



Board Minutes

Tuesday 27 July/Wednesday 28 July 2021
Chesford Grange Hotel

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

Board Chair: David Tucker (Chair)
Director of Coaching: Mal Evans (Coa)
Director of Competitive Events: Margaret Docherty (Com)
Director of Development: Adam Tanner (Dev)
Director of Governance: Foster Johnson (Gov)
Director of Finance: Stephen Hemsley (Fin)
Independent Director: Dr Anna Molony (Ind)
Independent Director – Marketing and Communications: Harry Nijjar (Mar)
Chief Executive: Jon Cockcroft (CE)
Head of Business Operations: Helen Slimm (HBO)

Apologies: Paul Robson, 2020 President.

2. Previous minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 11th May were approved to be signed as a true and correct record. There were no matters arising.

3. Declarations of Interest

None declared.

4. Operational Report

The CE had circulated an operational report, in advance, to provide all board members with an overview of activity since the previous meeting. A summary of the report, which was compiled by both board and staff members, has been circulated within the meeting synopsis. During the meeting the following further discussions took place.

Member Services:

An update on Greens Maintenance Bursaries was provided by the CE, bursaries were still being processed but the current bursary system was under review.



A discussion took place on whether the decreased affiliation numbers were due to loss of clubs or reduced membership. The CE explained that clubs have not disappeared at the same rate as members, it is suspected that some clubs may not be registering all their members and so the membership data may not be accurate. An end of season collection of affiliation fees for any new members that have joined outside of Bowls Big Weekend is being planned. It was acknowledged that it's important to communicate benefits of affiliation, ensuring clubs register all members.

A conversation took place on the possibility of Humberside Bowls Association affiliating to Bowls England. The CE advised the board that the association has over 800 playing members. It was **resolved** that the CE considers the latter and consults appropriately, create a report detailing the proposal, including the geographical boundaries of the association and present it at a future Board Meeting.

Finally, the CE advised the Board on the recent new team appointments at the Bowls Development Alliance.

Competitions:

The 2021 Competition structure was discussed. The CE advised the Board that a survey had been prepared for circulation to all participants and would be sent prior to the National Finals with the closing date set before then of the Nationals so that the 2022 competition structure could be discussed with counties and announced as soon as possible.

National Finals:

The CE advised the Board that Warwick District Council's safety advisory group had advised that the venue should be enclosed so we know the capacity within the venue and that all visitors should either provide proof of double vaccination or evidence of a negative Covid test.

The Board discussed the decision to enclose the venue, the cost of the national finals and the strategic importance of building a commercial programme around major events.

Following discussion, it was **resolved** that complimentary parking and entrance would be arranged with Warwick District Council for County Associations, Honorary Members and Past Presidents with a review to take place before the next event.

Concerns were expressed over the playing surface at Victoria Park. It was noted that the all decisions in relation to greens maintenance at Victoria Park had been made by Warwick District Council and not Bowls England. It was **resolved** that Coms would investigate the greens with the high performance players at the test series and would report back.

International Success:



The CE informed the Board that John Bell had resigned from World Bowls and that Andrew Knapper had stepped down from the High Performance Squad. The CE had called Andrew to discuss his decision with him. The CE was asked if another player would be called up to the High Performance Squad to fill the place. The CE advised that the Performance Director would be reviewing performances through the summer.

The Mar had attended the UK Anti-Doping seminar and had provided notes back to the Board. It was noted that the CE and High Performance Director would be attending the next seminar.

The Board noted the appointment of Stuart Thomas as Men's Junior Team Manager, and it was **resolved** that the replacement selector should be sought through the nominations process for the remaining two-year term.

Coaching:

Coa updated the Board on the nine centre of excellences that had been set up around the country with most courses now back to face to face rather than virtual. The CE informed the Board that a meeting had been set up with the EBCS during the National Finals.

Commercial and Finance:

The CE updated the Board on the new communications structure, with updates on the content, newsletters and structure. A discussion took place on the one year to go event that had taken place at Centenary Square in Birmingham.

The Chair asked for an update on relations with The Friends of English Bowling (FEB). The Ind who is currently serving as a member of the FEB board, informed the Board that relations were improved.

Governance and Overheads:

The CE and Dev updated the Board on the current disciplinary queries, and the status with the Disciplinary Working Party. Applications for the working party had now closed, and applicants would be contacted for interviews after the National Finals.

5. Operational Plan and RAG Status

The CE presented a status update on the Operational Plan and RAG status. Whilst good progress had taken place on the high priority areas such as the National Finals, there had been a few changes to the plan and the RAG rating since the last meeting. The affiliation and talent pathway strategies had been de-prioritised whilst the International Events had been upgraded because of the delivery of the Regional events involving internationals.



6. Management Accounts

Management Accounts had been circulated prior to the meeting. The CE explained that with savings in overheads and international bowls, our end of year projections were ahead of the original forecast. Modest additional spends had been allocated to the use of Warwick College during Birmingham 2022, office improvements and Covid compliance, safeguarding and National Finals contingency.

7. Bowls Big Weekend – Review

A review paper from Bowls Big Weekend had been sent to the Board in advance of the meeting. A total of 693 clubs signed up for the event and at the time of the Board Meeting returns had been received from 200 clubs, indicating that 5290 participants tried bowls over the weekend. Our total readership for the media coverage we received was 22.3m. With our TV coverage being seen by more than 2million people. Bowls England appeared on either TV, online or in a newspaper 670 times over the two weeks.

A discussion took place on the overall success of the event, with a special mention to the communications team and Edward Morris for the National Television coverage with Mike Bushell. The Chair thanked, on behalf of the Board all the volunteers in the clubs and the staff team for a successful event. The Board are looking forward to 2022 with an aim of 50% of new participants signing up for another session post Bowls Big Weekend. The date for the 2022 event is 27-30 May.

8. Annual Awards Event

A proposal had been circulated to the Board on the future of Annual Dinners and the introduction of an Annual Awards Event. Our ambition is to create annual event that truly celebrate our sport and achievements across all areas of our sport, shining a light on our volunteers. Following a discussion by all Board members it was agreed that the proposal was an excellent and very much aligned to the strategic direction of Bowls England. It was **resolved** that the first Annual Awards event should take place in February 2022 on the same day as the AGM, with all future award evenings falling in November.

9. Performance Paper

The CE had submitted a discussion paper on the future of the performance programme, and its role in Bowls England's future strategy. The paper had been prepared with the objectives of sharing with board members, a broad direction of travel for our performance programme and how it connects with areas such as



talent development, major events and visibility of our sport. It contained some ideas around developing a central programme, improving facilities, international event hosting, elite domestic competition, selection, coaching and junior talent development.

A discussion took place on how international bowls can be positioned to grass root bowlers, to ensure support of our athletes and to break down the current barriers between the elite players and grass root bowlers. Overall there was general support for the report and a recognition of the value of performance. CE advised that there would be little progress on this area until after Birmingham 2022 as it was important that we focus on medal success at the event.

A discussion was held on the BIBC and BIWBC championships, given that the event had been postponed from 2019 and that Bowls England was the only nation to run an event in 2021. It was acknowledged that this was a wider discussion to have with other nations, outside of the Bowls England board and reported back at a future board meeting.

10. Safeguarding Paper

The CE and HBO had prepared a safeguarding report for the Board which provided a GAP analysis of the current safeguarding bowls policies and procedures against those advised by the Child Protection in Sport Unit.

During the meeting the HBO updated the Board on current safeguarding cases, it was noted that the Bowls Development Officer would be appointing a lead safeguarding officer for the sport and it was **resolved** that until there were new cross code safeguarding disciplinary procedures, the Board would impose any sanctions that the safeguarding bowls case management panel suggest.

11. Risk Management

The updated risk register was presented to the Board, the risks that had changed in level were the top five risks at a controlled risk level had already been discussed elsewhere throughout the meeting. These were the loss of Affiliation Fees, Safeguarding, Victoria Park Greens, CWG status and BDA funding. A discussion was had and the board agreed that the risks were being managed.

12. Governance Working Party

The Governance Working Party (GWP) was formed to review Bowls England's current governance structure in line with Sport England's Tier 3 'A' code for



Sports Governance'. The working party completed its review of the code and put together a report alongside a GAP analysis with recommendations for the Board to discuss and review during the meeting.

Gov gave a presentation highlighting each recommendation, with the reasoning alongside the relevant section of the Sport England Code of Good Governance. Following the presentation, a group discussion took place on the proposals. The Board discussed the structure of the proposed committees of the Board taking into account feedback and advice received from Sport England.

Following discussion, it was **resolved**:

- In principle the Board approved the revised Governance Structure with the implementation to be carried out during the 2022/23 operational year.
- The Management, Audit and Review committee to be re-established and for a new member to be sought ready for the 2022 AGM.
- For the Governance Working Party to remain in place to work on change management ready for the 2022/23 operational year.
- For the Governance Working Party to review with Sport England the need for a company secretary.

The Chair thanked Gov and the Governance Working Party for all their work and recommendations.

13. Operational Plan 2021/2

The CE reported that the 2020/21 Operational Planning process had been a major step forward for the Bowls England staff team. It allowed for clear objectives and KPIs to be set and assignment of responsibility, which echoed the teams annual work programme. In advance of 2021/22 the CE prepared a report that would allow for all staff to be involved in the development of the plan, with improved budgeting and performance evaluation.

The planning process had identified 8 'big stones' for the next operational year. The Board resolved in principle to support the 8 big stones, on provision of a full budget to be presented at the October Board Meeting.

These big stones include the development of a pay and play platform, the development and launch of an introductory 'casual' form of the game, the delivery of two participation drives, the development of content aimed to change perceptions of bowls and the development and delivery a bowls experiential activity programme. Maximizing England's performance at Birmingham 2022 to



influence key stakeholders, building future partnerships and creating a spectator legacy were also included.

In order to capitalise on these big stones during 2021/22 a proposal was put forward on scaling back or deferring certain areas of work until 2022/23.

Following discussion, it was **resolved**:

- That Youth Development plans would be amended from a full weekend for selected to players to an open event for Under 18s to be held over one day at Victoria Park. The day would include coaching and input from the Performance Team, and Commonwealth Games selected players.
- That the Celebration Match schedule would be scaled back with a review of the process for both the selection of matches and of players.
- That the major governance recommendations, website development and membership management solutions would be deferred to the 2022/23 operational year.

14. Final Strategy Paper

The Bowls England 'Fit for the Future' Strategy was presented to the Board ahead of the August launch date. The five-year plan has been designed with the ultimate goal of getting more people playing and enjoying bowls. The strategy sets out our vision for the sport, how we plan to achieve our objectives and what success looks like in 2026. The Board approved the final version, ready to go to print and be launched during the National Finals.

15. Any Other Business

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking all the Board and Staff for their contribution over the year especially whilst working virtually. It was noted that the refurbishment of the office should be complete for the new financial year which will allow for the team to get back working together.

