



BOWLS ENGLAND AGM – 19 FEBRUARY 2022

This document has been developed to give County Associations the position of the Bowls England Board on the propositions that have been brought forward to the 2022 AGM. Alongside this, Bowls Hampshire was offered the opportunity to substantiate their propositions and this is included within the AGM documentation entitled 10.1 Commentary from Bowls Hampshire.

PROPOSITIONS AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. "That, the Presidential Badge Presentation for qualifying competitors be reinstated at the National Championships for the 2022 season"

Bowls England Board's Position

At the County Meeting in November, after discussion with County delegates, the Bowls England Board agreed to reintroduce an optional badge presentation at the National Finals. Our insight tells us there is varying levels of appetite for the badge presentation and so people who wish to receive this acknowledgement are able to opt in, and those who do not value it as part of their experience are not compelled to do it.

We are working on the details of this ahead of the event in August. Given the decision has already been made, we do not believe there is need to vote on this proposition.

2. "That, Bowls England reinstate the two National Championship Dinners in November and February to recognise the achievements of the successful competitors following the National Championships. This to be implemented for the 2022 season"

Bowls England Board's Position

Bowls England strongly opposes this proposition as it is not in the best interest of our sport, best use of Bowls England's resources or aligned to our 2021-26 Strategy.

The Bowls England Awards Night has been introduced to replace the two annual dinners. The new-look event includes a dinner, retains all the social elements of the two dinners and the Bowls England Presidential team will continue to have a key role. The inaugural Awards Event is set to be enjoyed by around 350 people, but importantly has touched the sport across all corners of our country. One club's feedback was "the whole awards gig has been a godsend for us, and we are very grateful."

Bowls England is often criticized for being old-fashioned and elitist, focussing on a very small portion of the bowls community. The Awards Night is a modern, relevant occasion for all, and celebrates the varied contributions of players and volunteers across our sport at all levels. The awards are aligned to our entire strategy – playing, administrating, coaching, umpiring, greenkeeping and so on. In its first year, we have almost 150 nominations where historically very few have been put forward for Club or Story of the Year. The event is not split along gender lines, which is backward and gives out entirely the wrong impression about our organisation and our sport.



It is absolutely right to celebrate our fantastic national competition winners, but this does not need to involve putting on another dinner and it further exacerbates the disproportionate amount of resource that goes into elite competitions and the perception of Bowls England only caring about a few. Let's remember, national competitors make up about 20% of our player base, and winners clearly a tiny fraction of that. The desire to celebrate competitions winners is evident with the measures in place at the National Finals and we are committed to building on that special moment at Victoria Park. Stands, MC, presentation backdrop, TV, streaming and media and social media profile. This is the moment that we need to amplify and showcase, and as the National Finals grows in profile this will reach greater heights.

The incremental benefit of re-presenting a trophy in a hotel function room months later is low, and is borne out by the players' perspective. Out of a combined 242 winners at the last Men's and Women's dinners, there were only 86 different winners in attendance. Out of these winners, 12 were up for two awards and four were up for three awards. These figures do not include the team events such as Club Two Fours, Top Club, Johns, Walker, Balcomb and Middleton where traditionally only a handful of players, if any, attend. For example, out of a potential 210 players in these team events there was only a maximum of 60 in attendance spread over the two events. Many of those who attended had to be cajoled into doing so. Our insight tells us that the dinner ticket is the lowest valued item of the National Finals winners' package, well behind entry to the British Isles, the medal, winners' jacket, prize money and a winners' picture.

The Awards Night relates to all our strategy but it also targets the importance of reward and recognition amongst our volunteers. We know that volunteer recruitment is a challenge – who will replace that person when he or she runs out of steam? The Awards Night and the nomination process makes all those who devote so much time and energy feel valued, even if they are not nominated or shortlisted themselves. The inaugural year has brought to the fore some great stories and generated content that has been fantastically received. We have seen clubs and players inspired and motivated, from developing their own videos in support of a nominee, to taking a table at the event. The online voting, to which everyone can relate, has engaged the sport and we have had over 2500 votes already so that the concept of celebrating endeavour and achievement has reached far more people than just those attending a dinner. We have also seen media attention from those that have been short-listed.

From a financial perspective, the aspiration is that the Awards Night is viable and breaks even, whilst keeping the price at a reasonable level. The two dinners made losses excluding the expenses for associated meetings. Having one event clearly provides economies of scale and the Awards delivers a greater market for ticket buyers. The Athena and other venues could hold the two dinners put together, and this also reduces the cost for the many people who attended two dinners previously. Sponsor value and interest is higher for the Awards with categories that resonate with more brands, so for example Dennis Mowers are supporting the Greenkeeper of the Year. We are unlikely to get much more investment from a competition sponsor who would realise most of its value from the exposure generated at the denouement to that particular competition at Victoria Park. Also, economically, one event is half the staff time which is both a direct cost but also an opportunity cost as the team can be devoting energy elsewhere, more aligned to growing participation.



Finally, on a practical level we couldn't possibly hold a dinner in February around the same time as the Awards Night.

3. "That, the Middleton Cup and the John's trophy return to the 2019 league format as soon as possible, and no later than 2023"

Bowls England Board's Position

Whilst the format changes made over the last two years were instigated to ease the calendar in two challenging years, Bowls England doesn't have strong position on this proposition. We are aware that there are different views across the counties and previously this topic has been put forward for a decision.

We have prepared the below as a means of helping Counties in their deliberations.

	League	Knockout
For	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater number of matches for all counties • Counties can build teams for the future • Can bring on players, gain experience • More opportunities for players to participate • Most consistent team will win 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces time commitment for players • Every match matters – each match an occasion • More pressure on players which is healthy • Greater chance of an 'upset' • Lower cost to counties (venues/player/official expenses outlay) • Smaller counties can field teams (unable to have player commitment for 4 weekends)
Against	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dead rubbers/matches can be fixed so other teams go through • Counties struggle to field teams in later matches when out of the running in group stages • High time commitment • Some players not willing to represent their county (ill-feeling) • Time restraint, many matches over 2 hours travelling time • Lots of administration for counties arranging venues, officials and refreshments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removes opportunity for players to participate at higher level • Difficult to build teams for the medium term • Players can be demoralized prior to match if playing strong counties • Less player development/player camaraderie • Tight turnaround to arrange venues between rounds