delegate attending a meeting where they cannot even vote is unreasonable use of their funds. It is also wholly unjustifiable to ask any member to have to consider the possibility of putting their health and that of their family and loved ones at risk when they return.

I hope that you will understand the reasoning and hope that I have your full support. We will of course hope that 2022 will see a return to an Annual Meeting that we all know, and love and meetings face to face that we all long to hold.

Please all take great care and stay safe and smiling.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Read' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mrs M Read
Federation Chairman