

FIT FOR THE FUTURE

BOWLS ENGLAND'S
2021-2026 STRATEGY

#BEfitforthe future





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WELCOME

Bowls is a sport steeped in tradition.

For centuries the simplest of pursuits has provided untold enjoyment across generations and the local bowling green has been a place of great jollity and togetherness.

Yet, despite its colourful history and intrinsic qualities, the numbers of people playing bowls across England is in steady decline and the challenges our sport faces are significant.

Our world is changing fast. Technology is transforming people's choices and the competition for attention and leisure time is fiercer than ever. Evolving family dynamics are affecting patterns of life and society's expectation around diversity and inclusivity is rightly changing. We cannot escape that our sport needs to change to ensure it is relevant now and fit for the future.

Covid-19 has shone a light on those challenges, but also illuminated the huge opportunity we have. It has highlighted the value people place on their health, social connection and local communities. It has shown us all that things can be done in a way that most never thought possible. It has allowed us to reflect, listen and explore the future direction of Bowls England.

Our 2021-26 Strategy – Fit for the Future - frames a new, exciting course for our sport. We believe it will -

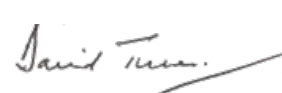
- Unite our sport behind a compelling vision, creating a sense of belonging and source of inspiration for our volunteers.
- Guide our staff team's activity allowing us to better allocate resources to the areas that matter most.
- Help put issues and problems into a broader context, engendering a can-do, optimistic culture.
- Build confidence and enthusiasm amongst current partners and act as a catalyst to forge new relationships.
- Enable us to articulate with one voice why those outside our sport should care.

In this booklet we share our vision, mission and objectives.

We explain why we feel bowls is so special and the key catalysts to embolden it.

We map out what success looks like and how we plan to get there.

We hope you are encouraged by the direction upon which Bowls England is embarking. Like so many, we care deeply about our sport and are looking forward to working with everyone across the country to ensure it is Fit for the Future.



David Tucker
Chair



Jon Cockcroft
Chief Executive

OUR VISION

This strategy has been developed amidst a global pandemic, which has created extraordinary levels of disruption to people's lives.

It has limited our freedom, separated us from much we hold dear and forced us to approach things very differently. Whilst this has been difficult, it has also been eye-opening and allowed us to reflect on what's most important.

Nelson Mandela famously stated, **"Sport can create hope where once there was only despair"** and the power of sport to enrich people's lives has never been more apparent. Those for whom sport is a constant in life know its potential to create moments of joy, treasured friendships and that incomparable feeling of being part of a team or a club.

Others won't feel that way. As we strive for a level playing field in many walks of life, too many in society have never felt they enjoyed the capability or opportunity to derive that experience from sport. **One's background, gender, postcode, physicality and bank balance have conspired to make playing sport feel impossible, even unimaginable, for some. Our hopes and dreams are for this to change, and for bowls to be a valued part of the solution.**

With this context in mind, our vision is...

For everybody to realize the joy and benefit of playing sport.



WHY BOWLS MATTERS

We believe the sport of bowls can help everybody unlock the many advantages of playing sport because:

- Bowls is as **DOABLE** a sport as one can play. Physically, financially and practically, there are no intrinsic reasons not to have a go.
- Many, including older people and those with disabilities or health conditions, find bowls **VITALIZING**. It delivers real mental and physical health benefits and acts as an essential social lifeline.
- Bowls is highly **SOCIABLE** providing a level playing field across ages and genders. Competition amongst friends and family is authentic and clubs feel like a home from home.
- And finally, playing bowls is a simple skill which takes a minute to learn, but a lifetime to master. Its **MESMERIZING** qualities capture imaginations and give people the time of their life.

We believe so passionately in bowls' unique ability to make a difference that our ambition is that by 2026, 1m people across the country will have a go at outdoor lawn bowls each year. Sounds like a lot? Well with over 2000 clubs across the country and given what we've got planned in our strategy, we believe this is doable.

93% 

of people feel they are capable of playing bowls

81% 

feel bowls has a positive impact on their physical wellbeing

 80%

of people associate bowls with being sociable

TARGET

**1 million bowls
experiences**

PER YEAR BY 2026

If we are successful, there will be thousands of people who are more active; thousands who add life to years, not just years to life; thousands less lonely and countless more moments of fun and happiness.

OUR MISSION IS...

To promote and develop the sport of bowls across England so it enriches the lives of its participants, connects communities and is in good health for future generations.

Growing the numbers of bowls participants is at the heart of our mission. More participants mean healthier, more vibrant clubs which are able to deliver great experiences for their players. Happy playing experiences means more people advocating bowls to non-bowlers. It will mean more volunteers making our sport happen in communities across the country and more opportunity to inspire others to take part. And, finally, it will mean more public and private sector support as our sport is able to deliver more back to society and be strengthened for generations to come.

To ensure we are always focussed behind this mission, we will continually asking ourselves one overriding question.

Does it Increase Participation?

Or DIP for short. As we deliver this strategy, the DIP test will ensure we are making the right choices, spending time in the right areas and investing in the most important activities.





THE VALUES WHICH GUIDE US

What we do is critical, but how we do it is just as important. We have listened to people and reflected on their experiences of engaging with us. Whilst proud of the many positive comments, we acknowledge our shortcomings.

We have been a little remote and officious. We have not created an environment where our sport feels able to embrace change. We have operated too much in isolation, rather than leading a culture of togetherness.

With all this in mind, we have pictured how we want to be perceived by all those who care about our sport. We have developed a **set of behavioural values**, which we are determined to live and breathe.

We won't always get it right, but we will do our utmost to apply these values to the choices we make and the way we behave.

WE WILL BE



COLLABORATIVE

We believe that together we can achieve more.

We share perspectives, seek out common goals and perform tasks with a mind-set of respect, trust and co-operation. We appreciate the varied contributions of those around us and are prepared to challenge those who do not have the wider interest of the sport at heart.



ADAPTABLE

We will strive to be relevant in the ever-changing environment in which we live.

We will be open-eyed and open-minded to the opportunities ahead of us, we will listen to others and we will display a can-do attitude. Whilst we remain steadfast in our purpose, we recognise the importance of being flexible in our approach.



RESPONSIBLE

As custodians of our sport, we are committed to leaving it in a better place than we found it.

We will be focussed in our mission, we will be proactive, we will be accountable for the decisions we make and we will be conscientious in our duties. We learn from our bad days and celebrate our good ones, knowing we will start afresh tomorrow.



ENCOURAGING

We will harness the energies of those around us through our friendly, positive yet resilient demeanour.

We will enable others to imagine what is possible, empower them to fulfil their potential and support them at times of need. Our words and actions will be motivational and embolden our sport in its future endeavours.



At the heart of these values is the unwritten truth that we CARE.

Bowls England cares about its staff, its players, its volunteers, its clubs, its counties and its sport.

We care deeply about the work we do, the way in which we behave and the difference we hope to make.



CONSULTATION AND INSIGHT

We believe that together we will achieve more and a culture of feedback is integral to our long-term success.

To that end, our strategy is the culmination of a huge process of insight gathering and consultation across the sport. We have listened to a wide range of voices from within our sport, conducted research on societal trends in sport and leisure and reached out to many not familiar with bowls.

We have been challenged, informed and inspired.

We really appreciate the contributions of all those who took the time to offer their views.

You have shaped this strategy and hope will play your part in delivering its contents.

If you wish to keep in touch with our progress, please sign up to the Bowls England e-newsletters.



3,420

Participant Survey Responses



974

Club Survey Responses



83

Player, Club and County Meetings



1,175

Non-Participant Survey Responses



300

'Our Future' emails received



4

Bowls England Board Meetings



OUR FIVE PRIORITIES

Driven by our core purpose,
shaped by the insight and taking
on the key challenges, we have
identified **5 priority areas**.



These objectives, and the strategies to deliver them, turn our recurring challenges into opportunities. They are detailed here alongside how we plan to measure success.



BUILD THE BRAND OF BOWLS

By celebrating its values and qualities, inspire people to feel Bowls is a sport where they'd belong

This is important because, for it to grow, bowls must be perceived as relevant in today's society and people outside the sport should consider it a credible option for their valuable leisure time. This requires it to be visible and for people to be excited by the benefit it may bring them.

WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- Developing and implementing a brand strategy that consistently, coherently and imaginatively promotes bowls' capacity to build a better society and benefit individuals.
- Growing the profile of our sport in traditional and new media through powerful storytelling.
- Supporting and showcasing winning England teams by effectively managing and maximizing our international performance programme.
- Delivering an inspiring programme of activity to capitalise on the unparalleled opportunity of a home Commonwealth Games.
- Scoping out a new, broadcast-friendly spectator product to provide a legacy from Birmingham 2022.

WE WILL MEASURE THIS BY:

The sport's reach amongst **target audiences** and the levels of **positive public sentiment** towards our sport.



MAKE BOWLS TRULY ACCESSIBLE

Open up the gateways to our sport, to embrace more people irrespective of their background or circumstance



This is important because, despite its uncomplicated nature, there are too many known and perceived barriers to getting involved in our sport. Bowls must evolve to complement current lifestyles, and intervention must be put in place to create behavioural change amongst potential new players, helping tackle deep-rooted inequality in sports activity.

WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- Developing and marketing new, introductory forms of the game to service identified target markets of new bowlers.
- Modernising our digital platforms and experiences so new bowlers can easily locate opportunities to get involved in our sport.
- Working with clubs and facility owners to break down barriers and ensure every new bowler's first time is uncomplicated and compelling.
- Developing and implementing a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to ensure our sport is more representative of society.
- Building new partnerships with like-minded organisations to engage groups of people from outside our sport.

WE WILL MEASURE THIS BY:

The number of **new people** engaging with our sport and the **diversity** of our sport's participant-base.





CREATE POSITIVE PLAYING EXPERIENCES

Satisfy the ever-changing needs of our participants to help them enjoy a fulfilling relationship with our sport

This is important because our sport will thrive if existing participants are enjoying life-affirming experiences, extracting maximum value from the sport, broadening their involvement with bowls and advocating it to their friends and family.

WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- Working with clubs to provide a mixed membership offer together with pay and play options to cater for the varied needs of bowlers.
- Delivering an annual programme of national competitions which provide a structure and environment for all players to be feel challenged, rewarded and committed to our sport.
- Running a commercially-successful events programme that inspires participation and creates treasured life memories for players and spectators.
- Introducing a Performance Pathway to stretch our talented athletes and retain more young people in the sport.
- Delivering an annual communications and content plan, shaped by data and insight, to enrich the experience of players and grow our bowls fan-base.

WE WILL MEASURE THIS BY:

The **satisfaction level** of players and **net promoter score** of our participants.

SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITIES

To nurture our volunteer workforce to help cultivate vibrant and safe environments for our sport to flourish



This is important because, our volunteers are the lifeblood of our sport, and their endeavours directly affect the experience of its participants. Bowls England has a duty to give them the support and guidance commensurate with this responsibility.

WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- Delivering and expanding our range of club services to support club management teams, increase their capability and empower them to thrive.
- Working at a local and national level to arrest the decline in facilities to ensure places to play bowls are accessible, inclusive and sustainable.
- Embedding a culture of coaching in the sport to attract and support high quality coaching and deliver better experiences for players.
- Ensuring we have an appropriate quality and quantity of officials in our sport to deliver and enhance the playing experience.
- Developing a national volunteering programme to recruit, retain and recognise volunteers in our sport.

WE WILL MEASURE THIS BY:

The number of **engaged volunteers** and **participant feedback** on volunteer delivery.





LEAD WITH PURPOSE

To be an appreciated and sustainable governing body

This is important because Bowls England is the ultimate custodian of our sport. The effectiveness of our leadership enables the sport's voice to be heard, to create efficiencies and harness the capabilities of those who care about its future.

WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- Developing our governance structures and processes so they are fit for purpose for the modern age and we create a safe, wholesome environment for bowls to operate.
- Growing and diversifying our revenue streams to create a securer future and enable us to invest more money back into the sport.
- Embracing the digital age in our business operations systems in order to create efficiencies, reduce our carbon-footprint and improve the effectiveness of our work.
- Investing in our people and culture to maximize the talents of staff and volunteers, making us an employer of choice.
- Working in partnership with our counties, clubs, bowls bodies and delivery partners to advance the sport in a co-ordinated and collaborative manner.

WE WILL MEASURE THIS BY:

The **reputation** and levels of **confidence** our stakeholders have in Bowls England.



OUR BOWLS ENGLAND COMMUNITY

Building on our existing understanding, our research allowed us to develop a clearer picture of our existing and future audiences.

Our strategy will help current participants to be more enriched through bowls and those outside our sport more able to get involved. The segmentation work below will allow us to deliver a more tailored approach to our engagement and communications, rather than assume the whole bowls community has the same needs.

We have broken our audience down into six current and four prospective participant groups.

The pen portraits are indicative but give a flavour of the characters in our sport, their motivation and what the strategy will do for them.



CURRENT PARTICIPANTS			PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS	
 Club Bowler Brian One of 75,000 bowlers who play competitively within clubs	 Social Bowler Sue One of 10,000 bowlers who play casually	 Competitive Chris One of 20,000 bowlers who enter competitions national or local competitions	 Junior Jess One of tens of thousands of 8-13 year olds who fancy playing sport but don't fit the sporty mould	 Casual Kabir One of millions of 40 and 50 year olds with more leisure time as their children have grown up
 Club Leader Linda One of 5,000 volunteers with leadership roles at clubs	 Volunteer Vic One of 15,000 people who contribute in some way to help the club run	 Supporter Sandra One of 50,000 people who support their loved ones to enjoy the game	 Mature Mike One of millions of 60 and 70 year olds who have retired and want to stay active demanding sport	 Sporty Sarah One of hundreds of thousands of 40 and 50 year olds who love sport and looking for a less physically demanding sport

OUR CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE

If we are to deliver this strategy, it will be important to create the right conditions to turn our intentions and ambitions into action. We have identified four catalysts for change that will make progress possible.

These are -



Brilliant Basics

A relentless drive to embed high standards and smooth processes across all the core areas of our work.



Digital First

A preparedness to embrace and apply new technologies and systems to meet people's expectations of this data-driven era.



Player Centric

A laser-like focus on putting the player at the heart of what we do, recognizing the limitations of a one-size-fits all approach.



Great Governance

A commitment to positive, effective leadership and delivery of opportunity at all levels of our sport.





OUR COMMITMENT TO THIS STRATEGY

Bowls England is fully committed to this strategy.

Supported by the board and reliant on the amazing endeavours of so many volunteers, the structure of our staff team has evolved to ensure we have the capacity and capability to deliver this work programme. Aligned to our values, we will be restless in our desire to see our sport flourish.

[Click here to see the Bowls England Team.](#)



**PASSIONATE
STAFF TEAM**

5 YEAR BUDGET
£500k
INVESTMENT

Alongside this 2021-26 Strategy, we have developed a 5 year budget, which sees a £500k investment of reserves to build firmer strategic foundations and capitalise on the once-in-a-generation opportunity of a home Commonwealth Games. Our ambition is to drive greater commercial revenues therefore keeping the cost of playing the sport low.

We will know we are successful when we see



More positive
MEDIA COVERAGE
for bowls



Consistent
MEDAL SUCCESS
at world-level events



A growth in
CLUB
MEMBERSHIP



MORE ADVOCACY
of our sport from
existing participants



More
COMMERCIAL
INCOME
flowing into our sport



More new players
from a more
DIVERSE BACKGROUND
having a go at our sport



A growth in
CROSS-
ORGANISATIONAL
collaboration

**Thank-you for taking the time to digest our Fit for the Future strategy.
If you want to stay connected with progress, please sign up to our
e-newsletters and follow Bowls England through our social media platforms.**



Bowls England is the national governing body for the sport of lawn bowls.

Facebook: @bowlsengland

Twitter: @BowlsEngland

Instagram: bowlsengland

YouTube: BowlsEnglandTV

Email: enquiries@bowlsengland.com

WWW.BOWLSENGLAND.COM

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