Women’s Suffrage in the Spotlight

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This story still remains to be researched and told. Building on short course organised by the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) in 2010, the WEA is launching a new project – Breaking the Mould – which will enable participants to continue to research and discover activities in the Inverness and Easter Ross area.

"The issue of people determining their future by voting is of obvious relevance in this year of the referendum," said Sue Mitchell, Education Development Manager, of the WEA: "Braving public opinion and much resistance, people in the Highlands fought hard to gain women’s right to vote and this new project, made possible by the Heritage Lottery Fund will uncover the extraordinary contributions of ordinary people."

Course tutor, Susan Kruse, agrees: "When we first started looking at suffrage in the Highlands, I was amazed that there was no book or article to consult. In fact some people told us that there had been no interest at all. But by looking at newspapers and journals we found the opposite to be true. For example, in October 1913, over 500 people attended a rally in Dingwall alone. But most of these people lobbied for change by law rather than militant protest, so their story has been forgotten.

Last time we were only able to scratch the surface. This time we hope to look at all newspapers and suffrage journals- and collect memories and photographs. We would welcome any information or photos of people who were active in the suffrage-or anti-suffrage- movement.”

Colin McLean, Head of HLF Scotland, said: “This is a very interesting project so we are delighted to give it our support. This project will preserve this unique heritage by bringing stories to life, letting everyone get involved and share their past.”

There will be two groups investigating women’s suffrage, one in Inverness and one in Dingwall. Each will start with an introductory talk: at Inverness Library on 23rd April 12.30 to 1.30 and at the Highland family Heritage Festival at Dingwall Academy on 26 April 12.30-1.30. Both events are free. A display about Women’s Suffrage will also be at the Highland Family Heritage festival from 10am-4pm.

Courses will then start the following week: at Inverness library on Wednesdays 10.30-12.30 for six weeks beginning 30 April and at Dingwall Academy on Fridays 10.30 - 12.30 for six weeks beginning 2 May. There will also be opportunities to do research at Highland Archives during this period, tracing some of the people involved. Schools will also be invited to become involved.

If you would like further information or to book on courses, please contact the WEA office on 01463 710755 or s.mitchell@weascotland.org.uk.

Notes to editors

About the WEA

Founded in 1903 the Workers’ Educational Association is a national, voluntary sector provider of adult education in workplaces and communities across Scotland. The Workers' Educational Association exists primarily to provide adults with access to the experience of organised learning which develops intellectual understanding, confidence and social or

collective responsibility. It gives priority in the allocation of resources to encouraging those adults who have experienced barriers to learning as a result of economic circumstances, social isolation, limited confidence, low self esteem or lack of educational opportunity.

About Breaking the Mould Project

This WEA adult learning and heritage project will research and celebrate 100 years of women's history and experiences in Scotland .It will seek to uncover and add to recorded history, information about influential and inspiring women who were able to "break the mould" and affect social, economic and political change in their communities, nationally and internationally. The project is based in Highlands, Fife and Edinburgh and participants will have the opportunity to get involved in creative and interactive ways in their own area.