

**UWE CONFERENCE 2016 24 – 27 June 2016 Winchester**

***“Aspiration, Advancement, Achievement, encouraging women into Leadership Roles”***

This year's European Conference began the day after the United Kingdom had voted to leave the European Union, a fact not lost on the delegates! The 78 University Women who attended represented GB, Ireland, Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, and Switzerland. Of the considerable Irish contingent, Queens was represented by Oonagh Ferrity, Paddy Skates, Naomi Patrick, Marian Gibson, Margaret Donaghey and Dorothy Dunlop.

Day 1, consisted of Arrival, Registration and a delightful Reception in Abbey House, hosted by the charming 817<sup>th</sup> Mayor of Winchester, Councillor Jane Rutter who welcomed us to the beautiful ancient city of Winchester.

Day 2, began with a Welcome by the UWE President and the President of BFWG. This was followed by an update from Christel Moor on the Hegg Hoffet Fund.

The Guest Lecturer was a slightly stunned MEP, Catherine Bearder, who spoke about “Women's Rights and Gender Equality” Catherine has been a Liberal Democrat MEP for the South East Region of England since 2009 and was re-elected in 2014. She is a member of the European Parliament's Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee and Women's Rights Committee. She also focuses on Environmental issues – particularly wildlife conservation and biodiversity. Catherine was an excellent speaker but she was clearly not expecting the “Brexit Vote” of the previous day and shared some of her thoughts on the future of Britain outside of Europe with us.

Patrice Wellesley Cole spoke about Women Refugees and Migrants, and after lunch there were a series of workshops on topics as diverse as the difficulties for women starting up and running their own businesses in Romania, and the barriers put in the way of female police officers aiming for promotion in the Netherlands Police Force.

The Gala Dinner was held in the Prior's Hall of the University of Winchester, where the Guest Speaker was Professor Joy Carter, Vice Chancellor of the University of Winchester.

Musical entertainment followed.

Day Three and the main business of the Conference took place. The Council Meeting included formal reports from the Board, eg Accounts by the Treasurer, and Annual Reports – (Max 15 Minutes) from the Federations by the CER.

The Jans Gremmee award was made to Dr Elizabeth Poskitt, who was honoured to accept.

An overall report by the President was unanimously adopted.

Vice Presidents Reports by Isabelle Tremaille and Elena Flavia Castagnino Berlinghieri were also unanimously adopted.

The Financial Report 2015 was unanimously adopted and Jenny Morley and Marita Salo were voted onto the Financial Committee 2016.

Last year it was decided that because of the name change of the IFUW to GWI, the UWE Constitution needed to be adapted.

There is concern on the part of some NFAs about increasing fees, with three areas being apparent:

- Some NFAs will leave GWI if the dues are raised.
- Most delegates wish to keep the connection with GWI
- There needs to be some way to prevent the UWE from disintegrating, by an emergency clause or a new clause in the Constitution.

The following wording was suggested:

“In the emergency situation that GWI ceases to exist, the Board of UWE in existence at that time will be mandated to take all necessary steps to ensure the future of UWE, after seeking maximum consultation with NFAs”

An invitation was extended by Elena Flavia Castagnino Berlinghieri to a Meet and Greet in Sicily during May 2017, was graciously accepted, dates and venue to be agreed.

The next Conference and AGM will be held in Graz, Austria, 24-27 August 2017, thanks to the kind invitation from Dominiqa Stiger. The Theme will be “ Changing Culture”

Naomi Patrick, November 2016