

## Derby to mark International Women’s Day with virtual festival

Local volunteers are embracing the 2021 theme #ChooseToChallenge as the city joins worldwide celebrations this weekend, continuing a Derby & Derbyshire tradition going back over a hundred years.

[The popular annual festival is moving mostly online this year](#) due to social distancing rules but organisers say they will be creating the usual mix of inspiring workshops, highlighting women’s rights issues, empowering creative expressions, courageous conversations and uplifting celebrations.

Vanessa Boon, Chair of [International Women’s Day Derby](#) Committee and Derbyshire Inspirational Woman of the Year Award Winner, said “in these trying times events that foster togetherness are more important than ever. Though we’ll miss sharing stories, food, and music in the same physical space, we hope the virtual sessions will give people a much-needed boost to wellbeing, confidence and a sense of connection to the community again”.

There will be a [programme of online sessions](#) from Friday 5<sup>th</sup> – Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March spanning a Feminist Friday Virtual Party, a Panel on Derby’s HERstory, Rebel Women’s Sing-Along, Healthy Relationships with Relate Derby, Hidden Figures - Black Women Matter, Mindfulness, Laughter Yoga, Courageous Conversations, Bollywood Dance-Along with Surtal Arts and a virtual Self-Care Café.

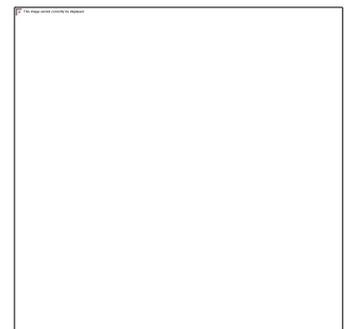
Local entrepreneur Kelly Woodward, of [KL Online Shopping Events](#), has volunteered her expertise, saying “every year I take my daughter to town to celebrate International Women’s Day. Sometimes we meet friends there and have a fabulous time creating and crafting. We love watching the performers and listening to music as we explore the stalls so I am excited to support the team to take that experience online with some brilliant women exhibiting their crafts and gifts on the virtual trail”. The virtual trails can be followed on Facebook on Sunday and Monday via

[www.facebook.com/WomensDayDerby](http://www.facebook.com/WomensDayDerby) discovering local women’s crafts and enterprise, causes, support groups and public services, all of whom will be sharing online content, with video messages from female fire fighters, kick boxers, a rock band, charity founders and women making feminist art.

Rebecca Muir, founder of [Bexstar Entertainment Productions](#), joined the volunteer team to support the cause and to gain experience. “I’ve learned so much from being involved in the event planning and learning more about the history behind it, like discovering Mary Wollstonecraft who is the inspiration for a dance piece being performed by Matilda Rowlands” said

Rebecca, “I am looking forward to being an MC and presenting a showcase of local female artists at the Feminist Friday Virtual Party”.

The virtual party will launch the festival weekend featuring live performances by Kirby, from South Derbyshire, who was picked by Olly Murs on The Voice UK in 2018, powerful poetry from Aoife O-Connor leading a ‘She Speaks UK’ platform of poets and spoken word artists, singer and guitar player Sarah Hinds, and Donna Briscoe-Greene, local landlady at The Maypole Bar & Theatre, will sing songs to honour iconic black women in music and comedian Ishi Khan will bring the laughter.



*Kirby, who impressed the judges on The Voice UK, will perform live online*



*Comedian Ishi Khan will lift spirits with stand-up comedy and laughter yoga*

Reflecting on the wellbeing benefits of crafts and green spaces during the lockdowns, there will also be a craftivism exhibition for people to enjoy whilst taking a socially distanced stroll around Derby Arboretum from Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> March and throughout the rest of March which is Women's History Month. More than 60 women and girls, including a group of Brownies, have taken part in

preparations by creating craftivism from home during lockdown. Stitched mini banners with affirmations have been made with the

help of [Spiral Arts](#), back by Central England Cooperative, sending out activity packs and leading virtual sessions. Banners from women's rights marches and feminist artworks have also been loaned by local women to include in the exhibition.

Amanpreet Kaur who has volunteered with the team this year, said "International Women's Day is an important opportunity to raise awareness of issues arising in our society such as domestic violence". Amanpreet has created a collection of poetry from

survivors of abuse and male allies, along with social media content to educate the public and highlight [sources of support](#).

"Since last year's festival we have all experienced huge changes in our lives through the pandemic and the impact upon women has [exacerbated gender inequalities](#)" Vanessa Boon, who will be hosting a virtual [Courageous Conversations Café](#) explains "many women have been juggling care-giving, home-schooling and home-working. Women have been especially affected by financial insecurity and being less likely than men to have savings, feeling the effects of job cuts, reduced income, austerity and the need for foodbanks to feed families".

"Many women are key workers in overstretched and underpaid areas like nursing, teaching and social care, and as volunteers helping the community, and are at risk of burnout. Meanwhile, as reported recently by the cross-party group of MPs on the [Women and Equalities Committee](#), the government's economic recovery plans are heavily skewed towards male-dominated and often environmentally unsound sectors like construction instead of the care sector and green innovation which would create more jobs with benefits to people and planet". Vanessa highlights factors that risk undoing decades of progress on gender equality with "a combination of lockdown and funding cuts to women's charities and refuges for the last decade leading to an increase in domestic abuse with limited resources and housing options to help survivors to safety".

"Globally we have also seen women's rights rolled back including reproductive rights and in the face of danger women have bravely risen up to challenge misogynist policies and far-right regimes. We want to see all genders recognising inequalities not as a women's issue but as a societal issue that we all need to work on to make progress. A fairer society liberated from gender-based violence,



*Donna Briscoe-Greene will perform live, online*



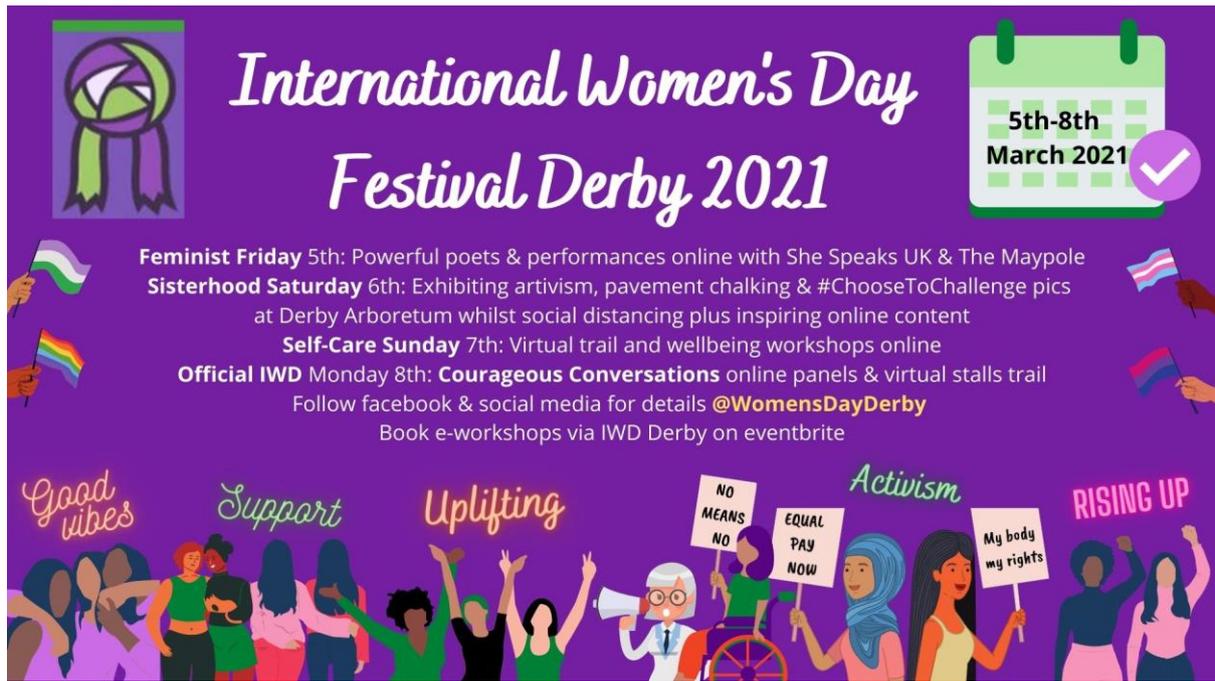
*Craftivism will be exhibited at Derby Arboretum*



*Vanessa Boon speaking on Derby Sound Community Radio*

discrimination and limiting stereotypes is good for everyone. We look forward to amplifying the local, national and global issues to renew efforts towards a safer, brighter, fairer future for women and girls everywhere”.

The festival programme includes a variety of activities, some open to all genders, some suitable for families with children to enjoy and some sessions specifically for women. All sessions will offer live caption subtitles and sessions on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March will also be signed by BSL (British Sign Language) Interpreters with thanks to Derby City Council support. The programme can be found along with bookings for Donate What You Can or Free (financial hardship) tickets via <https://iwdderby.eventbrite.co.uk>



The poster features a purple background with a white and green logo on the left. The main title 'International Women's Day Festival Derby 2021' is written in a white, cursive font. To the right is a green calendar icon showing '5th-8th March 2021' with a white checkmark. Below the title, the schedule is listed: 'Feminist Friday 5th: Powerful poets & performances online with She Speaks UK & The Maypole', 'Sisterhood Saturday 6th: Exhibiting activism, pavement chalking & #ChooseToChallenge pics at Derby Arboretum whilst social distancing plus inspiring online content', 'Self-Care Sunday 7th: Virtual trail and wellbeing workshops online', and 'Official IWD Monday 8th: Courageous Conversations online panels & virtual stalls trail'. It also includes social media handles '@WomensDayDerby' and a note to book e-workshops via IWD Derby on eventbrite. At the bottom, there are illustrations of diverse women, some holding signs that say 'NO MEANS NO', 'EQUAL PAY NOW', and 'My body my rights'. Other text at the bottom includes 'Good vibes', 'Support', 'Uplifting', 'Activism', and 'RISING UP'.

### The global picture

The UN is marking International Women’s Day with a Generation Equality webinar calling for women’s representation at all levels of power and decision-making. Currently, women are Heads of State or Government in just 22 countries, and only 24.9 per cent of national parliamentarians are women. At the current rate of progress, gender equality among Heads of Government will take another 130 years.

Women are also at the forefront of the battle against COVID-19, as front-line and health sector workers, as scientists, doctors and caregivers, yet they get paid 11 per cent less globally than their male counterparts. An analysis of COVID-19 task teams from 87 countries found only 3.5 per cent of them had gender parity.

When women lead, we see positive results. Some of the most efficient and exemplary responses to the COVID-19 pandemic were led by women. And women, especially young women, are at the forefront of diverse and inclusive movements online and on the streets for social justice, climate change and equality in all parts of the world. Yet, women under 30 are less than 1 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide.

This is why, this year's International Women's Day is a rallying cry with online activities around the theme "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world on the way to the Generation Equality Forum".

---

## ENDS

### Notes for editors / producers

**IWD Derby** is an award-winning non-profit voluntary group continuing the HERstory of over 100 years of local celebrations of International Women's Day with links to the Suffragettes speaking in Derby. <https://womensdayderby.wordpress.com>

**Photos:** Supplied. Photos from past events are also held in the Derby Telegraph archives.

**Contacts for interviews – contact details to be protected and used only for the purpose of additional quotes and interviews for the story:**

**Vanessa Boon, Chair of IWD Derby** tel. 0791 368 0088 e-mail: [iwd@energise.biz](mailto:iwd@energise.biz)

**Jenny Anthony, Spiral Arts** (Craftivism exhibition at Derby Arboretum throughout March, and the story of over 60 women & girls making pieces during lockdown) tel. 0776 587 0266 e-mail: [spiral\\_arts@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:spiral_arts@hotmail.co.uk)

**Gopa Nath, Relate Derby** (Healthy Relationships workshop on 8th March) Tel: 01332 349177 / 07741193484

**Laura Phillips, Derby Museums**, speaking at 'Anonymous was a woman: where is Derby's HERstory?' panel on 8<sup>th</sup> March – whilst we all know Clough, Wright, Arkwright, Curzon, Royce reflected in the city's naming of buildings, etc – where are the women who made an impact? A new exhibition in 2022 Derbyshire Women History Makers aims to change the narrative. e-mail: [Laurap@derbymuseums.org](mailto:Laurap@derbymuseums.org)

**Sonya Robotham, Black Community Matters & Vox Feminarum**, speaking on 'Hidden Figures – Black Women Matter' and 'Anonymous was a woman: where is Derby's HERstory?' panels on 8<sup>th</sup> March tel. 07779 560 284 e-mail: [sonyar.spectrumd@gmail.com](mailto:sonyar.spectrumd@gmail.com)