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 London Chilterns Region

**Lockdown Newsletter – 6th May 2020**

Goodness what a difference a year makes! This time last year I was getting excited about going to China on holiday and my only worry, having jumped through many Chinese Hoops to get my Visa, was what to pack for 16 days away! How times can change for all of us within the blink of an eye.

Stay safe and well and in the not too distant future we will all be able to meet up again not just on Zoom! And whilst we are talking about Zoom, I have also sent you advice that has been issued by Bedfordshire Police to help you prevent “ Zoom Bombing"

Good Wishes

Rita Beaumont

**Message from President Denise**

Dear Members

So, Lockdown continues (though hopefully we will get some positive news soon) and I am sure we are all finding innovative ways of keeping ourselves busy and helping others too......we probably all know more about technology than we could ever have imagined!! Most importantly I hope that you and all of yours are safe and well

I know that Clubs around the Region are finding ways to 'meet' and for members to support each other - vital for those that are on their own, but also vital to ensure that Clubs continue to exist once this period of uncertainty and worry eases. I do look forward to hearing about all that Clubs and Members have been up to, and to get these individual efforts publicised in  the SIGBI News Briefings under the heading 'Soroptimists in Lockdown'

In consultation with the Regional Executive, we have recently decided that the **Regional Meeting due to be hosted by SI Milton Keynes in June should be cancelled.** I cannot see that meetings of between 40 and 80 people are going to be allowed as soon as June, and even if they were, I doubt that many would feel comfortable in attending. This was  a heart-rending decision, the Milton Keynes team had already put in a lot of work towards the meeting, but hopefully they will get a chance to entertain us in the new Regional year. I have heard from SIGBI President Isobel that a decision about the Belfast Conference will be made in June.

Until Lockdown changes, I cannot do more than wish you all the very best and remind you that the Region is here to support Clubs and Members in whatever way we can, just ask.

Stay Safe

Denise

**Regional Levy 2020/21: Sylvia Watson, Regional Treasurer**

As the Region and Clubs have cancelled their meetings due to the current lockdown the Executive has determined that the Regional Levy should be held at the current rate of £9 per member, made up as follows:

* Regional Fees                                 £5.50
* UKPAC Levy                                   £3.50

We would be grateful if, where possible, Clubs would pay the Levy in the usual way by the end of May 2020.  We understand that in some cases this will not be possible and are extending the deadline for payment to 31 August 2020.

Please note that SIGBI have extended the deadline for payment of fees to 31 August 2020 and have requested that Clubs pay SIGBI by internet banking rather than cheque where possible.  Details of fees can be found in the Members section of the SIGBI website.

We have confirmed with the Federation Office that they will accept payments on account from Clubs that cannot confirm their membership numbers by the end of May 2020 (with the balance to be settled by the end of August). The Executive encourages clubs to do this to minimise the disruption to SIGBI’s cash flow in this difficult period.

Email: sylviaiwatson@btinternet.com

**Membership: Helen Byrne, Regional Membership Officer**

**Keeping Safe and Keeping in Touch**

In these challenging times Membership is all about Friendship and Support, keeping I touch in whatever ways we can and providing encouragement and support for members.

My club has created small Buddy Groups of members who keep in touch and support each other, often via WhatsApp. Early on Executive also appointed a Welfare Officer who identified members in particular need – those working on the frontline, vulnerable and shielding members and those living alone. She is contacting them direct, calling them to provide a friendly voice and make sure they are keeping safe and cheerful. Like many other clubs we have taken our first tentative steps into online meet ups- in our case just coffee chats and Executive Meetings. Some clubs have held full club meetings or their AGM’s via Zoom.

President Denise has already asked you to send her examples of how you are managing to keep up with Programme Action and support your communities during the pandemic. We would also love to hear about ways you are supporting your members or promoting your clubs to potential new ones.

**Take a look at this simple wonderful promotional video – made using a free easy to use video maker- why not have a go yourselves?**

We are all looking for things to brighten our day so I thought I'd share this fabulous video.

<https://biteable.com/watch/si-mk-presentation-evening-2343609?fbclid=lwAR1tvmyJsxKSpBk0aEYPlM0ghmSZius11qn7US7sPue5BJfktDLBukaEl7M>

The video was created by SI Milton Keynes as a promotional tool using the free video maker **Bite able**. Biteable ([www.biteable.com](http://www.biteable.com)) is free and provides lots of templates which can be adapted for your needs.

**I am sure you will agree – this version really hits the spot in a simple and enticing way – well done SI Milton Keynes!**

Perhaps you might to think about doing one for your club?

We will ask SI Milton Keynes to share hints on how they made it at a future Regional Meeting or as part of these Regional news items

Helen

Email: helenbsorop@yahoo.co.uk

*I am happy to help with any membership queries and would love to hear if you have any good membership ideas and practice to share.*

**Communications: Jane Slatter: Regional Communication Officer**

* **Welcome to our new website and do you follow us on Social Media?**

The new look SIGBI SILC Website is almost up to date now (just the news item to be added from the IWD event in Maidenhead in March). Please take a look [**www.sigbi.org/london-chilterns/**](https://sigbi.org/london-chilterns/) - please send any feedback, articles to add, amendments to Jane Slatter your Regional Communications Officer at pinkyslatter@hotmail.com

Also remember that if you use Facebook and Twitter then please make sure you follow the Region on  <https://www.facebook.com/silondonchilterns/> and @SoroptimistLC on Twitter. The Links are on the Website as well

* **Soroptimists are Community Connectors**

With lots of Members and Clubs adopting new technology during the lockdown - according to an article in the Guardian   *“'Community connecters' are crucial to spreading the knowledge.* *They’ll be the sort of person that can use technology or find out how to, and then have the ability or passion to share the experience,” -* that sounds like us!

* **Programme Action - Domestic Abuse Bill and Programme Focus Reports**

Thanks so much to all of the Clubs that emailed the letter to their MPs requesting amendments to the Domestic Abuse Bill that had its second reading in Parliament on 28 April. The good news is that the Bill passed its Second Reading but because of the restrictions, no amendments were possible. If you have received a reply from your MP please ask that they write to Victoria Atkins, the minister responsible for the Bill, to ask her what further action the government are proposing to take on the issues that we raised (thanks to Irene Cockcroft from SI Greater London for the update which came from her very supportive MP for Richmond Park Sarah Olney ) .

Keep safe and well, in friendship **Jane Slatter** pinkyslatter@hotmail.com 07834345796

**Programme Action: Pam Robertson, Programme Action Officer**

I would like to reiterate Jane's comments above; it is good to hear about so many members from across the region writing to their MP in support of the Domestic Abuse Bill and of course do not forget to fill in a Report Form – together with any other Programme Action Work undertaken either as a club or as an individual (the new forms now allow for this). Just log in to the Members Area of the SIGBI website on <https://sigbi.org/members/> and scroll down to Manage Membership and Programme Databases. Click on Add Programme Report.

If you have been working to support others during the lockdown, please report this too. Start the title of your project with **Covid-19**

There are some new petitions on the website. Do sign – then fill in a Report Form!

Is a member of your club writing her Big Story for Chora Chori for our Federation Project ‘Empowering Girls in Nepal’?

Anne-Marie Parker of SI Hertford has written hers and would welcome sponsorship if you are not already committed to your own club. Donations are to be made online from 10.00am 25th May to 5.00pm 31May 2020 when all sponsorship raised will double. However, if you do not wish to donate on line, but would like to support Ann-Marie, please get in touch with:

Pam on 01920 822631 or email: pamelarobertson807@btinternet.com

Thank you

Pam

**Empowering Girls in Nepal: Pauline Panter, Regional Ambassador**

Hello Ladies.

I hope that you are all safe, staying at home and well?

I have been asked to ask all clubs in the Region if anyone has contributed a Story for The Big Story in support of the Empowering Girls in Nepal project or undertaken any fundraising activities at all for the project.

On discussion with the other Ambassadors it is clear that the Social Distancing in place at the moment has had a very negative effect on all fundraising for projects outside of the UK, quite understandably. With many club members assisting local health and social care organisations and isolated neighbours etc. in various ways, such as assisting in supply of PPE, face masks and laundry bags for hospital staff.

Can you please let me know if your club is or has undertaken any fundraising for Empowering Girls in Nepal during this difficult time. If so what funds have you raised? Do you have any fundraising events planned?

I hope you don't mind me asking as I realise that it's a difficult ask at this challenging time.

Take care all and I look forward to seeing and catching up with you once we are let out again.

Stay safe and best wishes.

Pauline : pauline.panter@hotmail.co.uk

**SIGBI Benevolent Fund ~ Reminder: Rita Beaumont, Regional Trustee**

We are living in unknown times as we comply with the Government response to the Coronavirus pandemic. It is a challenging time for us all but for some members it will be exceptionally difficult. The Benevolent Fund is a confidential fund available to ease financial difficulties for those eligible to apply.

The fund can give a quarterly payment to help cover outgoings or a one-off payment to help cover an unexpected item. Discretionary help may be considered for such items as utility bills, telephone bills, essential living expenses or house maintenance

**Who is Eligible to Apply?**

Any Soroptimist who has been a member for 3 years or more living in the UK, including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, and the Republic of Ireland. The support is given subject to simple confidential financial checks

**How to Apply**

If member would like to apply, contact me and I will talk through the application process

**Rita Beaumont**: Regional Trustee

Email:  r.beaumont3@ntlworld.com

Phone: 01234 401475 Mobile: 07764511006