



# Board Minutes

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Ashorne Hill, Royal Leamington Spa

## 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 (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)  
Welfare and Governance Manager (BDA): Duncan Webster – Item 10 only

### Apologies

President: Terri Keen

As part of the welcome the Chair informed the meeting that item 11 on the Agenda (Rules and Regulations) would be deferred until the July Meeting.

## 2. Previous Minutes – accuracy/matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March were approved to be signed as a true and correct record. There were no matters arising.

## 3. Declaration of Interest

None declared.

## 4. Big Stones Presentation

Bowls England has identified several 'Big Stones' for the Operational Year. The CE gave the Board a presentation on current progress.

### PlayBowls Platform

Bowls England has developed the platform alongside an agency called Yellow Panther and various club leaders from around the Country have had opportunities to provide feedback at the development stages. The Board received information on the business case for clubs, the platform finances and the training sessions that are scheduled for



clubs. The CE advised the Board on the number of activators that are signed up and the current subscriptions for the webinars scheduled to take place on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> May.

A discussion took place between the Chair, SIND and CE in relation to how the system payments will work on council owned greens. Further discussions were held over phase two and possible developments, which may include a rink booking system. The CE advised that Customer Relationship Management systems and processes had been identified as an important area for progress in the next operational year.

### **Casual Game**

Pilot sessions for the new casual form of the game have been carried out, with the sessions receiving positive feedback from the new participants. The sessions had highlighted the importance of making the guidance simple and concise. The Sport England fund will enable approximately 200 clubs to benefit from the resources in year one with similar numbers being able to benefit in year two.

The CE highlighted the risk of time-scales in terms of sourcing some of the equipment and resources, with certain items needing to be introduced to the club resources in future seasons.

A discussion took place by all the Board on the name suggestion for the Casual Game, the health and safety implications and the educational video that will sit alongside the product. The CE further explained that clubs wishing to benefit from the equipment would be expected to attend the BDA activator course, which fully explain how the Casual Game should be positioned and the sessions ran.

All of the Board agreed that by providing a new format of the sport, along with a new platform to access the sport to a completely new audience was a positive step forward and were pleased with the progress to date.

### **Bowls' Big Weekend**

The CE gave the Board an update on the current number for the upcoming Bowls' Big Weekend. 790 clubs are currently signed up to run the sessions, with 60 of these coming from Crown Green. 643 attendees are currently registered to attend sessions. Four clubs that benefited well last years from Bowls' Big Weekend have been involved in Media Promotions alongside the Performance Players. In addition, seven webinars have ran advising the clubs how to make the most out of the Weekend. Finally the CE informed the Board that there is now a contract in place with clubs to ensure that there is an accurate and timely data capture following the weekend. IND updated the meeting on a consortium that has been set up by clubs in Sussex, which helped clubs to team up on marketing to extract maximum benefit out of the initiative.

### **BDA Collaboration**

The CE updated the Board on the collaborative working between the BDA and Bowls England teams. There is an opportunity for three new club hubs which are currently being explored in the South West, Greater London and Warwickshire. Recently adverts have been send out for seven community activators that will report to the BDA Development Officer and will deliver bowls experiences to community clubs in an effort



to support local bowls clubs. A club engagement spreadsheet has been developed by both organisations which provides a three tier approach and identifies clubs that are proactively working with both organisations to increase participation in the sport. The BDA will lead the insight work going forward. A discussion took place, instigated by IND on the importance of the Community Facilitators at local councils. It was **resolved** that going forward a review of community engagement would take place.

### **Other Big Stones**

At the end of the presentation the CE gave further information on the other main focus areas which included Brand and PR agency engagement, Stakeholder Management and Experiential Activity.

## **5. 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. During this item the following further discussions took place.

### **Member Services and Development**

The CE highlighted the risk of not meeting the 10% affiliation growth target that had been set, based on the County return so far. Some counties were showing a growth and some a decline. The affiliation data and championship entry data so far didn't demonstrate any clear and consistent patterns. The Board concluded that Bowls England are currently experiencing unpredictable trends in affiliation as the generational trends of systemic decline are being challenged by new participation initiatives. It was noted that the affiliation figures currently coming in are using the September baseline and not being measured against the like for like May figures.

The Board resolved that a review of the Tournament License system should take place during the winter season which will involve a review on what other sports do and the benefits to both Clubs and Bowls England for licensing.

### **Championships and Competitions**

The CE proposed that the dates for the National Finals in 2023 would be Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> August to Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> August inclusive. Following a review of the rationale which included consideration of the dates of the World Championships, school holidays, regional finals and qualifying rounds it was **resolved** that these dates form the schedule for 2023 and can be made public.

A discussion took place, instigated by Chair over the potential for live streaming on some of the days during the event. This included a review of the budget, the platform and sponsorship. The Board **resolved** to amend the budget and allocate £10k to the live streaming services that would cover four days during the event.

### **International Success**

A discussion took place between C, COM and CE on the current organisation involvement in the BIBC and BIWBC. Following discussion by the full Board it was **resolved** that the



CE approach UK Sport with the view of facilitating a meeting with the other home nations. The Board reaffirmed that home nations competition remains an important part of the England international programme and developmental pathway, with the ultimate prize being success on the world stage.

In addition, the COA and DEV informed the board on the arrangements for the Junior Talent Day scheduled to be held at Victoria Park in June and an update was provided on the Commonwealth Games tickets that had been ring-fenced for Counties and Stakeholders.

### **Commercial and Finance**

Discussions took place on the continuing partner and sponsor opportunities that are being progressed. C, FIN and COM discussed the negotiations with the Defibrillator and Sumup providers with announcements being made in the recent Bowls England Newsletters.

### **Governance and Overheads**

The CE informed the Board that Daniel Ellicott had joined the team as Media and Content Officer and was settling in well.

## **6. Management Accounts and Year End**

Following the previous Board Meeting further investigations had taken place on the viability of moving year end. After seeking legal advice, it was noted that the proposed date change would provide governance implications which would include amendments to the Articles of Association, AGM and Appointment periods. It was **resolved** that FIN would produce a paper for the next board meeting that would take into account all the benefits and implications of amending the date.

The Board reviewed the accounts and other than the unknown factor of the affiliation fees the year end forecast was looking robust with the Sport England grant being incorporated in the budget. FIN congratulated the C on the vast improvement of the amount of clarity in the accounts and budgets. IND queried whether the rising inflation costs should be accounted for in the Budget. It was **resolved** that from the next financial year the forecasts would include two columns with one including the impact of inflation.

## **7. 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 reputational damage from disciplinary cases, the rapid increase in safeguarding cases, reputational damage from policies and regulations not being updated, under 18 events and travel and loss of affiliation income.

Disciplinary, Safeguarding and Affiliation feature elsewhere on the agenda with the Rules and Regulation update being moved to the following to the meeting. Discussion took place on the need to ensure the policies for England away trips, particularly involving under 18s, are fit for purpose.



It was noted that a full review of the risk register is scheduled to take place at the July Board Meeting and that going forward the paper should include the top five risks including any additional risks that might have increased.

## 8. Disciplinary Paper

Following the previous Board Meeting the C, CE and HBO had been tasked to put together a full paper on the status of the disciplinary function of Bowls England which would incorporate quick wins and identify ways in which the workload pressures could be reduced.

Following discussion it was **resolved** that an advert would be circulated for contractor to take on the administration disciplinary function alongside the DC and HBO, and be paid a yearly honorarium.

It was **resolved** that adverts should be circulated for additional members of the Disciplinary Committee with the aim of increasing the membership ten, these will include members from outside the sport and will ensure the diversity of the panel.

It was **resolved** that the current regulations be updated to include removing the time limits on Bowls England, removing the provision for panel changes, amending job titles, providing more clarity on membership and including the requirement for all Clubs and Counties to follow regulation 9, before coming back to the Board for approval in July.

It was further **resolved** that 'quick guides and checklists' be developed to assist members, clubs and counties with disputes that will focus heavily on less formal methods of resolving disputes.

## 9. Stakeholder Management

The CE had produced a paper on proposed stakeholder management. The Board discussed current stakeholder groups at length including expectations and engagements. The Board were in full agreement with the objectives the plan outlines, and supported the proposal of the Board members building county relationships. GOV suggested including the associate members, FIN suggested active social media posters whilst SIND encouraged focusing efforts on the key stakeholder groups that will help deliver strategy as otherwise resources may be stretched to thin. IND supported this view and stressed the importance of upward managing with end users and clubs.

## 10. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

The CE positioned the draft EDI Policy that had been produced by The Inclusion Advisory Group, which included Varsha Ragoobarsing and Helen Slimm. The policy had been produced for the Sport of Bowls, in line with directive from Sport England. HBO gave an update on the workings of the group and how the policy had been drafted, with an emphasis on the future drafting of a delivery action plan. A discussion took place on the implementation and measurement of the action plan, the Board **resolved** to adopt the policy on a Bowls England Branded document.

## 11. Safeguarding Update and Presentation



HBO gave the Board a brief update on the improvements made in the safeguarding area since the July 2021 Board Meeting. These included areas such as Organisational Commitment, Safeguarding Policies, Reporting, Case Management Process, Disciplinary Procedures and Case Record Management. The Board noted that since the last Board meeting Bowls England had received 11 new cases with 16 currently open cases. Whilst 23 cases were currently open for the sport as a whole. Most cases involve past offenders wishing to return to the sport.

The Welfare and Governance Manager of the BDA attended the Board Meeting to give a presentation on the work the Safeguarding Case Management group were currently undergoing and to update changes that had been implemented and still needed to be implemented to safeguard the sport.

It was highlighted that visibility and consistency when dealing with cases was as an important step on the Safeguarding Action Plan. Reporting procedure changes meant that all cases at every level of the sport must be referred the Case Management Group for advice through the National Lead Safeguarding Officer.

Going forward education to clubs and counties is key, and the need for a safeguarding officer to be in position at each club by 2025 was flagged as an important step.

The CE advised the Board that the cases had increased significantly because of the better work that Bowls England are doing in this area, but warned that it may present a capacity challenge in the future and acknowledged the emotional challenge from some of the work.

## **12. Any other Business**

The C asked the Board on the preferences for future meetings, it was **resolved** the meetings would be held every other month and HBO to prepare a schedule with all meetings taking place at The Ashorne Hill Hotel.

With no further business the Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for everyone for their contributions. The meeting closed at 5.45pm.