



# Board Minutes

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022  
Woodland Grange

## 1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting. The Chair was unable to attend in person, and had logged in virtually so had delegated SInd to Chair the meeting on his behalf.

Board Chair: David Tucker (Chair) - Virtual  
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 (SInd)  
Independent Director: Jo Doust (Ind)  
Independent Director – Marketing and Communications: Harry Nijjar (Mar)  
Chief Executive: Jon Cockcroft (CE)  
Head of Business Operations: Helen Slimm (HBO)  
President – Terri Keen (PRE)

## 2. Previous Minutes – accuracy/matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and the minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> January were approved to be signed as a true and correct record. There were no matters arising.

## 3. Declaration of Interest

None declared.

## 4. Operational Report and RAG Status

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.



### **Big Stones (major 2022 projects)**

Discussions took place between all Board Members on the current activity surrounding the 2021-22 Big Stones.

Following a competitive tender process, a digital agency called Yellow Panther had been engaged to build the Pay and Play site and manage its ongoing maintenance. COA asked for an update on numbers that had put in interest for the Pay and Play platform. The CE explained that Pay and Play had been featured in the activator calls and had been positively received by over 200 attendees. The HBO had held two sessions with representatives from clubs in Hampshire, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Middlesex and Warwickshire; who had provided feedback to ensure that the system was workable and easy to use.

Over 400 clubs have signed up to Bowls' Big Weekend. The requirements of the Board Members throughout Bowls' Big Weekend was discussed, with the view of getting a wider presence throughout the Home Counties.

Arrangements in relation to stakeholder engagement for the Commonwealth Games were discussed with ticket access available to be offered to the players' friends and family, counties VIPs and past commonwealth players. The expectations of the wider bowls community was discussed and reviewed in line with the stakeholder engagement plan.

The CE updated the Board on the current workload of the team with the onus on ensuring that the big stones are delivered effectively and making the most of Birmingham 2022. It was noted that in order for the really big projects to be completed before the Commonwealth Games, to enable us to utilise that platform some work streams would need to be deprioritised until after the Commonwealth Games. Following a full discussion by the Board which included views on the Governance Working Party, Disciplinary Working Party and MAR it was **resolved** that the Chair would meet with the CE and Leadership Team to discuss the current resource and workload with a full discussion taking place at the May Board Meeting.

### **Member Services and Development**

The FIN and CE discussed the recent Sport England submission and the opportunity for the sport to utilise the Commonwealth Games to build and enhance the relationships with Sport England and other key stakeholders. This was highlighted as a priority for the summer.

A discussion took place on an approach from the Rugby Football Union, which has provided the opportunity to build bowls greens at Rugby clubs. The Board viewed this as a positive model that could be replicated and work with other



clubs. It was **resolved** that the CE proactively continue discussions to drive participation and open new markets.

### **Championships and Competitions**

The CE informed the Board that the entries for championships and competitions had closed over target. Men's Championships increased by 867 entries from 2021 and the Women's Championships increased by 353. A discussion took place on ways of increasing entries from Women into the Championships for next season.

The importance of elevating the regional final events was a priority for the Sports Development Team going forward. Clubs that are running the events, should be supported by the relevant County Associations and Board Members if available. The SIND recommended training for the clubs holding the events so that they feel the same up and down the Country. It was **resolved** that the CE would bring to the May Board Meeting a full outline plan for the Regional Finals.

The IND highlighted the need for a marketing and participation plan, starting with the reopening of the greens through to the National Finals. The CE confirmed that a comprehensive communications plan was in place and consistent with the four brand values which would capture the whole season, with the Commonwealth marketing activity starting shortly before the event.

The CE discussed the ticketing marketing plan for the National Finals, which was approved by the Board.

### **International Bowls**

The board discussed the ongoing challenges of the BIBC and BIWBC and was made aware of the latest developments. It was agreed the solution that was reached was the best path in the interim period and that a statement should be drafted to outline Bowls England's position and aspirations.

### **Commercial and Finance**

The CE provided the Board with an update on the ongoing partner prospects. A discussion took between Board Members on the types of products and backgrounds of companies we are endeavouring to align with in the future. The IND recommended the development of a sponsor framework that would provide a fair balance, enabling us to assess the types of partner that we are aiming to work with. It was **resolved** that the CE provide the Board with our current sponsor deck at the next Board Meeting.

### **Brand and Communications**



The CE gave the Board an update on a positive meeting the BBC's Commonwealth Games lead which highlighted a number of stories from within the Bowls Community and has led to follow up meetings. The FIN highlighted the importance of daily publicity of who is on the TV today, to really advertise the games to our existing members and drive up the BBC viewing figures. The Commentary team was discussed and it was **resolved** the CE discuss options with the Head of Communications.

## 5. Risk Management and Internal Control Systems

The updated risk register was presented to the Board with an accompanying paper highlighting the top five risks which were the Bowls England loans, disciplinary cases, facility stock, Sport England performance funding and loss of affiliated income.

A discussion took place, instigated by the Chair, on the current disciplinary situation. It was noted that day-to-day risks had increased due the hospitalisation of John Durston. The CE asked for Board approval to advertise for someone that could support with handling enquiries and managing cases at a basic level, who could work alongside the current Disciplinary Committee and the HBO. A discussion took place as to whether outsourcing to specialist provider might be more suitable. It was **resolved** that the Chair, CE and HBO will look at the way forward before the next Board Meeting and bring back a full proposal.

The FIN discussed the current situation with the Bowls England loans and reviewing the credit rating of guarantors. It was **resolved** that the process needs to be reviewed following the Commonwealth Games.

## 6. Management Accounts

The management accounts had already been circulated to the Board in advance of the meeting. There were not major variances at this juncture, but it was highlighted the Annual Awards had not met the financial target. A re-forecasted year end budget that would come back to the Board at the May meeting particularly should Sport England's funding be successful.

## 7. Financial Year Paper

The FIN presented a report recommending the Board approve the change of the financial year end from the 30<sup>th</sup> September to the 31<sup>st</sup> March. Which will facilitate many operational improvements. This decision would involve a £5k budget to cover the additional work to effect the change.



A discussion took place on the effects of this change with staff annual leave, annual reports and the annual general meeting. It was **resolved** by the Board to support the proposal subject to some final exploratory work.

## 8. AGM and Awards 'wash up'

The Chair gave an update on the voting at the AGM, he explained his discussions with Bowls Hampshire that had taken place prior to the meeting and their willingness to amend the proposal to one annual dinner rather than two. Bowls Hampshire had already suggested this to the membership within their proposal document and it was agreed between the Chair and the Bowls Hampshire representatives to amend the proposition when it came to voting.

The CE had prepared an Awards Event report for the Board which had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Board congratulated the team on a successful event, and reviewed the feedback which had been positive. The CE explained the reasoning as to why the event had gone over budget which included a cautious approach to the pricing of the tickets, the fixed costs of launching a new event and a lack of appetite from a number of counties. The PRE gave an update on how well the awards had sat at grass root level, with exciting nominations and that nothing but positive feedback had been received at the event.

A discussion took place on improvements that could be made for the next event which included opening the nominations earlier, allowing more time for the nominations panel and a review of the categories; particularly in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion. It was **resolved** to remain at the same venue for the 2023 Awards Night.

Following the review of the Awards Night, the Board discussed the arrangements for the AGM. It was noted that the venue was not ideal for conference style meetings and that arrangements would be made for another venue within Leicestershire. A wider discussion took place on the way the Board members exercise their vote, particularly when the Board does not have an official view. It was **resolved** that votes should be cast in support of the Board position and if there is no position the Board members should abstain en bloc.

The Board discussed the Champions Dinner that will be held in November. An exchange took place on the look and feel of the event following a proposal from the CE. The PRE supported the decision of a professional MC and a speaker from the wider sporting world to be arranged by the Bowls England Office. It was **resolved** that the Champions dinner would feature the trophy presentations for all National Final winners and runners up and that tickets would go on sale during the National Finals.





## 9. World Bowls Review – Strategic approach

World Bowls recently commissioned an external review of its governance, management and operational structure. The Board received a copy of the review and held a wider discussion shaped by the CE which incorporated the following themes - International Competition, Major Event Hosting, New Broadcast Products, Game Development, Governance and International Influencing, WB Headquarters and Marketing Department. It was **resolved** that a meeting be arranged incorporating the Board, Performance Director and Performance Management Team in November to discuss the future performance strategy in more detail. It was further **resolved** that the CE should explore options related to hosting major international events to keep the momentum going from the Commonwealth Games and to promote the excitement in our sport at a local level.

A full Board discussion took place on new broadcasting products and how this could be implemented nationally. It was **resolved** that discussions take place with Bowls Australia in relation to the current BPL league. It was further **resolved** that Bowls England should take the opportunity of hosting meetings throughout the commonwealth games with World Bowls and the large Member Nation Authorities to discuss the broadcasting opportunities, which should include all media outlets and not just TV.

The role of Bowls England in regards to global bowls and the development of other bowls nations was reviewed. The Board was keen to support the development of a nation buddy system and it was **resolved** that discussions could take place with World Bowls and member nations throughout the Commonwealth Games.

Finally the Board **resolved** to pass on the two tender opportunities from World Bowls in relation to their new headquarters and marketing function.

## 10. Casual Game Format

The Head of Sport Development had prepared a report on the proposed format of the casual game. The report included an update on the current process of project group which included tendering marketing agencies, trailing, drafting rules and meetings with suppliers.

Discussions around the Board Paper took place between all directors with the SIND raising the question of trademarks and branding, advising the CE that two to three names of the product should be identified to aide with trademark searches. MAR took a closer look at the commercial budget in line with the branding and equipment expenses. Stressing the importance of broadcasting the product to the largest audience, focusing on user generated content. The CE



discussed the Commonwealth games live site, and the links to the experiential activity as well as the branding videos that were in the pipeline which would explain the game to both new and existing players. IND and CE discussed working with clubs that have highlighted they wish to work with and are eager to try new innovations to increase participation.

## **11. Any other Business**

SIND raised the query of MAR and it was resolved that an open invite be sent to any recommended individuals in the South area and the interested members would then be able to be co-opted on the Committee.

With no further business the Chair thanked SIND for chairing the meeting and thanked everyone for their contributions, reminding the Board that appraisals would take place at the May meeting.