

Step up, Lead the Way

February had a very busy start to it, with meetings in Stockport to discuss the SIGBI website, Cardiff with the Programme Director and Conference Chairman to discuss the content of the Cardiff Conference, and Newport to meet with the Director of Finance to discuss SIGBI finance.



And that was all before the first weekend when I had the pleasure of attending SI Solihull's Schools Speaking Competition. This was a lovely event and it is always inspiring to see young people talk about diverse subjects and be so confident and well prepared in their delivery. Good preparation always ensures a good output so most of the second week of February was spent ensuring we were prepared for the Board Meeting in Stockport. An intense weekend of reports and discussions with much time spent on charitable status, good governance, strategic planning and our finances. A long weekend with long days, but as we only meet three times outside of

Conference week it is important to make the most of our time together. It snowed on the Sunday morning as well so it was good to know that everyone got home safely.

Early the next week, I was involved in the interviews for the new Soroptimist International (SI) Director of Advocacy. The current incumbent, Pat Black, finishes at the SI Board in Rotterdam in July. We had 6 candidates, and three were shortlisted for interview. The interviews were conducted via Skype – three hours later a decision was made.



Later that week, I attended the Wales Council for Voluntary Action Awards where my own Region – Wales South was shortlisted in the most admired category. Sadly, we did not win, but got great publicity as a runner up. Well done Wales South!

The month has finished with a flurry too. Last week, I was in London to visit design students at Ravensbourne College who have worked on a research project for us to identify how SIGBI could attract young members in the 18 to 25-year age group. A tutor at the college approached us, and of course she is a Soroptimist. It was well worth the trip – a great presentation and very thought provoking with much for us to think about if we want to take it further.



In amongst all of this, I have also been gearing up for my attendance at the Commission on Status of Women in New York. New passport obtained and ESTA renewed so hopefully they will let me in! I am really looking forward to the experience and to join with the delegation of approximately 80 Soroptimists from across the World in showcasing what we do and exchanging ideas with like-minded women. Please watch out for the daily blogs on the SIGBI website.



Tomorrow is the 1st March and St David's Day so it is very fitting that I am off to see SI Aberdare in the welsh valleys who hold an annual Daffodil Festival to mark the day and raise funds for local charities. Then, thoughts turn to **International Women's Day**. This year's theme is "**Be Bold for Change**". Recent events across the world tell us that there is still so much for us to do in bringing about gender equality and closing the gender gap, which the World Economic Forum recently predicted would not happen entirely until 2186. Far too long to wait!

The International Women's Day website (<https://www.internationalwomensday.com/>) states that "each one of us can be a leader within our own spheres of influence by taking bold pragmatic action to accelerate gender parity. Through purposeful collaboration, we can help women advance and unleash the limitless potential offered to economies the world over. We have urgent work to do."

These words instantly made me think of my theme for the year – **Step Up, Lead the Way** – and I hope that it has inspired you and your Club to mark this annual day of importance for women across the World.