



# Board Minutes

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023 at 1 p.m.  
The Ashorne Hill, 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)  
Chief Executive: Jon Cockcroft (CE)  
Head of Business Operations: Helen Slimm (HBO)  
Events Officer: Laura Blatherwick Item 8 only. (EO)

### Apologies

Independent Director – Marketing and Communications: Harry Nijjar (MAC)

## 2. Previous Minutes – accuracy/matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022 were approved to be signed as a true and correct record. There were no other matters arising.

## 3. Declaration of Interest

No interests declared.

## 4. Operational Report and RAG Status

The CE had, in advance of the meeting, circulated an operational report to all Board members providing an overview of the activity across the business since the previous Board meeting. During the meeting the following further discussions took place.

### Member services and development

The Board commented on the success of the Bowls England GrantFinder. Since Bowls England had entered into the agreement, the investment has directly helped clubs secure £134,797 in funding. For every pound that Bowls England invested £7.96 had been returned to affiliated clubs. The initiative was started by FIN and the C thanked him on behalf of the Board for his involvement.



The Awards Event planning was progressing well, with 106 nominations being made in total. The CE made the Board aware that the ticket sales were slightly behind this time last year. Whilst this does not pose too much of a financial risk, the team were working hard to increase sales. An additional discussion took place on the County of the Year category, which highlighted the extent to which County Associations were engaging with national programmes. It was agreed that we would explore this further through our ongoing relationship building work with counties.

Applications for the Celebration Matches player entry had closed with player number similar to the previous year.

FIN provided an update on the affiliation working party, notifying the Board that Surrey's John Tucker had stepped down from the working party to focus on Surrey's work on men's and women's amalgamation. He informed the Board that they were not currently seeking a replacement. The working party is meeting face-to-face meeting in March to discuss various affiliation models.

#### Championships and Competitions

Entries for the National Competitions opened 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023, including plans for the 2023 domestic season and National Finals. Following feedback from 2022, and subject to any changes made at the AGM, Regional Finals would not be held in individual National Competitions. The CE informed the Board that sales were tracking well, however entries were down in the club competitions owing to going on sale later than usual. A plan has been put in place for the communications activity throughout the remaining entry window which will focus on the Club events, including Champion of Champions.

IND queried the entry numbers at club level, asking if the data showed the types of clubs not entering, which would then enable marketing to be tailored accordingly. The CE agreed this would be a good approach, but currently we don't have such a sophisticated way of interrogating our club data.

SIND asked for the Competition Working Party, when established, to review the entry criteria for the women's team events. The CE confirmed that the Working Party would be looking at the culture of competitions in general, to identify how we can encourage more women to have the confidence to play competitively. In addition, the working party will be strongly considering the option of open competitions rather than gender based. COM added that many women had not returned to competitive bowls after the pandemic and that travel was a barrier.

COA commented on the unique selling point of competitive sports, highlighting the chance to play against the top performers rather than focusing on the winning aspect. IND supported this narrative, confirming the need to capture the motivations within the current players for entering and then tailor marketing efforts to attract mass participation. A discussion took place on the future of three inter club championships and six inter county championships as opposed to establishing one really prestigious event to increase the motivation of players. COM confirmed that the views of the Board would be taken into account during the review.

#### International Success



The CE informed the Board that the Performance Team had finalised its plans for the 2023 season, with the World Championships in Australia being the highpoint of the season. The home nations, have after a review, have released plans for the 2023 junior and senior internationals.

- Senior International Squad Day (Royal Leamington Spa) – Saturday 20th May
- British Isles Championships (Ayr, Scotland) – Wednesday 28th and Thursday 29th June
- British Isles Senior Internationals (Ayr, Scotland) – Friday 30th June to Sunday 2nd July inclusive
- Junior Squad Day (Royal Leamington Spa) – Sunday 9th July
- U18 International Test Match (Wales) – Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th August
- World Championships (Gold Coast, Australia) – Tuesday 29th August to Sunday 10th September
- British Isles Junior Internationals (Llandrindod Wells, Wales) – Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th September

Scotland will be hosting the Senior Internationals in 2023, with Bowls England having offered to deliver the event in 2024.

The CE also provided the Board with an update on the performance summit and the performance management team. A meeting is taking place in early February to ensure all is in place for a successful summer programme.

#### Commercial

The CE gave the board an update on the current commercial partnerships which included Riviera Travel, Dennis Mowers, Sutton Winson and new partnerships that were currently being finalised.

#### Brand and communications

The Board were informed that the Annual Report was currently being compiled and a discussion took place on how this could be utilised for influencing key stakeholders. IND suggested an A3 info graphic poster could be sent to clubs pre-season. It was felt this would be more useful for clubs to add to their noticeboard than a full copy of the annual report. SIND suggested a discussion with Bowls International to investigate whether the annual report, or the poster, could be included within their magazine circulation. It was resolved the CE investigate the possibility.

#### Governance

The C updated the Board on recent meetings with Warwick District Council in relation to the planned closure of Riverside House. The Board were informed that the CE and HBO were in discussions with the Council about alternatives and beginning to scope out other premises for the Bowls England Head Office.

HBO provided an update to the Board on the disciplinary function. Two National Panels had sat since the last Board Meeting alongside two requests for appeals from County Hearings. The HBO informed the Board that the Disciplinary Working Party is in the



process of being re-established. In addition, amendments have been made to the website to include clear and useful information to assist member, clubs and counties in dealing with complaints of misconduct.

It was noted that a review of the sport had been held by the Child Protection in Sport Unit. The preliminary report was discussed by the Board alongside the current initiatives to encourage all clubs to register their safeguarding officers. It was **resolved** that Bowls England going forward investigate a training course for National and County Volunteers.

The C gave the Board an update on the recent applications for Independent Director, with interviews set to take place on the 24<sup>th</sup> February. It was further noted that Sheila Storey, Northumberland, had been elected as Junior Vice President. Sheila had recently been invited to meet the team at the office for an induction alongside the President and Chair.

## 5. Management Accounts

The CE presented the Management Accounts for the end of November. With only two months into the financial year, there was nothing substantive to discuss. It was further **resolved** to schedule an additional virtual Board Meeting to sign off the accounts for year ended 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

## 6. Risk Register and ICC

The Board had been provided with the risk register, highlighting the top five risks to Bowls England:

- CWG Status, covered in Agenda Item 10
- AGM Vote against the Board, covered in Agenda Item 7
- Head Office Provision, covered in Agenda Item 4
- Facility Stock, a discussion took place on the possibility of joint facility services with the Bowls Development Alliance.
- Disciplinary, covered in Agenda Item 4

SIND identified that safeguarding should be added to the risk register as a reputational risk for those clubs that currently do not have a safeguarding officer. After discussion it was further agreed that a loss of income risk should be added for clubs that are no longer eligible to affiliate due to not be compliant with obtaining a safeguarding officer by the 2025 cut off period.

The meeting paused at 2.36 p.m. and reconvened at 3 p.m.

## 7. COMPETITION/AFFILIATION PAPER & TOR

The CE, along with Board and Staff team members, had prepared a paper to be circulated to County Associations ahead of the Annual General Meeting. The paper contained three sections covering; the terms of reference for the competitions working



party, and commentary on the propositions for competitions and affiliation. The CE gave the Board a preamble to paper and asked for feedback ahead of distribution.

#### Competition Terms of Reference

It was noted that there had been a wide range of interest in the Competitions Working Party. The Board supported the terms of reference and noted that interviews would be held by the CE, COM and the Head of Sport Development.

#### Competitions Propositions

The Board approved the Bowls England Board proposition as presented, with the following amendments:

- Amending the 2023 dates, to include a potential option for 2024. This would just be a precaution in case the Competition Working Party recommendations are not supported for 2024.
- To ensure the paper is clear as to why Bowls England made changes to the 2023 format and schedule. Including listening to the players by reducing the Regional Finals and increasing the chances for more players to attend the National Finals.
- Make clear that 18 is the maximum number of days for the National Finals.

#### Affiliation Proposition

The Board approved the proposition as presented, but asked for two amends:

- Amendment to the line 'broadly in line with RPI' to add in the word 'normally'
- Make it clear that future plans are pending the decision of the AWP

## **8. Champions Dinner**

The Events Officer joined the meeting at this point. A paper had been prepared for the Board and circulated in advance providing a report and feedback from both the Champions Dinner and the County Conference.

#### Champions Dinner

The Champions Dinner was re-introduced following a vote at the 2022 AGM, the event was for both male and female winners and finalists at the National Finals 2022. The EO gave a brief overview that included:

- Tickets were priced at £42.50 for an individual ticket, this included a welcome drink, three course meal, professional photographer, host and DJ.
- Whilst there was some initial resistance to the ticket prices comparatively to previous years, this did not affect the sales with the event selling out at a 300 capacity.
- Tickets sold out relatively easily and thus did not impact heavily on marketing resource.
- 47 trophies were collected on the night.
- There was good social media engagement. Facebook received 1388 reactions, with 128 comments and 67 shares.



- 33 guests completed the survey out of 304 guests who attended the event. Overall event satisfaction scored an average of 5.2 on the event feedback form.

SIND asked for further information on meal prices. The EO explained that for another meal option to be added onto the event it was a £9 uplift by the hotel. A discussion took place on the viability of adding additional menu items and increasing the ticket price.

DEV questioned the choice of host, and the CE provided background. GOV remarked on the running order of the event, with general agreement that running order should be to feed the guests first.

Following discussion, it was resolved that the event should return to the Hilton on the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2023 with a priority booking window to be offered to prize winners. It was further resolved that the EO and GOV review the delivery of the event in terms of timings and host. Consideration should also be given to offering an enhanced menu with an increase in ticket price or retaining a similar price to this year.

Following a discussion between the EO, CE and GOV it was also resolved that a review of the JustGo booking system take place, as it was highlighted that it had prevented some guests from attending.

#### Counties' Conference

After a successful County Conference in 2021, Bowls England decided to host this event annually. The County Conference is a chance for the County Administrators to come together to hear from the Bowls England Staff and Board about what BE have been working on, our future direction and to discuss pertinent topics and get the counties thoughts and ideas on these topics. The EO gave a brief overview that included:

- The conference enabled 90 delegates to come together for the day. 33 of the 35 Counties were represented along with representatives from DBE, EUBA, FEB, BDA, Coach Bowls and the Bowls England Staff, Board and Presidential Teams.
- The feedback from the event was positive, with 100% finding the event useful and feeling that they could share their opinions in a positive way.
- There was an increased show of support and alignment from the delegates.
- The event was delivered under budget.

The Board discussed the feedback, and it was resolved to continue the event for next year. The informal meal on the Friday evening received good feedback, but should be more organised next year.

## **9. Presidential Paper**

The Presidential Team met with the C, GOV and CE during the National Finals, during the meeting the Presidential Team asked for the Board updating the Presidential Uniform and to review the Immediate Past President Position. The GOV and HBO had prepared a paper for the Board that looked at the both recommendations alongside the business wide implications.

Following discussion it was **resolved** that the position of Immediate Past President be removed from 2023 onwards. The reasoning behind this decision was:





- Four years is a long commitment for anyone thinking of applying for post.
- The position of Past President is more symbolic than functionary.
- The Presidential Team raised the concern of costs particularly in the current climate. The removal of the Immediate Past President position would mean that the yearly payments could be increased.
- The current President is already aware and fully supports the proposal for 2023.

This would require two amendments to the Presidential Protocol, and amendments to future job descriptions.

It was further **resolved** that, following the ongoing challenges of sourcing the blue material for the blazers, and confirmation that the Presidential Team were comfortable about moving away from the blazers and adopting a less formal approach, that the blue blazers be removed from the Presidential Uniform. The kit tender will cover less formal uniform for the team and clothing at County Presentations and meetings such as the AGM should be lounge suits with the chain of office.

## 10. World Bowls Strategy & CWG Formats

The CE gave the Board an update on recent changes at World Bowls. A new strategy has been drafted to frame World Bowls' work over the coming years and they have asked the member nations for feedback. IND questioned whether the strategy was aimed at Bowls in general or at World Bowls on their own. SIND and FIN highlighted that the strategy appears more focused at attracting new member nations rather than motivating the current member to grow and develop.

The most significant challenge to World Bowls currently is that the 2030 Commonwealth Games Bid from Hamilton does not include Lawn Bowls. This highlights the importance of bowls modernizing its approach so that it remains attractive to the Commonwealth Games Federation and host venues.

Following a discussion that involved all members of the Board, the Board reviewed suggestions presented by World Bowls to seize the opportunity to make the look and feel of the 2026 games in Victoria different and exciting.

The IND and C discussed the merits of major international competitions and their impact on mass participation. It was acknowledged that the major games need to be short, entertaining and easy to follow. Although this may not change the core of the sport, there is evidence to suggest that you can link the visibility of sport to the participation in that sport.

It was **resolved** that instead of supporting the proposals by World Bowls, we ask them to approach the CWF in the first instance to establish what they would like to see and then we can use that as a basis for discussions on the new format of the Commonwealth Game.

## 12. Any other Business



The Chair updated the Board on a recent meeting with the BDA that was attended by the C, GOV and CE. The meeting was in response to the recommendations to amend the BDA articles allowing other National Governing Bodies (ESMBA and BCGBA) to join the BDA at Board Level. After discussion and understanding of the assurances made by the BDA Chair, the Board **resolved** to agree proposal given the reassurances that have been made.

With no other business the meeting was closed at 16.53 p.m.