



National Assembly of Women

Annual Report June 2024-May 2025

The National Assembly of Women was founded in 1952 to work for full social, economic, legal, political and cultural independence and equality for women irrespective of age, race, religion, philosophical belief, sexual orientation or nationality. These aims, of course, can only be fully achieved in a world at peace and to this end we campaign for an end to nuclear weapons and militarism.

National Assembly of Women Officers and Executive Committee 2024-25

President: Liz Payne

Secretary: Sandra Durkin

Treasurer: Carolyn Simpson

Executive Committee

Mary Davis, Megan Dobney, Siobhan Endean, Bernadette Keaveney, Vicky Knight, Alison Spencer-Scragg and Anita Wright

Vice Presidents

Dame Vera Baird KC; Baroness Rita Donaghy CBE, Baroness Helena Kennedy, Gloria Mills CBE and Sarah Woolley

Executive Committee Meetings

The EC has met five times since the last AGM. These have all been virtual meetings.

SISTERS

SISTERS is produced quarterly and features reports on national and international campaigns and NAW events and activities. The campaign against the rise in misogyny and violence against women and girls has featured in a number of articles in SISTERS including from Women for Refugee Women and Dame Vera Baird on the newly established Women's Justice Board. Through our links with the WIDF we have also published articles about women in Cyprus, Italy, Sudan and the situation of women in Gaza with statements from the Movement of Democratic Women in Israel condemning the ongoing conflict. With escalating conflicts across the world, many articles have reiterated the urgency of campaigning for peace.

Our strong links to the labour and trade union movement has been reflected in articles about TUC Women's Conference; on workers' rights from the

Institute of Employment Rights as well as campaigns on pensions and the winter fuel payment.

All past editions can be viewed at

www.sisters.org.uk

Website

The website covers NAW activity; progressive campaigns especially the People's Assembly against Austerity; various Labour movement demonstrations and events that members may wish to attend. NAW reports, submissions and documents are also posted on the website including those from the Women's International Democratic Federation.

Join up with other sisters on the NAW facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/171465242908480/>

National Assembly of Women

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Setting the scene

The National Assembly of Women Executive would like to thank our members and affiliates for their ongoing support.

Our 2024 AGM was held in the Unite Union Head Office, Holborn, London

Update on the campaign for a statue of Sylvia Pankhurst

The NAW is a founding sponsor of the Sylvia Pankhurst Memorial Committee. And that was 26 long years ago...

We have made progress this year but there's still some way to go. The pre-planning application was submitted, we have had a response and have submitted our response to their response! So now we wait... (again).

The exact siting of the statue is still under discussion – the underground services (gas, electricity, sewage etc) should be avoided if possible. However, planning officers agreed that siting Sylvia further into the Green would be better than placing her nearer Clerkenwell Road as they originally suggested.

They wanted further information as to “why Clerkenwell Green” and queried why we weren't looking at the site of Holloway Prison – where Sylvia was incarcerated. We reiterated that Clerkenwell Green was chosen because of its historical significance as a centre of democratic struggle. The Peasants' Revolt (1381), Chartist demonstrations, and protests for Irish freedom gathered on the Green in the nineteenth century. Since 1890 it has also been the gathering point for May Day celebrations.

The Green is home to the Marx Memorial Library – a building linked to radical politics since the nineteenth century. And Sylvia organised the first “Hands Off Russia” meeting in Farringdon in 1919 and also, in 1923 in a Clerkenwell social club, what was probably the first London meeting against the spread of Italian fascism. As for the Holloway Prison site – we are not sending Sylvia back to prison! And of course Sylvia Pankhurst was more than a suffragette.

The statue commemorates (1) her fights for women's rights including for the vote, for fair work for women, for food for children, (2) her fight for workers' rights, linking class and gender, her anti-racism, and (3) her internationalism with her support for Irish independence and the Dublin

Lockout, her pioneering campaigning against the Italian fascism creeping into London, and her support for Abyssinia (Ethiopia) when invaded by the Italian fascist government.

Our annual Sylvia Pankhurst Memorial Lecture was again held at Wortley Hall (“the workers' stately home” near Sheffield) in August. Suki Sangha, Philippa Clark and Mary Davis spoke on ‘Sylvia Pankhurst speaking out on race’. The 2025 lecture will be held at Wortley on Saturday 9 August – Lindsey from Police Spies Out Of Lives will speak on ‘Spycops, the undercover policing scandal’. Details are on our website

<https://sylviapankhurst.gn.apc.org/category/memorial-lectures/>

NAW Activity over the past year

The 2024 AGM carried motions on child poverty/the two child benefit cap, defence and the climate crisis. Our guest speakers were Sarah Woolley, General Secretary of BFAWU and Fran Heathcote, General Secretary of PCS. Both made inspirational presentations reminding us of the roles women have played in the trade union movement (eg matchmakers, chainmakers, miners disputes) and reminded us that we should learn from the history of women who went before us.

As in previous years sisters held stalls at Wortley Hall and trade union conferences including Unite Equalities Conference and Unison. These attracted great interest and discussion with delegates. Materials practically flew from the stalls!



(at the Unite Equalities Conference)

We placed an advert in the IWD and May Day edition of the *Morning Star* and an NAW insert was included in the May Day edition

International work

Since the last AGM, our international work has continued to focus on peace. Our president, Liz Payne was on the small working group of the Women's International Democratic Federation (Europe) which organised an international workshop against war. This took place on 29th June 2024 online and was attended by representatives of women's organisations from 27 countries, including. Three sisters attended on behalf of the NAW and committed the NAW to working even more closely with the WIDF and all its affiliates to analyse and better understand issues of war and peace across the world and how to provide the most effective solidarity with struggles for peace and equality worldwide.

In line with that pledge, and with the support of the Pancyprrian Federation of Women's Organisations (POGO) we were able to publish on the struggle for

justice in Cyprus in the Autumn 2024 edition of *Sisters*. We covered the "forgotten" war in Sudan in which women in their thousands are being subjected to systematic war crimes, while at the same time being at the forefront of the ongoing struggle for democracy and the rights women have been denied for decades. We have published statements of the Movement of Democratic Women in Israel, in which Palestinian and Jewish women are calling for an end to ethnic cleansing in Gaza and a just and sustainable peace.

We took and distributed NAW materials to the international meeting in Parliament called by Liberation to mark International Women's Day 2025 on Wednesday 5th March. These were well received. Speakers from Western Sahara, Sudan, Iraq, Iran and Palestine took the floor, including our sister Azar Sepehr of the WIDF-affiliated Democratic Organisation of Iranian Women.

2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the WIDF (see *Sisters* Spring 2025) and the NAW will be marking this anniversary in various ways. We are proud to be a member of this truly international organisation.

Financial report

NAW accounts to year end 2024			
<i>Income</i>		<i>Expenditure</i>	
Subscriptions	£4,046.00	Greennet website hosting charge	£330.00
Seminar fees	£345.00	CND affiliation	£10.00
Donations	£330.00	CSC affiliation	£100.00
Wortley Hall sales	£244.96	NPC affiliation	£25.00
Seminar stall sales	£62.00	People's Assembly affiliation	£50.00
Unison stall sales	£163.00	Unison Women's Conference	£445.25
Unite stall sales	£50.60	PPPS IWD ad	£132.00
Bank refund	£6.00	UCU conference	£293.68
		AGM	£42.20
		PPPS May Day ad	£132.00
		Pram Depot donation	£250.00
		Seminar	£4,197.05
		Unity Trust charges	£71.40
		EC expenses	£379.35
		Printing for conferences	£616.24
	£5,247.56		£7,074.17

1 January 2024 in bank	£26,257.07	1 January 2025 in bank	£24,430.46
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NB: £3,000 of assets are the **Val Duncan Fund**

Please note: The NAW Annual Seminar is subsidised from the Val Duncan fund

Due to personal circumstances faced by the auditor the accounts have not yet been audited. Once this has taken place they will be circulated.