

# WiRE

Women in Rural Enterprise

## Network Leader Guide



# Checklist

## **Before Meeting**

- Book Venue
- Arrange speaker or meeting theme
- Update website with details of meeting
- Send reminder email 3 weeks & 1 week before the meeting
- Take bookings (preferably online)

## **Meeting**

- Badges, WiRE leaflets
- Welcome new members
- Introductions
- Complete Attendance List

## **After Meeting**

- Thank Speaker
- Return attendance List to WiRE
- Update group's mailing list
- Update website with:***
  - Notes from last meeting
  - Member news & events
  - Add photos
  - Upload presentation
  - Add details for next meeting
- Email the Network with brief outline of the last meeting and direct them to the WiRE website

## **Contact WiRE**

Member Services: 01952 815338  
info@wireuk.org

## **Return Attendance List to:**

WiRE Harper Adams University  
FREEPOST NWW8123A, Newport  
Shropshire TF10 8NB

## 1. About WiRE

**Rural** - we are the only national UK organisation solely dedicated to promote, support and develop rural businesswomen; we have 2000 members and an active database of over 8,000 contacts, based at Harper Adams University College in Shropshire.

**Business** - we have been supporting rural businesswomen since 1996. Through feedback WiRE has created a package of business services designed specifically to help small and/or rural business women. WiRE has a small team of staff, all have run their own rural business, all are 100% dedicated to helping rural business succeed.

Membership fees allow us to:

**Network:** by continuing to grow the network of volunteer leaders and networks, making face to face support for women running small and rural business possible all over the UK.

**Promote:** by providing online and other promotional opportunities for members helping to grow businesses.

**Help:** by supporting and helping small and rural businesswomen through events, training and our specialist network of experts and partners.

## 2. WiRE Member Benefits

WiRE membership is diverse and varied, including businesses that are just starting and others growing and employing people. WiRE businesses offer a multitude of products and services and they operate from the remotest rural locations and the busiest market towns – everybody is welcome.

### What can WiRE do for business?

- Supportive local WiRE Network groups for women in business
- Listing in our “search optimised” online Marketplace
- Access to specialist training events, mentoring and national conference
- Regular WiREMail e-newsletter sharing news, information, events, offers and advice
- Promotional and marketing opportunities
- Professional services from partners who understand small businesses
- Being part of the vibrant and varied WiRE community
- Raising the profile of all women in business nationally

We understand that it is sometimes difficult to keep motivated; we are passionate about celebrating success and keeping our members inspired. We feature member success stories and trendsetters in our e-newsletter, online and invite members to listen to inspirational businesswomen (other WiRE members) at WiRE Events.

### **3. About being WiRE Network Leader**

Here are the reasons you should become a WiRE Network Leader:

- To promote your business
- To help your community
- To make some fantastic contacts
- It's fun and enjoyable
- To put your business at the heart of the local WiRE Network
- To meet interesting people
- To help your local rural economy
- To associate your business with the strong WiRE brand
- To develop your confidence
- To enhance your profile in the community
- To help other women in business
- To develop your leadership skills
- To use your skills & experience
- To gain further WiRE benefits

#### **Additional member benefits for Network Leaders:**

- FREE membership while you are running network meetings
- DISCOUNTED RATES at WiRE events
- We pick Network Leaders FIRST when we receive PR requests and invites

### **4. WiRE Local Networks**

WiRE Local Networks are a huge benefit and opportunity for rural business women. Through our volunteer led Networks individuals are able to meet, collaborate and do business, support each other and share information so they can grow their businesses.

WiRE supports it Local Networks by:

- Providing WiRE branded promotional material

- Providing a Network Leaders Pack with: brand and financial guidelines, organisation and meeting tips, PR plans etc.
- Promoting meetings, events & members through the website
- Providing the group with web pages (highly ranked) to share information, communicate with the group and promote the network meetings.
- Providing an online booking facility for meetings through the WiRE website
- Providing on going mentoring support from head office
- Providing an online forum for Network Leaders to support each other and exchange best practise.
- Providing online Resources to support Network Leaders on dedicated section of the website.
- Providing additional benefits to Network Leaders

### **WiRE member expectations**

WiRE is a highly regarded organisation in its field and is a nationally recognised brand. Our members have high expectations of our services which extends to our Local Networks. They expect:

- To be made to feel welcome
- An opportunity to network and develop relationships
- The meeting to be useful and relevant to their business
- To meet other likeminded women
- Others to understand their issues and needs

## **5. Skills & attributes needed by a WiRE Network Leader**

**A WiRE member** - As a WiRE member you will understand the benefits of being part of WiRE.

**Self Employed** - As a business woman yourself you will be able to understand the needs and issues of other self-employed rural women.

**Time** - Our volunteer Network Leaders generally spend between 7-14 hours per month on the networks plus attending the network meeting.

**Good organisational skills** - You will be juggling the running of the network as well as running your business; there is the website to update, speakers and venues to organise, emails to send, a mailing list of contacts to maintain and enquiries to deal with. Are you able to make time for this extra work and still be able to run the network and your business to a high standard?

**Ability to facilitate groups** - Every meeting will need facilitating. The meeting needs to be kept to time and managed to ensure that the group makes the best opportunity of meeting up. Our networks have introductions, speakers, announcements, discussions and other promotional and networking activities.

**Good understanding of networking** - Many rural women lack confidence or are new to networking, you need to have a clear understanding of the aims of the group and the benefits of networking. You will need to be able to explain the benefits of networking and devise ways of encouraging the group to use each other's products and services, collaborate, share information and recommend each other's businesses.

**Ability to work with mixed groups** - Rural women can join WiRE whether they are just thinking about a business idea or well established in business. They run diverse businesses which contribute to the successful dynamics of the WiRE network. This means you will need to devise a meeting programme or meeting formats that can benefit a mixed group.

**Confidence with email, web, and basic word processing** - There is no avoiding the fact that technology is here. We believe in using technology to our best advantage to save time, enable us to reach more people and keep costs down. The internet plays a huge part in modern life and we will continue to develop our website and technology.

**Enjoys meeting people** - An enjoyment and interest in people is of course vital. If this is already part of your business, fitting the promotion and running of a WiRE network into your life will be made easier. When you start a new network you will need to attract lots of new people to it, to keep the network vibrant and effective.

**Good communicator** – Communication is the life blood of a network. You will need to ensure the website is regularly updated with information when meetings are taking place, what happened at the last meeting, news and information. You will use the website and emails to convey the vibrancy and effectiveness and quality of the network meetings to encourage more rural business women to get involved!

**Self-motivated** – Although WiRE is here to offer the framework, support, advice, ideas, mentoring, information and resources to Network Leaders, unfortunately that is all we can do. It is up to the Network Leader to take the network forward and make it happen.

**Resourceful** – All Local WiRE networks need to be sustainable and self-funding as there is no funding available. This can be challenging so having a good network of contacts, being able to think out of the box or knowing someone who can, would be an advantage.

**Dedicated and enthusiastic** – This is a voluntary role so it is important that you really believe in WiRE, the importance of what we do and very importantly enjoy it! You will be seen as our local representative. A Local WiRE network and its members have the opportunity to benefit by being part of WiRE and the reputation that we have built.

## **Our expectations**

WiRE can advise on how best to go about promoting WiRE and finding new members. But it is the WiRE Network Leader and the members of the group who need to make it happen.

It is important that meeting attendees understand that WiRE Local Networks are an integral part of WiRE and their Local WiRE Network is one of the benefits of membership. Everyone who attends the meetings needs to join WiRE as an individual and they will receive all the other benefits of being a WiRE member. Guests may attend 2 meetings before being required to join. Membership is administered through head office and the WiRE website ([www.wireuk.org](http://www.wireuk.org)). All attendees must complete the attendance list (see '*Attendance List*') with contact details of visitors and those interested in joining. The attendance list should be sent to WiRE after each meeting. WiRE will contact all potential members with details of Member benefits and how to join.

Network Leaders are also responsible for the finances of the network. (See *Appendix*)

We hope Network Leaders will share the responsibilities of running the network with other members of the group as this helps the sustainability of the group. (See '*Sharing responsibility*').

Network Leaders are expected to lead the group for at least 12 months, although some Network leaders stay longer because they are enjoying it so much, we think a year is a good length of time. However, it is hoped that by the time you step down there will be someone else to take over. We can give you lots of help and advice on succession when the time comes but it's worth bearing this in mind from the beginning (See '*Succession*')

## **Global Resources**

This is an online library for Network Leaders. Here you can find all sorts of useful and interesting information such as articles to help you run the network group, forms, document templates, and notes from Network Leader meetings, newsletters, WiRE presentations, posters, website instructions and WiRE logos. We keep Global Resources up to date with everything, so it's always worth checking here first. If there is anything you think we need to add just let us know.

## **6. about meetings**

### **Sharing responsibility**

We recommend that tasks are shared between the Network Leader and at least 2 members of the group, who are prepared to act as Deputies. Alternatively, joint running of network groups with 2 leaders sharing responsibility can also work well.

It is important to give members ownership of the group, get them involved and make people feel valued.

- Ask members what they want from the group.
- Share ownership and use skills of all members
- Ask for volunteers to carry out tasks identified within the group
- Encourage participation by all members so everyone feels valued

## **Choosing a Venue**

Venues should support a local rural business wherever possible, have a warm and friendly atmosphere, be easy to find and easy to park. If the meeting is to be held in the evening please ensure that parking is nearby and well lit.

Some groups use the same venue each month, others move each meeting. Every area is different and it depends what is available, obviously cost needs to be taken into account. Some examples of venues WiRE groups have used are: village hall, pub, hotel, vets, farm shop, café, accountant's office etc. A quirky venue can even help to attract people to the meeting.

Venues often change to match the group's needs, for example a new group may start to meet in a pub or restaurant. As the group gets larger and they would like to invite speakers to meetings, they change venue and meet in a larger separate room away from noise and distractions. Establishing a consistent venue for a time has helped to sustain the numbers attending for some groups and give the group some stability.

WiRE aims to be inclusive and involve business women with different needs. Please consider different requirements when choosing a venue (e.g. hearing loop, easy access etc.) or be prepared to be flexible on the venue if attendees have special requirements.

## **Charging**

Running costs of the network meeting should be kept at a minimum and any costs that arise need to be covered by the attendees e.g. Refreshments, room hire etc. by way of an attendance fee. A fee of £5-10 would be an acceptable charge to cover venue costs and expenses if necessary. Any regular costs associated with the running costs of the network also need to be covered by the meeting charge. There should be a difference in meeting fees between Members and Non-Members e.g. Members £3, Non-Members £5.

The most important thing about WiRE networks is their sustainability – we always want to ensure that they will survive and continue giving business support regardless of any external intervention. Therefore, meeting costs (venue, refreshments, speakers), must to be covered by the members attending the meeting. WiRE can't cover the regular costs of holding network meetings, such as venue hire or refreshments. There are two reasons for this. Firstly it's not possible for us to pay these costs for all of our 60 networks, and secondly this would potentially undermine the sustainability of the networks. We want to ensure that networks will survive and thrive and not be dependent on external intervention.

## **Golden rules for Local WiRE Networks**

The following golden rules ensure consistency and quality across the WiRE network. We have developed the unique character of our network meeting through feedback from our members over several years.

- WiRE members and their guests only
- Visitors and guests may attend up to 2 meetings before joining WiRE
- Make sure all the delegates know that you are a volunteer and have a busy business life
- Women only (with the exception of speakers by invitation only)
- Meetings are informal and friendly
- New people are welcomed and made to feel at ease by the group – they are introduced to others and someone is responsible for looking after new members
- Everyone gives a very brief introduction of themselves and their business at every meeting for the benefit of new members and visitors. (This may seem pointless if people have done it before, but it is a great way for the group to find out about each other's businesses).
- Each meeting is business focused
- Each meeting includes informal time for members to network
- Members are encouraged to attend meetings of other Local WiRE Networks

## **Meeting format**

We recommend a 2 hour meeting held once a month. It is important to have a clear start and end to the meeting, members will continue to network but it is useful for people to know the official end of the meeting so members can leave punctually without feeling they are appearing rude.

Most meetings contain the following:

- Welcome, introductions, feedback from last meeting
- WiRE news/achievements/announcements/help wanted, speaker (30 mins)
- Discussion
- Networking

## **Timings of meetings**

Any time that is best for you is fine but 10am – 2pm and 6.00pm - 9.30pm seem to fit best into WiRE member's busy day. The least favoured time is breakfast meetings!

It is important that WiRE groups work together and complement each other in an area. Try not to clash with other networking opportunities in the area.

## **Planning a meeting programme**

Ideally the meeting programme should be member driven. The easiest way to make decisions is to ask your Network group. Each meeting should have a different speaker and cover different topics.

One of the key strengths of WiRE is the diversity of businesses - all different stages. This forms the dynamics of a WiRE meeting and is why it works so well! You need to bear this in mind when planning meetings. If in doubt, cater for the growing and aspirational businesses; the settled businesses will always gain something from the meeting.

We recommend that meeting programmes are planned up to 12 months in advance or at least 3 months in advance. We understand this is not always easy, but it helps if members and prospective members can see what is coming up on the website. Planning ahead also gives the Network Leader some breathing space between organising events.

## **Speakers**

These can be chosen from within the group or be a local person. All talks should be business focussed and it is important when briefing a speaker that they understand that this is not an opportunity for them to sell their product or service (that should come naturally when a relationship has been established). Speakers may share a business skill, share useful information for businesses or tell their story.

If you have run out of ideas or need some help, why not contact other Local WiRE Network Leaders and share information on speakers and topics. Contact details for all Local WiRE Networks are listed on the WiRE website or just ask us.

## **Attendance list**

The Attendance List (*See Appendix*) needs to be completed and returned to us at WiRE HQ after each meeting. It is important the attendance list is returned to us promptly so that:

- We know that meetings are happening regularly and that all is well
- We can check that new people are coming along (not just the same all faces each time)
- We can chase up visitors and encourage them to join WiRE
- We can keep an eye on your network, in case you need any help and support

Please get everyone to sign the attendance sheet; visitors can attend 2 meetings before they are required to join. WiRE is funded only by member subscriptions – the more members, the more we can do.

In order to ensure sustainability it is important to increase and maintain WiRE membership in the local area.

Please note that contact details will only be used by WiRE and not passed on to anyone else.

## How to encourage good WiRE networking

- Facilitate the networking, split into groups, get people to mix
- Encourage networking on behalf of others outside the group
- Encourage everyone to contribute to the meeting and take part
- Stress the main point of attending meetings is to build trusting relationships. Not just to hear the speaker, so you do need to attend more than once...
- Encourage members to bring along products, leaflets and business cards
- Facilitate a group discussion on 'What makes a good networker?'

## Ideas for meetings!

Encourage brief introductions at the beginning of each meeting. It is worth stressing 'briefly' to avoid introductions taking up the whole meeting - unless of course this is the plan! Try a *four point only*: what they do, how they sell, where they are going, best stress buster or favourite quote, or biggest inspiration. This helps new people with what to say and members will find out more about each other.

Invite members to bring 'something' to the meeting that illustrates what they do. The group can then take turns talking about what they have brought and why. The more bizarre the object, the better people will remember the business!

- Celebrate each other's achievements since you last met
- Spend the meeting setting 'SMART' goals for business, short, medium and long term- then plan a future meeting to see how everyone got on!
- Choose a discussion topic for the meeting e.g. successful ways I have marketed my business
- Give everyone the opportunity to lead a meeting on their area of expertise
- Encourage people to share their skills. Remember people have previous jobs, hobbies & experience that could make for an interesting and valuable meeting
- Mix people up and get them chatting - get every other person to move one place to the left every 10 minutes
- Run a business clinic by requesting that members bring a business issue to the meeting which other members can puzzle over and exchange ideas on, and hopefully come up with a solution (action learning)
- Invite people to come along and speak – people you meet in business all have a story to tell eg; customers, associates, suppliers and organisations such as the Inland Revenue, Banks, Accountants & Solicitors

- Discuss what you do or could do, to become more ethical and environmentally friendly in your businesses - and how you tell your customers you are ethical
- Work in pairs and develop a perfect 2 minute pitch (for the other person)

## **People not turning up**

Difficult one, nearly all groups have problems with this, so don't think of it as personal. Make it very clear at each and every meeting what the booking processes is and that they should also let you know if they cannot make it after all.

Keep reminding them. WiRE will do the same- hopefully the message will get through eventually!

## **Succession**

Consider the issue of succession from your first meeting as Network Leader. Let everyone know this is a temporary post. By ensuring the group has ownership and the running of the group is shared between several people, the network will continue to run smoothly when a new Network Leader takes over. Sustainability is one of the WiRE's core values and is fundamental to the way we structure and support our network groups.

- As soon as you have decided when you plan to step down as Network Leader let your group know, at least 3 months ahead or more if possible, be open about it.
- Let the group know that someone needs to volunteer to take over the group.
- Look out for possible members to take over the group.
- Anyone who is interested in possibly running the group should to contact WiRE HQ for an informal chat. They will be sent an information pack and an application form. The information pack will explain what is involved in running a WiRE network and the support we offer.
- If no one comes forward to lead the network from within the group, WiRE will contact members in the area to see if anyone is interested.
- If no members come forward we will advertise the opportunity on the WiRE website for a period of time.
- If no-one comes forward before you step down don't worry -it may be that meetings stop for a while but eventually someone is sure to come forward and all your hard work in getting the group started will not have been lost.

# **7. Marketing & Communication**

## **WiRE Website**

The WiRE website is an important resource for WiRE Networks. Each network has its own pages with a URL address e.g. <http://www.wireuk.org/dorset>. The WiRE Website is highly ranked by search engines because of the quality of its content and many links; public and large organisations, and WiRE Members link to the WiRE site. Adding

content to the website regularly, further increases our website's search engine ranking, and means more traffic to our members websites and more new people finding the Local Network. Keep network pages up to date with information, this will help current members and will help to gain new members.

Encourage members to:

- Check the website regularly for meeting details & news
- To give you their news for the network's news page
- To book meeting places online.

If the website is up to date and changing, members and potential members will gain confidence in it and the group and will be keen to contribute to it.

WiRE Members lead busy lives and an individual may only manage to attend 1 in 3 network meetings. The Network's web pages are important to keep everyone up to date with what is going on and make them feel part of the network.

We invest in optimising the WiRE website to promote the network, attract new members and those interested in WiRE. Many find their local network via the website and member's businesses through the Rural Marketplace. *Please, please, please*, try to keep your network pages are always up to date and interesting. The WiRE team at HQ use the network web pages to inform enquirers about their nearest network and next meeting dates.

You could:

- Add details of WiRE meetings and events
- Add news - this can be members' news, local business support, craft fairs, members training events, a list of group members and their businesses.
- Upload speaker's presentations and handouts
- Upload the group's press releases
- Upload your groups newsletter if you have one
- Feature links to blogs

### **Social Media: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.**

Many WiRE groups have set up a page on a social networking site which can be useful for keeping in touch in-between meetings. These platforms are the responsibility of the network group and the individuals who set them up. We suggest a protocol is agreed in the event the group should change leadership or cease, as to who is going to maintain the account and how the admin rights will transfer to another person or whether the account will be closed.

**NB. Please make sure you add a link from your WiRE Network Page to Your Facebook and Twitter pages. The automatic link is now not working because both platforms have changed their algorithm – a text link is fine**

### **Follow WiRE:**

Facebook page: WiRE (Women in Rural Enterprise)

Follow us at Twitter: @WiREUK

LinkedIn Group: WiRE Women in Rural Enterprise

## **Email**

Emails are fantastic at keeping people in touch with each other and sharing information, but you can have too much of a good thing! Our policy is to keep emails to a minimum. They should be timely and relevant.

We recommend:

- News and information is sent around the group by one person
- Add news and opportunities to the website and let everyone know it's there
- Contact details shared amongst the whole group only with individuals permission
- Explain group email policy to everyone who joins to make things clear and avoid misunderstandings.

If emails become too frequent, people are more likely to delete them without reading them, which means the sender has wasted their time and the receiver has possibly missed an opportunity. We want people to see WiRE emails as valuable. If you feel that you are sending too many emails review the network's policy eg. save them up and send them once a week or add them to the website as news.

## **Growing and maintaining the network**

For the group to remain vibrant new members need to be introduced regularly; current members will naturally drop out due to businesses taking off, changed priorities, busy schedules and life!

Groups often start with a huge push in promotion which brings in new people. Once the group has reached the desired size, it seems unnecessary to promote the group. However, some level of activity promoting the group needs to be maintained to keep attracting a steady flow of new people. The larger the group, the more new people need to be introduced to the group, to maintain the size.

## **Suggestions for promoting the network**

### **Everyone's Responsibility**

Most new members hear about WiRE through word of mouth. The Local Network needs to work as a team to promote the group and bring in new members. Maintaining a healthy successful network is everyone's responsibility. Encourage members to tell everyone about WiRE and to bring friends and contacts to the meetings. Everyone should be networking on behalf of the group. Be sure to lead by example and praise those who are contributing towards the success of the Network, soon everyone will get the message.

## **Leaflet Campaign**

Place WiRE leaflets and/or postcards in post offices, pubs, restaurants, cafes, libraries, farm shops and members businesses - anywhere you can think of locally where women, business owners, or rural people will find them.

## **Work With Other WiRE Networks**

Work closely with other WiRE networks in your region. Get in touch with your neighbouring WiRE network groups; publicise each other's meetings, do a joint meeting or set up a mailing list to share news and information. Remember as a member and as a group you are part of the national WiRE network, so use it and network!

## **Tell Everyone You Exist**

Local organisations such as Councils, Rural Gateways, WFU, Chamber of Commerce, other business networks etc. will signpost relevant people to WiRE networks. Let them know about your meetings as they may be able to include WiRE meetings in their newsletters. They may be happy to have some WiRE leaflets. You can also ask WiRE to add these contacts to our mailings list and we will keep them up to date with regular WiRE news from HQ.

## **Local Press**

Take advantage of free 'What's on' sections in your local press. Get to know who your local editors are, you are a great local contact for interesting business stories! Use member's businesses as case studies in press releases about network meetings. (See *Appendix for examples of press releases*)

## **PR & Media**

Inside every small business is a story bursting to get out – and inside WiRE there are lots of stories. Start with that positive attitude and you will get thinking creatively about possible media coverage for the organisation, and most probably your own business. A clever use of public relations will help people to understand what WiRE offers, will gradually build the organisation's reputation and grow membership in the area.

### **What is the 'news'?**

Find the 'news'. Be ruthless and think like a journalist, otherwise your media release will get tossed in the bin. The journalist will be looking for things their readers or listeners will find interesting, amusing or useful. Here are a few ideas, but there are many possibilities:

- a significant new event that women can attend
- a WiRE member success story (please try to WiRE a mention)
- launch of a survey / report
- a new appointment
- sponsorship of a WiRE event
- WiRE welcomes or condemns some new policy/proposals
- WiRE claims the first/last/biggest/latest (but avoid best!)

launch a campaign / involve a celebrity

### **Writing a media release**

Although you want to encourage the journalists to use your story, this is not a sales pitch, so avoid gushing praise of WiRE and WiRE members. Here are some basic guidelines (*also in Appendix*):

1. Cover the basic facts in the first paragraph including who, what, why, when, where and how as clearly as you can
2. The second paragraph should build on the first and carry any significant facts
3. Include a quote; this adds personality and endorsement to the story
4. Use Notes at the end to carry background information which reporters can use for research. Remember to include a contact name and number
5. Choose a simple, attention-grabbing headline which re-enforces the overall message
6. Type MEDIA RELEASE at the top, date it and indicate when the information can be published
7. Use A4 paper, 1.5 line-spacing, wide margins and type ENDS to indicate you have finished
8. Limit your release to one page if possible, two at the most. Short, informative and interesting goes down well with busy reporters
9. A well constructed, high resolution (300 dpi) photo can turn a mediocre story into the one that gets coverage
10. Proof-read the release before it goes out. Then get someone else to do it again. It's amazing what you can miss...

### **Become media-friendly**

You need to make yourself media-friendly; that means being very flexible so reporters can meet their deadlines. You need to build a list of contacts at the local radio, press and TV offices and pick up the phone when you have some news.

### **Cuttings of coverage**

Finally, try to get cuttings of the coverage you have achieved, and keep a record of radio interviews and website mentions too. These are very useful if ever you apply for funding or local sponsorship because it shows you are active in promoting what WiRE is doing.

Better still, copy the cuttings and send to WiRE Head Office at Harper Adams University College for our central records.

### **Shows & Events**

WiRE can provide promotional material if groups wish to attend local business exhibitions or shows in order to recruit members and promote WiRE locally. Network Leaders are encouraged to promote their own and local WiRE members businesses at these events.

To request materials just send an email to **info@wireuk.org** with details of what you would like, quantity and the date of the event (the more notice we have the better). We will arrange for a courier to deliver the items to you and will contact you after the event to arrange collection.

## **Databases, Mailing Lists & Membership**

WiRE is covered by the Harper Adams University data protection policy therefore we are unable to divulge member's contact details without their permission. We can provide Network Leaders with a list of members in their area and their membership status on request. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to check if someone has joined – or check on the Rural Marketplace.

## **8. Regulations & Finance**

### **Code of conduct**

This is a voluntary code of conduct and it is enforced by the group themselves. WiRE will help in awkward situations. However, the Network Leader will have the final say.

- Members must respect other people's views and ideas
- Members must be tolerant and not be judgemental
- Must be aware of others feelings and not impose their views on others
- All members are responsible for their own actions
- All members are responsible for making their own business decisions
- Any information given in confidence is at members own risk

### **Disclaimer**

- Each Local WiRE Network group is responsible for its own activities, operations and liabilities and should not discriminate on any grounds against any other member of the group or public.
- Under no circumstances shall WiRE/HAU be liable to the group, for:
  - Any costs or expenses
  - Any loss of business, contracts or goodwill
  - Any loss of or damage persons or to personal items occurring at Local WiRE meetings
- WiRE/HAU do not offer or give any legal advice to any member of WiRE, neither do they make representations or warranties about accuracy, completeness or suitability for any purpose of the information that is provided. All liability howsoever arising for any such inaccuracies or errors, is expressly excluded to the fullest extent permitted by law.

## **Insurance**

WiRE Network Leader volunteers are fully covered under Harper Adams University insurance. This includes employer's liability insurance. This coverage is only in their capacity as volunteers and would not, for example, extend into the volunteer's business (whether that be self-employment or a business owned by that person).

WiRE members are not covered by the college insurance - unless acting as volunteers in some capacity (such as being a Network Leader). They are covered by our public liability insurance as members of the public.

## **Network Constitution**

To ensure that each network is operating in a uniform manner WiRE has introduced a network constitution for you to adopt if you wish.

Each existing and new Network Leader will be required to sign the network constitution. The full constitution can be found in the *Appendix*.

## **WiRE network accounts**

The WiRE networks, like WiRE, operate as non-profit making organisations. However there may be situations where a network receives funds which could be regarded as being taxable.

The Network Leader is responsible for the safe keeping of any Network Funds. These guidelines have been developed to support this and to ensure that the Network Leaders do not fall foul of any tax laws but equally do not have a huge administrative burden of keeping detailed accounts. Guidelines are available in the *Appendix*

# **Network Leader Guide**

## **APPENDIX**

- Press Release
- Constitution
- Accounts
- Attendance List

# Press Release

## MEDIA RELEASE

24 February 2015

### BUSINESS NETWORK FOR WOMEN

Rural and small Business has helped to prompt the formation of a new networking group for new and experienced female entrepreneurs in XXXXXXXX.

The Women in Rural Enterprise (WiRE) group is due to hold its first meeting

On: XXXX

At: XXXXX

It aims to help women with small businesses with setting up, running and marketing their businesses.

Organiser XXXX said the need to offer support to women in businesses had been recognised by WiRE nearly ten years ago, and WiRE has grown into a national organisation supporting rural business women across the UK.

Female entrepreneurs come up against a number of barriers including lack of confidence, isolation and lack of business support. WiRE aims to help women develop and grow their businesses and deliver a range of services for them; including the opportunity to network and do business with other rural women in business.

XXX who runs her own business XXXX says, "The meeting will provide an opportunity for women in business in XXX to meet in an informal and pleasant setting to discuss the issues which affect them and draw upon the experiences of others."

For further details, call XXX on XXXXX or email XXXX

For more information on WiRE, please contact us on 01952 815338 or email: info@wireuk.org or visit the website www.wireuk.org

**ENDS**

**Notes to the editor:**

WiRE is a national organisation, which helps women in rural areas either to start up or expand a business. Annual membership is just £50 and includes: networking for women in business, regularly-updated website with member notice board, free listing on the rural marketplace and business resources, access to help on legal issues, PR and media opportunities.

[www.wireuk.org](http://www.wireuk.org)



# Constitution

WiRE \_\_\_\_\_ Network

Adopted on the.....day of.....2015

## 1. NAME

The name of the association shall be 'WiRE \_\_\_\_\_ Network' hereinafter referred to as 'The Network'.

## 2. AREA OF BENEFIT

The Network is run for the benefit of its members, WiRE members being current fully paid up members of Women in Rural Enterprise or for the wider public good of potential WiRE members.

## 3. OBJECTS

The objects of The Network shall be:

- To provide a network of WiRE members or potential members
- To offer a friendly supportive environment for rural business women
- To enable women to meet up and overcome the isolation of working on their own
- To provide an environment where participants can meet like-minded women and improve their confidence
- To enable women to share and gain information and experience
- To help and promote each other's businesses
- To provide business opportunities
- To contribute to the rural economy by using local services where possible
- To build on existing provision in a complementary way

## 4. POWERS

The Network shall have the following powers:

- To arrange and provide for, or participate in arranging and providing for, the holding of network meetings, practical workshops and events, and to publish such activities on the WiRE website
- To co-operate and consult with other organisations to further the objects of The Network and to exchange information and advice

- To produce or assist in producing papers, pamphlets, newsletters, documents and tapes (whether audio or visual) which further the objects of The Network
- To recruit new members to The Network

**5. MEMBERSHIP**

- Membership of The Network shall be open to anyone without distinction of race, colour, culture, sexuality, disability or of political, religious or other opinions, interested in furthering the objects
- The Network shall be run and operated by the Network Leader

**6. FINANCE**

- All monies raised for and on behalf of The Network shall be applied to further its objects and for no other purpose
- The Network Leader is responsible for the safe keeping of the Network Funds
- The financial year will run from 1 April (or the date of the Network’s formation) to 31 March each year
- The Network Leader will be responsible for the maintenance of the network accounts and shall record all items of income and expenditure
- The Network Leader will adhere to the Network Accounts Guidelines
- The Network Leader shall be responsible for informing HMRC of any taxable funds received by the Network and for the completion of any necessary Corporation Tax or other forms
- The Network Leader shall present accounts to The Network as required

**7. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

Amendments may be made to the constitution by WiRE and will be communicated to the Network Leader and the Network giving 14 days’ notice of the changes.

**8. DISSOLUTION**

The Network may be wound up by agreement of WiRE and on presentation of the final accounts for the Network.

The person whose signature/s appear below on the date mentioned above adopted this constitution

**Signed**.....

**Network Leader/s**

# Network Finance Guide

## Keep It Simple!

It is very unlikely that the networks will receive taxable funds and in the majority, if not all cases, WiRE does not envisage that the network accounts will be an onerous task.

**WiRE also recommends that the network does NOT open a bank or building society account, for reasons that are explained later in these guidelines.**

## Why keep Accounts?

Network accounts need to be maintained to show the income received and the expenses that a network incurs. Whilst the network is being operated for the benefit of its members or for a wider public good and would not normally fall under any tax legislation, there are some instances where funds received may be taxable.

Therefore it is essential to keep records of all funds received and monies spent.

## What are Taxable Funds?

The network will have to pay corporation tax on their **taxable** income and chargeable gains, which are called 'profits'.

Usually it is Limited Companies that pay corporation tax but there are special rules that apply to 'unincorporated associations' and the networks fall within these rules.

However it is very unlikely that the networks will receive taxable funds and in the majority, if not all cases, WiRE does not envisage that a network will have to register with HMRC.

WiRE recommends that you read these guidelines. Then if you feel that your network does receive taxable funds you should contact WiRE head office to clarify the situation, following which you may need to contact an accountant.

## What is Meant by Income and Chargeable Gains?

Taxable income is defined as:

- Interest on bank and building society accounts or similar
- trading activities
- property lettings

General subscriptions or contributions made by individual members to the network funds are **not** treated as taxable income.

For example a contribution made to cover the cost of refreshments at a meeting.

However these should still be recorded in the accounts.

All interest received on bank or building society account is taxable and must be reported to HMRC.

Building society interest is normally paid after tax has been taken off but you can have the interest paid gross by completing a declaration (which can be obtained from the building society) confirming that the network is a company for tax purposes. Whether tax is taken off or not, all building society interest is chargeable to corporation tax and must be reported to HMRC.

In both cases receiving interest would mean that the network would have to register with HMRC and complete various Corporation Tax forms and returns.

It is for this reason that we recommend that a bank or building society account is NOT opened unless there is a significant level of club funds in which cases you should contact WiRE for further advice.

A chargeable gain is unlikely to apply to the Network but the definition is included here for completeness. A gain arises when:

- an asset is sold for a profit
- a capital sum is received from the ownership of an asset

### **What Expenses Can The Network Claim?**

Any day-to-day running expenses of the network would usually be met from the funds collected from the network members (subscriptions or contributions).

Such expenses could be a hire of a venue, refreshments, speaker, food, leaflets etc. These would be outside of the scope of any taxable accounts but should still be recorded in the accounts.

If a surplus of funds is available following a meeting or funds contributions, WiRE recommends that the surplus is spent on the running expenses of the network as soon as possible e.g. speakers, leaflets etc. As the network is a non profit making organisation it should not be normal practice to operate with a large surplus of funds.

In the unlikely event that the network incurs expenses from trading or property then these would need to be included as expenses deductible from the taxable income of the network. In this case it is recommended that you seek advice from an accountant to prepare detailed accounts.

### **What Accounts Should I keep?**

It is recommended that all networks keep accounts, regardless of whether or not the funds are taxable.

A template for the accounts is provided in an excel format. This can be downloaded from the network global resources and is included here in Appendix Two.

From time to time WiRE may request that the Network Accounts be submitted to them for review.

The template is formatted for the network to record its' income and expenses for each month of the accounting year, which runs from 1 April to 31 March.

### **Tips for accounts completion:**

- Unless there is a large surplus of funds, avoid opening a bank or building society account as interest received will be taxable
- save a sheet for each year for the network
- Change the 'Other' Headings to fit the income or expense headings for the network  
If no income or expenses have been incurred for the month, enter a nil total

## **FAQs**

### **Our network intends to raise some money for charity. Will this be taxable?**

*As a concession HMRC will not tax some small scale events arranged to raise funds for charity. General guidance on this can be obtained from HMRC web site:*

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/charities/fund-raising-events.htm>

### **I don't charge for the network meeting or collect any funds from participants. Why do I need to keep accounts?**

*If you have no income or expenses then your accounts for the year will be nil.*



