



09 June 2023

[hello@wdwi.co.uk](mailto:hello@wdwi.co.uk)

Dear Federation Secretary,

## **REQUEST FOR A MORATORIUM, VOTE AND DEBATE ON TRANS GENDER MEMBERS**

I hope that this email finds you well.

I am writing to you on behalf of the Women's Institute Declaration, you may have heard about us in various [media outlets](#) and seen our [tweets](#). Hopefully you may have even signed the [petition](#).

I am contacting Federations directly to inform them of our message, to ask them to inform their Women's Institutes about it, and briefly explain why, even if you believe that trans-identified males<sup>[i]</sup> should be Women's Institute members, you should support our aims.

Currently members are in limbo as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy conflicts with the Constitution. The Constitution states that membership is only open to women who have reached the age of majority. The policy includes women who "live as women, as well as transgender women<sup>[ii]</sup>" this implies that there is a set pattern of behaviour that dictates womanhood. The phrase can apply to anyone, and is therefore meaningless, it includes men who have a "gender identity<sup>[iii]</sup>" of 'woman', who are legally male. Furthermore the 2023 EDI policy is quite clear that no "gender reassignment surgery or other medical intervention<sup>[iv]</sup>" is required for trans-identified males to join the WI. The policy can be easily changed, a change of Constitution would give everyone certainty. I have explained in more detail below.

As the Women's Institute Declaration we also believe that this argument is multi-layered. Whilst the inclusion of trans-gendered males in the Women's Institute is the very visible face of it, it is also about the National Federation of Women's Institutes unquestioning embrace of ["Queer theory"](#), a separate letter will be written about this in the coming months.

I would be extremely grateful if you could forward this email to the individual WIs in your Federation.

### **Our aims are very simple:**

1. A moratorium on new transgender members.
2. An expansive debate on whether the Women's Institute should either accept or reject trans-identified males as members, or find a different way that involves compromise.
3. A membership vote which could lead to constitutional change to permit membership of trans-identified males or keep the Women's Institute as single sex, or another, again seeking a compromise.

### **Why This Is Needed:**

1. Trans-identified males without a Gender Recognition Certificate are legally male.
2. The Equality Act 2010 allows for groups to restrict membership to those of the same protected characteristic. Women have the protected characteristic of sex, whilst trans-identified males have a different protected characteristic, that of gender reassignment. Therefore it is legal to exclude trans-identified males from being members. This has not been refuted by the NFWI and the Board of Trustees has confirmed they do not wish to rely on the single-sex exemptions contained in the Equality Act 2010.
3. The WI's Constitution currently restricts membership to women only. This is in conflict with the 2023 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy which allows trans-identified males to join with or without a gender recognition certificate, i.e. people with a medical diagnosis and who have legally changed their sex to female, as well as people who are legally male. The only attempt by the NFWI to address this, is to remove the reference to the single-sex exemptions contained in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2021 in the 2023 version.
4. We have been informed that members do not need to be consulted on policy changes. We do not dispute this, nor do we think it reasonable for them to be. But this policy de facto changes the Constitution, it allows people who are legally male to join, this has been done without a membership vote.
5. A change of NFWI leadership could lead to a change of policy and the exclusion of trans-identified males from the Women's Institute. This would be with no membership vote, and against some members' wishes.
6. We firmly believe that this situation needs to be resolved, and the only way to do it is to hold a full debate and a membership vote, which could lead to constitutional change.

### **In Conclusion**

You may think this debate is merely semantic, and that "trans women are women" therefore no further clarification is required, but this is not their legal status, many will not hold a Gender Recognition Certificate, given the process to obtain one. Therefore, according to the Constitution they are not permitted to join, but this issue has been side-stepped by virtue of

the 2023 EDI policy, which can just as easily be reversed. We feel this is an untenable position for everyone and needs resolving.

The Women's Institute is uniquely set up to facilitate this kind of debate, it happens every year via the resolution process. But given the NFWI's current position, and recent appointment of a trans-identified male to the [NFWI Membership Committee](#), a resolution on this matter is unlikely to be accepted by National. As a democratic organisation the National Federation of Women's Institutes should take the opportunity to ensure it reflects its members' views on membership criteria.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email, we hope that you agree with our argument that the current conflict of the Constitution and the 2023 EDI policy is untenable. To find out more about this please read the letter dated [7 February 2023](#) (it contains references to the 2021 EDI policy, but the letter is still relevant), which goes into more detail and contains the pertinent references to the Equality Act 2010.

If you would like any more information please do not hesitate to get in touch. Our [website](#) contains other submissions to the NFWI, and will be updated on 14 June 2023 to include our critique of the 2023 EDI policy and a letter replying CEO Melissa Green's article in the [Guardian](#) newspaper.

I have also attached this email as a PDF if you wish to distribute it more widely.

Regards

Women's Institute Declaration Coordinator

Please note in order to stop individual WIs becoming a target we are withholding personal details, letters to the NFWI have identifiable names and addresses. These are redacted on our website.

Distribution List:

All Federations in England and Wales

i. Please note we now use the term trans-identified male, this is different from the initial letter on 7 February 2023. We do not believe that people can change sex and that using the term "trans woman" makes women a subset of their own biological sex class.

ii. [NFWI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#).

iii. See the [NFWI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Glossary](#) for the NFWI's definition of this.