



## **BOWLS ENGLAND AGM – 25 FEBRUARY 2023**

This document has been developed to give County Associations the position of the Bowls England Board on the propositions that are being brought forward to the 2023 AGM.

### **Item 10 – Bowls England Affiliation Fee**

*Further to discussions in November, this paper gives County Associations context to our proposal to increase affiliation fees and will be helpful for your discussions.*

National Governing Bodies, or NGBs for short, are an essential part of the fabric of our nation's sporting landscape. We play a leadership role, act as our sport's ultimate custodian and govern activity within our sport. Clubs, organisations and individuals affiliate to their sport's NGB and benefit from services and support.

At Bowls England we have a clear mission - to promote and develop the sport of lawn bowls so it enriches the lives of its participants, connects communities and is in good health for future generations. We trust these intentions strike a chord.

Our role as an NGB is wide-ranging -

- We provide practical support to almost 2000 affiliated lawn bowls clubs and grassroots players. More of this later ... and working alongside Coach Bowls, EBUA and others, we provide the structures to educate and develop coaches, umpires and volunteers.
- Working with County Associations, we administer international and national lawn bowls competitions and events. Our National Competitions are experienced and enjoyed by thousands, bringing people together and creating lifelong memories.
- We manage talent development pathways to help-players fulfil their potential. And, for those who rise to the top, we manage our international teams including lawn bowls' representation within England's Commonwealth Games Team. As well as making us feel proud, success on the global stage is crucial for our sport's visibility and inspiring new people to have a go.
- As an NGB, this requires us to work with World Bowls, partner organisations like Commonwealth Games England, funders Sport England, venues and other nations' NGBs.
- We promote lawn bowls and lobby on its behalf to ensure its voice is heard. Our All To Play For campaign, investment in live streaming and media work are examples of our commitment to ensure more people recognize lawn bowls' fabulous qualities. This work is key in inspiring people to participate.
- We develop new ways to play our game to grow participation within our ever-changing society. Bowls' Big Weekend, Bowls Bash and the PlayBowls platform are key to make our sport more accessible to new audiences and potential participants irrespective of their background or circumstance.



- One of the primary responsibilities of an NGB is to ensure its sport provides a safe, open and inclusive environment for all. At Bowls England, we work hard to regulate the environment in which the sport is played including discipline and safeguarding.
- We actively seek and bid for major funds to support bowls and channel investment whether it be from commercial revenues or government funding. Over the last two years, we have secured over £400k from Sport England to help support our work, and we are working with new commercial partners to support our initiatives.
- And we act as a backstop when our sport is in need. This was never more evident during the Covid Pandemic when we helped clubs and counties navigate through the crisis, disseminating information, creating guidance and helping affiliated lawn bowls clubs access over £3m of government support.

NGBs function through investment from the public purse, commercial revenue and from those people enjoying the benefits of participating within that sport.

To help us perform our important role as an NGB and to harness the collective strength of our sport, local bowls clubs affiliate to their County Association and Bowls England by paying a fee. As part of all the above activity, this affiliation enables affiliated clubs to unlock a range of national services.

These services are more comprehensively detailed in the Club Support section of the Bowls England website and include –

- **Access to Player Recruitment initiatives**
  - We launched Bowls' Big Weekend in 2021. Hundreds of clubs have participated attracting an average of over 20 new players per session. Bowls Bash and play-bowls.com will open our clubs to a new audience.
- **Club Development and Education support**
  - The Bowls Development Alliance offers bespoke support to our affiliated clubs, including access to the Club Hub Programme, Club Health Checker and Education programme.
- **Business and Finance support**
  - We assist clubs to access information on potential grant funding Grant Finder. This investment has directly helped clubs using the system to secure almost £150,000 – this means for every pound we invested it has returned £8 to affiliated clubs.
- **Greens Maintenance support**
  - We continue to invest in our Greens Maintenance Advisory Service, which provides free advice and assistance to clubs regarding the bowling surface. The service has now responded to calls for assistance from more than 200 clubs, covering a wide range of topics from cutting height and thatch to coping through a drought.
- **Governance support**
  - We provide advice and support in areas including legal, safeguarding and disciplinary to help clubs to better manage their affairs when required.



- **Facilities support**
  - All affiliated clubs are eligible to apply for an interest-free Club Loan to enable them to make an important capital investment. Currently, almost £400,000 is out on loan to support affiliated clubs.
- **Competitions and Events**
  - Our national competitions and events continue to prove popular amongst our affiliated clubs – offering the chance to challenge players at a national level, make new friends and rekindle old rivalries.

Visit [www.bowlsengland.com](http://www.bowlsengland.com) and click on Club Support to see all the benefits in full.

The Bowls England affiliation fee is calculated per playing member, with each County Association also charging a fee for county services. Individuals benefit directly from affiliation and their club benefits from the services we provide, which in turn also adds value to the individual. The more playing members a club has, the more membership revenue they are generating, and the more they contribute, so there is an in-built fairness to the system.

A common misunderstanding is to see affiliation as just about competitions. It is not. All playing members of a club, whether they play in competitions or play the Bowls England formats, must be declared and affiliated if the club wishes to affiliate. This is because the benefits are for the whole club, and all members will be advantaged if their club makes the most of its relationship with us. If affiliated clubs or individual players wish to play in national competitions or championships, they pay on top to enter.

The affiliation fee to Bowls England has been £5 per playing member since 2010. It is a fraction of what most sports receive, for example golf £9.50 and squash £15, and has been declining in real terms over the last 13 years. This fee is equivalent to £3.20 now and therefore in real terms the affiliation income received by Bowls England has been reducing year on year.

A decline in participation has exacerbated the problem. Through this period of steady decline, Bowls England built up its reserves. Whilst this strategy allowed us to absorb the impact of Covid-19, the absence of investment to address reducing participation – marketing our sport, developing our game to meet the lifestyles of today's society, supporting you, our clubs and counties, to grow and thrive - proved self-defeating.

Our new strategy, Fit for the Future, charts a different course and we are working hard to arrest this downward cycle. Including bearing the brunt of the Covid shock, we will be drawing down on over £1m, over half our cash reserves.

Whilst we are making positive strides to reducing our reliance on affiliation by growing our commercial income, and earning more government support, to continue the level of investment into our Fit for the Future strategy, it is important we address the real terms decline in affiliation income. This has all been put into sharper focus with our current economic climate and the increase in our operating costs.

With all this in mind, **Bowls England is proposing at its 2023 AGM that the affiliation fee from the 2024 season will increase by £2, to £7 per playing member, which in real terms is less than what was being paid in 2010.**



Whilst we understand that some of our community will be facing financial pressures, given the real terms decline over the last 13 years and £2 being equivalent to less than 20p per month, we do not feel this will prohibit anyone from continuing to enjoy our great sport. Introducing this in 2024 also allows plenty of time for clubs to adjust their membership subscriptions for the 2024 season, which remain incredibly good value in comparison to most leisure activities.

Of course, at all levels of the sport, growing the numbers of people playing is key for the costs of delivering our sport to be spread across broader shoulders. We are seeing positive evidence of this with a 4% increase across the country, some counties growing by over 11% and some clubs more than tripling in size over the last 12 months. This affiliation increase will enable us to do more to help all clubs grow.

- ✓ More visibility and coverage of bowls across national media.
- ✓ More investment into recruitment and local marketing initiatives such as Bowls Bash.
- ✓ More support for volunteers in affiliated bowls clubs.

All those who play lawn bowls care about its future and want their children and grandchildren to derive the same enjoyment from our great sport that they do. This affiliation fee rise will support activity that will make this more likely and help ensure that we deliver our Fit for the Future strategy, grow our sport, keep the cost of playing bowls low and help ensure bowls clubs thrive for current players and future generations.

## **Item 11 – Bowls England Championships and Competitions Programme 2023**

### **1. Context**

One of the core priorities of our 2021-26 Strategy 'Fit for the Future' is to create positive playing experiences for our nation's bowlers. Delivering an annual programme of national competitions is an important part of that.

We know competitions are popular within our membership, but we are aware of several challenges. We have therefore committed to undertake a strategic review of our domestic competitions and a Working Party is being assembled to take this work forward. Our aspiration is that a revised competitions structure will -

- Be valued and enjoyed by players, retaining them in our sport.
- Stimulate opportunities for participation among those who may not otherwise play.
- Support international performance by providing an optimal environment to prepare our best players.
- Support our Performance Pathway by stretching and inspiring our most talented young players.
- Elevate the National Finals in the minds of all bowlers thus increasing spectator numbers and broadcast reach.

We are aware this work is starting 12 months later than anticipated, but it is now underway. Counties will be represented on the Working Party and consulted through the



process. Our aspiration is for the recommendations to be implemented for the 2024 season.

## **2. 2023 – Bowls England’s Plans and Board proposition**

**“That the Bowls England Board’s plans for the 2023 National Championships and Competition programme published on 1 December and detailed in the attached paper, including increasing National Championships qualifiers to 62, are ratified.”**

Our plans for the 2023 National Competitions and Finals programme were published on 1 December 2022 in order that all concerned, primarily players entering National Competitions, were aware of the dates of play. Arrangements at national and county level have been made, and players have entered the competitions, based on these plans.

In developing this year’s programme, we listened to feedback from the 2022 season particularly regarding the Regional Finals and number of qualifiers in National Championships from each county. Discussions at the Counties’ Conference were taken on board.

In making these decisions, it was also important to factor in our ability to operationally deliver the National Finals effectively within the 18-day window, the experience of competing players, the wellbeing of umpires, volunteers and staff and the perspective of our event partners.

With all this in mind, the National Finals schedule was developed consistent with a number of key principles, including but not limited to:

- Priority given to National Championships
- Increasing the number of qualifiers to 62 in all National Championships (with the exception of the Senior Fours and Junior Pairs, which remain at one per county). **This means an additional 14 qualification places and, with 30 rinks available, enables the green space at Victoria Park to be used maximally.** In all those events with 62 places, those 27 counties with the highest entries per event will receive two qualification places, with the remaining 8 receiving one place. Increasing this number will elongate the competition and disproportionately burden the schedule.
- No regional finals in National Competitions – all area winners proceeding directly to the National Finals will provide a significant increase in qualifying places available across our 35 events.
- Inclusion of Top Club Finals within the National Finals giving these teams the full National Finals experience.
- Minimising duplications wherever possible

The published dates for the National Finals are Thursday 10 to Sunday 27 August inclusive.

This plan provides an interim solution pending the outcome of the Competitions Working Party. As detailed below, it would be counter-productive to this process to make changes for 2023 and, at this late stage, cause unhelpful disruption for all concerned.



### **Bowls Dorset Proposition**

**“In the Final Stages of each National Championship (as defined in Bowls England Regulation 50 paragraph 1.4 dated April 2022) played at Victoria Park, Royal Leamington Spa, all Counties shall have at least two qualifying places for the 2023 season onwards.”**

*To date, we have received no supporting information from Bowls Dorset detailing how this proposition might be implemented.*

Bowls England has considered the implications of this proposition. If it is supported for 2023, the published plans for the 2023 will have to be reworked. There will be a significant impact on qualifying stages, the National Finals and our wider work including, but not limited to, the following:

- Regional Finals in National Competitions will be re-instated therefore reducing the opportunity of qualification in those events and increasing the cost of travel to participants.
- Top Club Finals will be moved to September.
- Travel expenses in National Competitions and National Championships will be reviewed due to additional costs from staging Regional Finals and Top Club Finals that are not currently within the competitions budget for 2023.
- Revised National Finals scheduling will cause inconvenience to those players, officials and spectators who have already made plans based on the published schedule.
- Activity to promote and develop the sport, which is identified as a top priority by our clubs and members, will receive less time from the staff team ahead of the 2023 season to manage the necessary changes to the National Finals schedule and organisation of early rounds of National Competitions.
- Regional finals and Top Club Finals will potentially clash with County Finals that have now been arranged based on the published schedule.

### **Worcestershire Bowling Association Proposition**

**“That Bowls England reinstate two qualifiers for all counties in the National Championships for 2024, with those counties with higher levels of entries, having three qualifiers.”**

If the Worcestershire proposition is supported for 2024, it will:

- Create inequality in qualification in National Championship events in comparison to entries.
- Compromise, affect and negate the work of the Competitions Working Party on qualification before it has started.
- Potentially lead to similar outcomes of the Dorset proposal but for 2024.



## **Bowls England Board Position on the Propositions**

As detailed in our statement in December 2022, we do not support the Dorset proposition for because it will:

- Create greater inequality between Counties in terms of the chances of qualifying for the National Finals based on entry numbers received. Counties with the largest number of entries have up to 20 times more entries than the smallest counties, and their players would have a correspondingly smaller chance of qualifying. *Please see Appendix 1 of how the Bowls England proposal will affect qualification based on 2022 figures.*
- Mean that plans for 2023 cannot be finalised by players, spectators or officials causing significant disruption and inconvenience.
- Negatively impact on the event delivery for officials, volunteers, county officials and staff, and possibly compromising our duty of care for our workforce's wellbeing
- Make no impact on entry numbers for National Championships given that many counties have already completed their competition entry process for the 2023 season.
- Make no impact in terms of qualification numbers for a clear majority of counties.
- Create additional work at all levels of the game, time which can be better invested in getting more people playing.
- Precede the National Competitions Review (see below) and will hamper the full review that has been agreed to be carried out by that group as part of our 'Fit for the Future' Strategy.

If the Dorset proposition is passed by county associations, then we shall need to change the domestic schedule and National Finals programme just over six weeks before the start of the season.

This will include:

- Reintroducing Regional Finals to enable the National Finals, with the additional rounds, to be completed within the allocated event period.
- Continuing to stage the Top Club, or other Finals, on a separate weekend.
- Amending the National Finals schedule for re-publication following the receipt of entries and publication of draws.

Similarly, we do not support the proposition put forward by Worcestershire for a similar change but from 2024. Whilst we acknowledge the desire to have more qualification places, this proposition will hamper the National Competitions Review process.

Our plans and proposition for 2023 is an effective solution in the context of the current competition programme. It balances a range of considerations in terms of delivering competitive events in 2023, including the National Finals, and gives the Working Party time to produce a more rounded approach from 2024.



**Appendix 1 – impact of 62 qualifiers on the National Championships based on 2022 entry figures.**

As you can see from these figures, entrants in counties that have one qualifier have more chance of qualifying to the National Finals than entrants in the counties with larger number of qualifiers.

National Championship Entries - Men (projection based on 2022 entries)							
<b>Numbers 1 &gt; 27</b>		Receive Two Representatives at National Finals					
<b>Numbers 28 &gt; 35</b>		Receive One Representative at National Finals					
<b>County</b>	<b>Singles</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Pairs</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Triples</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Fours</b>
1 Kent	275	1 Kent	335	1 Kent	203	1 Kent	127
2 Hampshire	268	2 Surrey	261	2 Surrey	147	2 Surrey	105
3 Surrey	257	3 Hampshire	229	3 Hampshire	140	3 Devon	87
4 Devon	228	4 Devon	188	4 Sussex	126	4 Hampshire	82
5 Cornwall	186	5 Sussex	179	5 Devon	122	5 Sussex	77
6 Essex	162	6 Essex	164	6 Essex	102	6 Gloucestershire	68
7 Gloucestershire	151	7 Cornwall	155	7 Gloucestershire	100	7 Cornwall	64
8 Sussex	148	8 Berkshire	154	8 Berkshire	94	8 Essex	60
9 Hertfordshire	146	9 Hertfordshire	144	9 Hertfordshire	94	9 Hertfordshire	60
10 Berkshire	143	10 Gloucestershire	142	10 Cornwall	91	10 Warwickshire	55
11 Warwickshire	132	11 Warwickshire	129	11 Warwickshire	76	11 Berkshire	51
12 Wiltshire	131	12 Somerset	123	12 Northamptonshir	73	12 Northamptonshir	49
13 Northumberland	128	13 Middlesex	114	13 Somerset	73	13 Wiltshire	47
14 Middlesex	120	14 Northumberland	104	14 Bedfordshire	72	14 Bedfordshire	46
15 Durham	118	15 Wiltshire	104	15 Leicestershire	71	15 Somerset	46
16 Bedfordshire	116	16 Bedfordshire	103	16 Wiltshire	69	16 Leicestershire	44
17 Somerset	112	17 Leicestershire	97	17 Middlesex	64	17 Northumberland	43
18 Bedfordshire	102	18 Northamptonshir	95	18 Norfolk	60	18 Middlesex	39
19 Lincolnshire	98	19 Buckinghamshire	92	19 Northumberland	60	19 Norfolk	39
20 Oxfordshire	95	20 Oxfordshire	87	20 Durham	57	20 Durham	38
21 Dorset	93	21 Durham	85	21 Oxfordshire	57	21 Oxfordshire	38
22 Northamptonshir	93	22 Norfolk	82	22 Buckinghamshire	55	22 Suffolk	36
23 Buckinghamshire	86	23 Suffolk	81	23 Suffolk	54	23 Dorset	35
24 Leicestershire	86	24 Cumbria	75	24 Lincolnshire	52	24 Lincolnshire	32
25 Norfolk	86	25 Dorset	73	25 Cumbria	50	25 Yorkshire	31
26 Yorkshire	76	26 Lincolnshire	71	26 Dorset	50	26 Cumbria	29
27 Cumbria	73	27 Yorkshire	69	27 Yorkshire	47	27 Buckinghamshire	28
28 Worcestershire	62	28 Worcestershire	60	28 Worcestershire	43	28 Worcestershire	27
29 Cambridgeshire	52	29 Isle of Wight	46	29 Isle of Wight	34	29 Isle of Wight	21
30 Isle of Wight	49	30 Nottinghamshire	42	30 Nottinghamshire	29	30 Huntingdonshire	19
31 Huntingdonshire	48	31 Cambridgeshire	41	31 Cambridgeshire	27	31 Cambridgeshire	18
32 Lancashire	47	32 Herefordshire	41	32 Herefordshire	26	32 Herefordshire	18
33 Nottinghamshire	47	33 Huntingdonshire	41	33 Huntingdonshire	26	33 Nottinghamshire	17
34 Herefordshire	35	34 Lancashire	24	34 Lancashire	17	34 Lancashire	11
35 Derbyshire	22	35 Derbyshire	17	35 Derbyshire	11	35 Derbyshire	8

  

Criteria for number of qualifiers at National Finals:	
1.	Number of entries by competition
2.	Number of entries by County (All comps) Men Only
3.	Number of entries by County (All comps) both Men's & Women's





**National Championship Entries - Women (projection based on 2022 entries)**

<b>Numbers 1 &gt; 27</b>	Receive Two Representatives at National Finals
<b>Numbers 28 &gt; 35</b>	Receive One Representative at National Finals

County	Singles	County	Pairs	County	Triples	County	Fours
1 Hampshire	115	1 Hampshire	145	1 Essex	118	1 Kent	60
2 Kent	114	2 Kent	142	2 Surrey	96	2 Essex	59
3 Cornwall	107	3 Surrey	123	3 Hampshire	93	3 Hampshire	57
4 Devon	103	4 Essex	107	4 Kent	85	4 Surrey	53
5 Essex	97	5 Devon	104	5 Devon	84	5 Devon	52
6 Surrey	96	6 Hertfordshire	93	6 Sussex	75	6 Sussex	45
7 Hertfordshire	73	7 Cornwall	79	7 Hertfordshire	69	7 Hertfordshire	40
8 Bedfordshire	65	8 Sussex	72	8 Cornwall	56	8 Cornwall	37
9 Warwickshire	63	9 Leicestershire	70	9 Warwickshire	52	9 Gloucestershire	35
10 Sussex	61	10 Warwickshire	70	10 Gloucestershire	49	10 Wiltshire	34
11 Dorset	57	11 Gloucestershire	70	11 Berkshire	49	11 Berkshire	30
12 Wiltshire	55	12 Wiltshire	69	12 Leicestershire	48	12 Warwickshire	27
13 Leicestershire	50	13 Berkshire	62	13 Wiltshire	46	13 Leicestershire	26
14 Berkshire	48	14 Bedfordshire	62	14 Dorset	43	14 Dorset	26
15 Gloucestershire	47	15 Dorset	58	15 Bedfordshire	42	15 Bedfordshire	25
16 Yorkshire	44	16 Somerset	48	16 Middlesex	38	16 Middlesex	23
17 Middlesex	42	17 Middlesex	47	17 Buckinghamshire	36	17 Somerset	20
18 Suffolk	38	18 Yorkshire	44	18 Somerset	34	18 Buckinghamshire	18
19 Oxfordshire	38	19 Buckinghamshire	43	19 Norfolk	30	19 Yorkshire	18
20 Cumbria	36	20 Norfolk	41	20 Northamptonshire	30	20 Norfolk	17
21 Durham	35	21 Suffolk	38	21 Yorkshire	29	21 Durham	16
22 Lincolnshire	34	22 Oxfordshire	37	22 Suffolk	26	22 Northamptonshire	15
23 Isle of Wight	34	23 Cumbria	36	23 Oxfordshire	25	23 Oxfordshire	14
24 Somerset	29	24 Northamptonshire	33	24 Durham	21	24 Worcestershire	14
25 Northamptonshire	28	25 Durham	32	25 Worcestershire	21	25 Isle of Wight	12
26 Buckinghamshire	28	26 Worcestershire	32	26 Isle of Wight	21	26 Cambridgeshire	12
27 Norfolk	26	27 Isle of Wight	32	27 Cumbria	18	27 Suffolk	9
28 Worcestershire	24	28 Northumberland	31	28 Lincolnshire	16	28 Lincolnshire	9
29 Cambridgeshire	22	29 Cambridgeshire	22	29 Northumberland	14	29 Northumberland	9
30 Herefordshire	21	30 Lincolnshire	21	30 Cambridgeshire	14	30 Herefordshire	9
31 Huntingdonshire	20	31 Herefordshire	18	31 Herefordshire	11	31 Nottinghamshire	9
32 Nottinghamshire	20	32 Nottinghamshire	16	32 Nottinghamshire	10	32 Cumbria	8
33 Northumberland	17	33 Huntingdonshire	14	33 Huntingdonshire	9	33 Huntingdonshire	8
34 Lancashire	15	34 Derbyshire	11	34 Derbyshire	6	34 Derbyshire	6
35 Derbyshire	7	35 Lancashire	7	35 Lancashire	3	35 Lancashire	3

Bowls England  
24 January 2023