



Chair – Richard Shelley

Vice Chair – Kay Kerley

Background

The proposition was submitted in order to allow Counties the opportunity to consider the Bowls England decision to replace the Annual Presentation Dinners with an Awards Dinner. Many Counties have not welcomed this decision. No advance consultation appears to have taken place with Counties and the first most people knew of the decision was when the Awards Dinner was announced in the programme for the National Championships.

Reasons to Retain the Dinners

The Bowls England Dinners (and those run previously by the EBA and EWBA) have always been prestigious, popular and well supported events which enable winners to enjoy and celebrate their achievements with family, friends and colleagues who may not have been able to attend the Championships. For many bowlers achieving success at the National Championships is the pinnacle of their career in bowling and to receive their trophy in front of their peers at the dinner is a lifelong highlight. There is little opportunity at the National Championships to celebrate. Family and friends may not be present, and the weather may not be conducive to celebrating. Importantly the Dinners, also, allow County representatives, who give up huge amounts of time to support bowls, the opportunity to socialise and reflect on the season just passed.

Attendance from year to year varies, depending on who wins the events (some Counties are more supportive than others) but for the last two Dinners a total of 597 people attended (330 at the Men's 2020 and 263 at the Women's 2019 events). At these Dinners of the 36 individuals who won the main championship events 27 (75%) were in attendance indicating there remains strong support from winners for the Presentation Dinner.

At the Counties Conference Bowls England revealed a slide giving reasons for their decision. We have the following comments:

- The Dinners have been held on gender lines, presumably because it has been difficult to find a large enough venue and because of the large number of trophies to be presented. It is claimed the Awards Dinner will bring economies of scale. The Awards venue holds up to 900 so a combined Dinner would have been feasible.
- The claim that 70% of winners (not defined) do not attend seems at odds with the long queues waiting to collect trophies and with the attendance of championship winners at the last 2 Dinners.
- It is claimed that staff work will be halved and that in excess of £5k will be saved by not having the Dinners. Given that Bowls England employs more staff than at any previous time and has a turnover in excess of £1m, the savings that might be achieved do not justify the loss of these prestigious events.

In putting forward this proposition Bowls Hampshire is not opposing the idea that more should be done to recognise those at grassroots who contribute to the sport. It has publicised the awards and the Awards Dinner to all its Clubs but even with a barrage of publicity from Bowls England little interest has been shown, perhaps because Awards Dinners seem to have lost their lustre. It is recognised that the experience in other Counties may be different, and the success of Awards Dinner cannot be measured until after the event. Successful or not it remains our view that there should be an event to celebrate the achievements of those who have been successful in National Championships. The proposition is for both Dinners to be re-instated but we would be content for that proposition to be amended to have just one Presentation Dinner.