

History of mandates and campaigns

- Madam President, Madam Chairman, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.
- A new era for the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds began in 1953 when the National Council passed 2 motions
- The 1st was: The time has now come when the NUTG, which represents a large body of thinking women in Great Britain should, while preserving intact its non-sectarian and non-political character and the idea of its common meeting ground, express its view on National Affairs, especially on matters concerning women and children, provided that these views do not conflict with the policy laid down by the National Council Meeting
- And the 2nd: That the executive committee of the NUTG be given mandatory power to approach Government Departments and other public bodies on matters that have been the subject of resolutions passed at National Council
- The following year the mandate was that
The movement deplures the amount of litter deposited on roads and open spaces in Great Britain and urges that the NUTG shall support the endeavour to awaken the public conscience on this matter
- Over 50 years on, this and many of the other TG mandates and campaigns are still topics in the spotlight. For example, Keep Britain Tidy has encouraged people to become Litter Heroes and in March nearly ½ million people join in organised litter clear ups.
- In the 2007 series Blue Planet 2, David Attenborough had called for reduction to the amount of single use plastic and better rates of recycling. The 5p plastic carrier bag tax, eco-friendly drinking straws and cafes offering reduced prices for drinks served in customer's own cups have begun to address this.
- Recycling is still as important as in 1988 when a mandate was passed which urged the government to provide a co-ordinating role in the promotion and development of recycling waste. Recycling is collected by councils across the UK with some councils collect lots of different types of plastic waste but two collect none at all.

- Some supermarkets are encouraging customers to bring their own containers for meat and fish purchases, and like 'Unwrapped' in Sheffield sell dry goods which go into customer's own containers. And who can forget the 'wonky veg' we are encouraged to take home in cloth bags.
- Selling food in this way can cause concerns about food hygiene. The 1955 mandate considered the arrangement for keeping unpackaged food clean and protected from contamination. The Food Standards Agency gives ratings for food shops, restaurants and take-aways which show the standards of food hygiene. This is published and there is now a quick way to view this with app to download, featuring live information from the FSA for the whole of the UK.
- Food was not the only hygiene issue on the high street of concern to members. In 1956 the Ministry of Health was asked to ensure cleanliness, adequacy and decency in public toilets and for it to become compulsory that local authorities provide facilities in them for free handwashing.
- In 2018, Network Rail charges for using their toilets at stations varied from 30p to 40p. They announced that the charges will be ditched "at some point in 2019".
- But charges were not the only issues with public toilets. Just finding one has become increasingly difficult.
- In 2011, TG conducted a survey regarding the provision and quality of public toilets, including those with changing facilities and provision for disabled people. In 2018 the BBC reported that at least 673 public toilets across the UK had stopped being maintained by major councils since 2010. Birmingham Live reported that it is not a legal requirement to provide public lavatories and so when councils aren't feeling flush, toilet blocks are often targeted first when it comes to cuts.
- Other things are vanishing from the high street. Last November the Financial Times reported that the UK had lost two-thirds of its bank branches in the last 30 years, resulting in communities losing access to mainstream financial services. TG campaigned vigorously to save cheques and banks have been looking at alternative ways to deposit them without visiting a building. Some banks already enable cheques to be deposited by taking a photo of them with a smart phone.

- With the increase in internet service and shopping, the Guardian predicted that over 23,000 shops would go in 2019 and that barber's shops and bookies would fill the gaps on high streets as independent shops shut.
- In 2015 TG raised concerns about the advertising of gambling, particularly where it enticed children into gambling possibly before they were old enough to understand what they were getting in to.
- From June 2018 all gambling advertising on British television had to show a responsible gambling message for the duration of the advert and from 2019 there will be a ban on all TV betting adverts during pre-watershed live sport, starting five minutes before the event begins, and ending five minutes after it finishes.
- But it wasn't just high street betting shops causing concern. Last August the Telegraph's Woman's lifestyle page headlined how a high street manicure or a hair cut in a traditional Turkish barber shops could be funding modern day slavery, where victims were put to work in the grooming industry.
- In 2003 TG urged the government to take more action to tackle the problem of Human Traffickers and in 2016 applauded the passing of the Modern-Day Slavery Act.
- Awareness about the problem has been growing and Anti-Slavery Day, on 18th October, provides an opportunity to encourage government, local authorities, companies, charities and individuals to do what they can to address the problem.
- 'Signpost', a website supporting those affected by crime in Bedfordshire, explains that there is no 'typical' victim of modern slavery. Victims can be men, women and children of all ages, ethnicities, nationalities and backgrounds. They are forced into a situation through the use of deception, coercion and the threat of violence.
- Violence against women and girls can take many other forms. A 1975 mandate called for the provision of 'Refuge hostels' to provide emergency accommodation for women and children who had left their homes due to physical assaults by their husbands.
- In January this year the government's draft domestic abuse bill was published, which included measures such as banning perpetrators being able to cross-

examine victims in court and the appointment of a domestic abuse commissioner.

- In February a new campaign was launched to help hairdressers and beauticians spot the signs of domestic abuse. Norfolk County Council ran a conference for 250 of them, aiming to give them the tools and confidence to know what to do if they suspect a client is in trouble.
- TG has also had ongoing concerns about rape and there have been three mandates on this in 1975, 1979 and 1987.
- The 1992 'No means no' slogan began a campaign aimed at raising awareness and providing education around the nature of sexual consent.
- In recent years it has become more acceptable to for people to speak out about sexual abuse and there have been some high-profile cases in the news.
- In April CNN reported about the new standardized forms being rolled out by police in England and Wales asking people alleging a variety of crimes, including rape and sexual assault, for permission to access their messages, emails, photographs and social media accounts, in order to improve the chances of a successful prosecution.
- This came under fire from women's rights groups and senior police figures for "treating rape victims like suspects"
- The Crown Prosecution Service published further information about it last month, including explaining that mobile telephones or other digital devices should not be examined as a matter of course and that they should only be examined in investigations where data on the device could form a reasonable line of enquiry.
- The Crown Prosecution Service was successful in another area of violence in February this year when the mother of a three-year-old girl became the first person to be found guilty of female genital mutilation in the UK
- FGM was first outlawed in the UK in 1985 and in 2014 a mandate urged the government to enforce and extend the existing legislation regarding FGM

- In February it was announced that all secondary school children in England will be taught about the dangers of female genital mutilation by 2020, in a bid to eradicate the abusive practice in the UK. and just last week it was announced that campaigners Nimco Ali and Leyla Hussein who are seeking to end the practice are to receive OBEs in the Queen's birthday honours
- FGM causes both short and long-term health problems and different aspects of healthcare have been addressed by mandates.
- A mandate was passed in 1961 urging the provision of larger funds for cancer research, in 1964 the provision of comprehensive facilities for routine smear tests and their interpretation, in 1992 funds to research into diagnostic tests for breast cancer in pre- menopausal women and last year to ensure that every education facility that contains asbestos must produce an annual report for staff, pupils and their families. explain how asbestos can affect health, as asbestos can cause mesothelioma
- The Institute of Cancer Research announced in May that they were changing the entire way they thought about cancer to focus on anticipating the way cancer cells will evolve to prevent them from becoming resistant to drugs.
- £75m was being invested to develop the new drugs which could make cancer a "manageable" disease in the long term and "more often curable"
- Ill health often means that the support of an unpaid carer is needed. Frailty, disability, a mental health problem or addiction can also result in a carer being needed
- In 1990 TG called for statutory financial and practical support to be provided by local authorities and in 2006 TG committed to educating members and the general public of the vital role unpaid carers take and ensuring that carers were aware of financial support available
- Carers UK reports that there are around seven million carers in the UK, who provide care to the value of the £132bn a year
- We will be re-visiting this in the Townswomen magazine, starting in the next issue so please keep an eye out for that
- TG have not shied away from discussing other difficult subjects

- Organ donation was the subject of mandates in 1974, 1999 and 2016, all on aspects of consent.
- The NHS Blood and Transplant website shows up to date statistics about organ donation. In May 6072 people were waiting for a transplant in the UK and 437 had received a transplant since April
- In April a year-long campaign was started by NHS Blood and Transplant to increase awareness and understanding of the new presumed consent organ donation law which comes into place in the spring of next year, across England.
- The contentious topic of voluntary euthanasia was debated in 1997 and assisted dying in 2013
- We try to remain sensitive towards those members who do not personally support a mandate which is carried by a majority vote but must also consider those members who did vote for the mandate to be passed. These are topics which are not going to go away
- Looking forwards, what will be the subject of mandates in the next decade?
- Perhaps aspects of discrimination and equality will be revisited. We have come a long way since the mandates in 1968 and 1993 in terms of achieving gender, disability and racial equality
- You can help to decide on future mandates by completing section 5 of the Voice for Change section of the '29 to '19 challenge', which asks you to send a proposal for a TG mandate
- I hope that we are inundated with your letters and e-mails and see future lively debates at National AGMs.