Women in the Fire Service
National Executive Committee Meeting
Wednesday, 15 April 2026

Attending:

Directors: Jules King (Chair), Vicky Wallens-Hancock (Vice Chair)
Executive Member: Ceri Sumner
Co-opted Member: Jan Morris, Nicky Thurston
Regional Reps: Anna Snelson (London), Olivia Crook (South West), Ellie Hayes (South East), Kate Garrigan (East Midlands), Daisy Byron (East)
WFS: Karen Smith (Services Manager), Jemma Yates (Marketing and Communications Officer), Kerry Cassidy (Administration Assistant)

1. Apologies received:

Amy Beams, Dany Cotton, Hannah Lodder-Rodda, Karla Stevenson, Kathryn Billing, Lisa Howsden, Lynsey McVay, Nicola Lown, Paige Williams, Paula Lyons.

Jules King (JK) welcomed everyone to the meeting. JK welcomed Jemma Yates who has joined WFS as the new Marketing and Communication Officer.

2. Notes from the last meeting:

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 27 January 2026 were received and agreed as a true and accurate record

3. Matters Arising:

Business plan
WFS is looking to undertake a review of the organisation to help shape its future direction to ensure it continues to meet the needs of women in the fire service. The review will consider current practices and policies, as well as the future priorities and direction of WFS.

The review will involve engagement with the WFS Team, Directors and NEC, with the potential also to include Regional and Local Representatives.

The Directors are currently finalising a draft brief, which will be issued to external consultants as part of a tender process. This work will also align with the review and update of the WFS Business Plan.

Treasurer's Report:

Discussion on academic research specifically relating to the FRS.

Ceri Sumner (CS) reported having a brief conversation with a surgeon from the Royal College of Surgeons, who advised that they receive corporate donations from large medical suppliers used to support research. CS will continue to gather further information and report back.

ACTION: CS

CS had also spoken with Motorola regarding corporate social responsibility and the possibility of contributing to a funding pot for WFS. CS and Jules King (JK) will follow this up jointly with a more formal approach regarding potential charitable donations.

ACTION: JK/CS

Jules King (JK) acknowledged that this would be a new area for WFS and that appropriate governance would need to be considered. Any discussions would need to involve Paula Lyons, WFS Secretary, and Sara Slater, WFS Treasurer. It was hoped that an initial discussion could take place at the Training and Development Event, when all relevant parties are expected to be present.
CS suggested that this could also be considered as part of the wider organisational review, to include possibly fitness and medical-related areas. It was felt that this should be explored as part of the review before significant work is undertaken, to ensure it aligns with the future direction and priorities of WFS.

JK agreed to update the Directors and explore whether this could be incorporated into the organisational review, helping to future-proof WFS and inform its future direction.

ACTION: JK

WFS Policies:
Update on the Gifts & Hospitality policy to cover conflicts of interest updated. Action now closed.

4. WFS Gifts and Hospitality – declarations

There were no gifts or hospitality declared at the meeting.

5. Chair's Report: Presented by Jules King

Since our last meeting I am delighted to say that our new Website is now up and running, please do take the time to have a look, I am of course biased but it looks really good and has a couple of additional features included such as a map of the country where you can click on your area and find your regional rep.

I also wanted to reiterate my thanks to the team - Karen and Kerry for their continued hard work and support. As I updated at the last meeting, they have been supporting the work within the communications and marketing area whilst we have been recruiting to the role - and I am delighted to say that we now have Jemma with us who joined the team just yesterday, a very warm welcome to you Jemma, I do hope you will be very happy working with us in WFS.

It was great to see so much taking place for International Women's day on 8th March - have a go days, women only crews, training and development events and other virtual events, there was much to celebrate and there continues to be and just in the last few days I have seen road trips delivering fire engines in Europe, a firefighter climbing Snowdon in full kit including breathing apparatus and I am sure much much more

This year's Training and Development Event in June will be 30 years since the very first event in 1996, and we are now only a few weeks away from our event and I hope to see some of you there.

Finally I would like to thank all of you for all that you do for WFS which I know is on top of your busy daily lives, each and every one of you really does make a difference

JK invited NT to offer an update on the three women out on convoy taking a 4x4 and fire appliance going across Europe to Montenegro. Three instructors also going out shortly. Received lots of interest from WFS members wanting to be part of the convoy.

6. Treasurer's report (Financial Summary pages 6/7)

JK presented the financial report on behalf of Sara Slater (Treasurer) who has sent apologies. Receiving money from services for the Training and Development and outstanding Corporate Membership renewal fees.

Nicky Thurston (NT) enquired if WFS had considered investing some of the money held in the reserves so the money was working and providing interest for WFS. JK confirmed this was not something in place currently and would bring this to the discussion in June. NT has a contact who may be able to link into WFS to offer some advice. JK and NT agreed to meet to discuss further.

ACTION: JK/NT

CS enquired whether WFS should have a formal reserves strategy, linking to NT's earlier query regarding WFS reserves.

JK referred to the approach taken during Covid, when consideration was given to ensuring sufficient reserves were available should WFS, for any reason, be unable to continue operating. This would provide protection for staff commitments and any outstanding financial liabilities.

It was acknowledged that WFS has grown considerably since then and is now moving into a different phase. The forthcoming Business Review will provide an opportunity to consider the organisation's reserves strategy as part of its wider future planning and direction.

CS suggested that WFS should also consider developing a digital strategy, including consideration of cyber security and the potential impact of increasing national cyber threats.

ACTION: JK/SECRETARY

7. Health & Safety

Vicky Wallens-Hancock (VWH) advised that the Directors are currently considering a Lone Working Policy and its implications, particularly in relation to the WFS office team in Downham Market. Fire safety requirements for the office are also being considered. Karla Stevenson, WFS Director with responsibility for the Health & Safety portfolio, has prepared a draft policy which will be reviewed to ensure it is appropriate for the office and WFS requirements.

CS offered some support from a Health & Safety expert from Norfolk FRS. Hopefully, this could be looked at after the TDE, and later in the year.

ACTION: CS/JK/KS

CS raised the potential impact of negative social media comments on women in the fire service, particularly in relation to stress and resilience, referencing recent media coverage involving women crews in Oxfordshire and Shropshire.

NT advised that the NFCC is considering a masterclass focused on handling challenging comments, strong opinions, and how individuals can navigate these effectively. NT would be happy to explore WFS involvement in this work.

JK agreed this was part of Health and Safety and confirmed that WFS would be happy to support the NFCC where appropriate.

Jan Morris (JM) suggested that, in future, this agenda item could be titled **Health, Safety and Wellbeing**, to reflect the more holistic approach being adopted across the sector.

JK sought the Committee's approval for the change, which was AGREED.

JK also reassured the Committee that WFS is available to provide support at any time and encouraged anyone who may need support to reach out.

8. Marketing and Communications update:

Although Jemma Yates has only been in post for a few days, she is already looking to move forward with social media communications, including information on the TDE and the 3rd Women's Development Programme.

9. WFS Events update:

9.1 Women's Development Programme

Karen Smith (KS) updated on the Women's Development Programme which only had one more session left and about to promote the 3rd Programme dates which are:

- Workshop 1 - Tuesday 23rd June
- Workshop 2 - Thursday 23rd July
- Workshop 3 - Wednesday 12th August

Dates for Programme 4 have been provided and to be reviewed.

9.2 Training and Development Event 5-7 June 2026

Planning is progressing well, with only eight weeks to go until the event. Over 180 delegate booking forms have been received, with the office following up on those still outstanding ahead of the deadline on Friday.

The **Abseiling** and **Trauma** workshops are still to be confirmed.

Work is also progressing on risk assessments and resource requirements, workshop allocations, and completing the information required by the Fire Service College.

All **Purple Shirts** are now confirmed, and a WhatsApp group will be set up this week.

Entertainment – Silent Disco reserved and additional to this will be something new on the Friday evening, a play 'Trailblazing – Women have always been Firefighters'. This is a story of firefighters from West Yorkshire: All women, all wanting to make a difference. All ahead of their time, all facing changes beyond fire.

10. WFS Policies

The following policies presented to the Committee requiring approval:

Expenses Policy – all were happy with the policy.

Expenses Policy: Approved by the Committee

Privacy Notice – a discussion followed:
CS advised that Norfolk FRS/County Council include a statement on its website explaining how forms, cookies and personal information are processed and used. Although this could be covered within the WFS Data Protection Policy, CS suggested it might be helpful to include a short, specific statement on the WFS website for clarity.

CS also raised the use of IT equipment and the handling of information when working across different computers, including how information is transferred between devices and where it is stored. It was suggested that this could be considered as part of WFS data protection and information management arrangements.

It was noted that Directors are using the WFS Teams channel to upload and share documents and are using their WFS email accounts. Paula Lyons, WFS Secretary, is particularly mindful of ensuring these arrangements are followed appropriately.

As part of the future Business Review, the Privacy Policy and how this is being applied in practice will also be considered.

Privacy Notice: Approved by the Committee

Retention Policy - JK advised this will sit front and centre with the Business Review in terms of a document outlining what WFS will do, and the efficiency of this policy.

Retention Policy: Approved by the Committee

11. Any Other Business

Future merchandise:
Daisy Byron (DB) asked the Committee to consider whether WFS could produce its own merchandise by purchasing a printing machine.

JK agreed this was an important point to explore, as it could help reduce waste, provide greater flexibility and enable merchandise to be kept current.

Nepal Project:
NT advised that she had spoken with the organiser of the Nepal project, who is keen to encourage greater involvement from WFS members. He has asked whether he could attend a future meeting to provide further information about the project and explore how WFS might become involved.

JK advised NT to contact Karen to look at options for dates.

15. Date of Next Meeting
NEC - Thursday, 24 September 2026
Regional Rep/Local Forum – Tuesday, 20th October 2026

Financial Summary and Outlook

Financial Year Ending 30 April 2026 (Current Year)

The draft financial position as at 9 April 2026 is shown below:

Opening Bank Balance			**11,040**
Income			**305,337**
Events			
	T&D Event	159,600	
	Other Events	0	
	WDP programme	16,979	
Memberships			
	Corporate	43,493	
	Individuals	4,353	
Other			
	HMRC	0	
	Donations	5	
	Refunds	30	
	Misc	3,684	
	Transfer from Reserves	75,000	
Expenditure			**288,264**
	Employee Costs	53,160	
	Premises Costs	7,150	
	Transport Costs	3,542	
	Supplies & Services	7,442	
	Establishment Costs	2,167	
	Trading Costs	118,904	
	Raffle	2,194	
	Misc	6,705	
	Transfer to Reserves	87,000	
Closing Cash Book Bank Balance			**28,114**

Previous we reported that no payments have been made to date to HMRC with regards to staff tax and NI. This was due to the successful applications for the small companies allowance each financial year and still being in credit. The credit is now depleted and deductions started in October at a reduced rate in line with the small companies allowance.

The reserves are shown as below:

Opening Reserves Balance			**162,451**
	Transfer Out		75,000
	Interest		
	Transfer In		87,000
Closing Cash Book Reserves Balance			**174,451**

As of 9 April 2026 the amount of money owed to WFS from the training and development events is £19,582, Corporate Membership is £2,700, Awards £1,750 and the womens development programmes is £4,287. Not all this is classified as overdue and any bad debts are actively chased before application to the Directors for write-off.

Sara Slater

WFS Treasurer