



Board Minutes

Tuesday 18th July 2023 at 10 a.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 Competitive Events: Margaret Docherty (COM)
Director of Development: Adam Tanner (DEV)
Director of Governance: Foster Johnson (GOV)
Independent Director: Dr Anna Molony (SIND)
Independent Director: Jo Doust (JD)
Independent Director: James Wurr (JW)
Chief Executive: Jon Cockcroft (CE)
Head of Business Operations: Helen Slimm (HBO) removed for Item 9 only
Rowland Jack – Governance United

Director of Finance: Stephen Hemsley (FIN) Item 5 onwards
Chief Executive from World Bowls: Neil Dalrymple (ND) Item 13 only
Clubs and Participation Officer: Jasbir Batt (JB) Item 7 only

Apologies

Director of Coaching: Mal Evans (COA)

The C welcomed Rowland Jack from Governance United. As part of the review of the effectiveness of the Bowls England board, Rowland was in attendance at the board meeting as an observer.

2. Previous Minutes – accuracy/matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th May 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, in advance of the meeting, had circulated an operational report to all Board members. This provided an overview of the day-to-day business activity since the previous Board meeting.

The CE informed the Board that since the data had been circulated relating to affiliation; Yorkshire and Kent had provided additional affiliation data, which increased the growth of affiliation from 1.2% to 1.4%. All Board Members discussed the affiliation numbers,



which included a debate on local authority facilities, working member clubs, federation, geographical differences with falling numbers in northern counties, club facilities and sustainable club models. The CE gave an update on the recent initiatives such as Bowls Bash and PlayBowls, which are progressing but not at the desired pace. The CE raised concerns about the lack of resource going into local club development and a discussion was had about the service and support provided by the Bowls Development Alliance.

The C commented on the approval for the use of Acelepryn on bowls greens, stating that it was a great announcement for the sport and expressed his disappointment at the timelines surrounding the club mail out. The CE acknowledged this was later than hoped.

A discussion took place on the arrangements for the Aviva National Finals, with the Board confirming that they are happy to take on an ambassadorial role for the event. The Board discussed the role of the Friends of English Bowling at the Aviva National Finals and how they could contribute to club development and participation. The CE will supply the Board with spreadsheet confirming the VIP attendance at the National Finals.

The recent announcement surrounding Victoria pulling out as hosts for the 2026 Commonwealth Games was discussed at length, with concerns being raised about the impact this might have on Sport England's funding of the performance programme. This prompted a discussion on the long-term financial viability of the international performance programme. The CE had received a quote for a performance strategy to be developed to give the Board direction and provide a long-term plan. The Board approved the spend in this area and the CE lead this work with a specialist called Jon Austin, who was previously the performance director of Badminton England.

The COM gave an update on the recent British Isles series, where the England Women in particular played very well. Whilst the results ended up in favour of the England Women and the new format was more enjoyable to watch, she noted that there was an overload of support staff and the facilities provided at Ayr were not favourable to spectators. JW queried who hosts the event and what the commercial opportunities were for Bowls England. The CE, JD and JW discussed wider opportunities and the benefit of nations playing on the sporting landscape, which highlighted the importance of the performance strategy. The C asked for a wider discussion to take place with the performance team on whether so many support staff were needed to be in attendance. A further discussion took place on three incidents of sub-standard behaviour involving Bowls England representatives, all of which had or will be addressed with those involved.

The CE announced that Aviva had agreed to provide additional support for the streaming of the Aviva National Finals. This was positively received.

In relation to governance and overheads, the CE updated the board on some challenging safeguarding cases that were currently being managed by the Case Management Group with the HBO giving the board a verbal report on a current case that had been referred to the National Safeguarding Panel.

The CE gave an update on the new office within the Tennis Pavilion at Victoria Park, which will be renamed 'The Pavilion'. It was hoped that the Staff team will be operational in the new premises on the conclusion of the Aviva National Finals. The new building has a £3.3K one year lease. The DEV offered to review the lease agreement.

SIND gave thoughts on the AWP paper that had been circulated alongside the Operational Report. All other Board Members were asked to provide their report directly to the FIN. DEV queried the current status of the relationship with Aceit, the CE advised that contract was now finalised following discussions regarding an online store.

5. Management Accounts

The CE presented the Management Accounts for the end of May which were approved by the Board.

The CE updated the Board on the End of Year forecast, which included additional costs that were incurred in relation to the International Events. The anticipated staff savings from vacant positions, were offset by recruitment fees and temporary support that was engaged.

The team had made a couple of decisions that cost more but felt right in relation to BBW and event streaming, in addition to investing in the Aviva relationship. However, other savings and an increase in revenue has helped.

FIN applauded the year-end forecast and stated that it was now the right time to do it, he informed the Board that we would look at closing the gap on overspend and stressed the need to keep up with a year-end forecast.

A review on resources for next year took place. In its long-term forecasts, Bowls England had committed to break even, but this would need to be considered in line with the importance of putting in more resources to fulfil the commitment to grow participation, and tough choices lay ahead.

SIND requested that the CE and FIN review additional grants through charities which focus on the movement and health aspects of sports. JW provided details of the government grant finder.

6. Risk Register and ICC

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

- Safeguarding Cases
- Facility Stock
- Disciplinary
- Loss of Income
- Legal and Compliance

There was nothing else to add verbally on the risks. JD discussed the importance of the value of the risk register and the dates aligned to risks. With a request to review breaking out long term and short-term risks, so that the long-term risks we have no control over do not clog up the key risks being faced each Board Meeting.



7. Bowls' Big Weekend Review

Jasbir Batt, Bowls England Clubs and Participation Officer joined the meeting for this agenda item. A paper had been prepared and circulated in advance presenting a full overview of the 2023 Bowls' Big Weekend.

The paper highlighted many notable successes including great feedback, the features on mainstream media and the spread of the Bowls' Big Weekend Brand. Overall, each club event saw an average of 31 attendees almost double 2022 and the average satisfaction rate on the feedback was 4.6/5 demonstrating that most clubs had been successful in creating playing experiences. All the Board, Staff, Presidential and High Performance teams were out promoting the event at clubs throughout the country.

The SIND queried the club support that takes place following Bowls' Big Weekend, and it was resolved that next year more information will be sent post-event to encourage clubs to follow up with participants and invite them back. A discussion took place between JB, JW, JD, SIND and CE on the resources in general including signage, checklists and images. It was noted that there was an increased opportunity for clubs to purchase more marketing materials, with a suggestion that these should be more generic.

Following a full review it was resolved that Bowls' Big Weekend would take place between May 24th and 27th 2024.

8. Competition Review

CE gave a preamble on the importance of the Competitions Working Party and explained that the project needed more structure, which he felt that this was now in place through the development of a clear positioning paper. This had already been shared with the Counties and was circulated to the Board. It was noted that the Counties had sympathised with the size and scale of the work, supporting the extended timeframes. It was agreed that the formats and programme would remain the same for 2024, and that the changes would be ratified at the 2024 AGM for implementation in 2025.

The Board discussion included the timeliness of the papers, the use of the Buddy System, the debatable points, the overarching concepts, central management via the portal and timescales of the completed review.

It was resolved that the remit for the working party is to suggest the desired formats, but not the finance or costings. This remains with the Board.

The next meeting of the competition working party is scheduled for week commencing 24th July.

9. Employee Satisfaction and Recommendations

A paper had been circulated detailing the findings from the staff satisfaction survey which was conducted in May. The survey covered engagement, culture, development and training, reward and recognition and communication. In all areas, staff satisfaction had improved, and the scores were positive. The CE recommended that the



development and training programme continue in 2023/24, that the review of the staff benefits is completed with options discussed amongst staff and that the team revisit the CARE values and how they inform team culture, particularly with the office move.

The CE advised the board that two members of the team were departing – Varsha Ragoobarsing and Helen Slimm. Whilst this news is disappointing and challenging for a small business, it provides an opportunity to revisit the business operations department structure particularly given the increasing challenges around governance and compliance issues that are facing all sports.

10. 2023/24 Planning

The CE gave the Board an overview of the 2023/2024 planning process, which had included two really productive planning sessions with the staff team. He explained that in terms of the paper overview, the general feeling with the staff team is that we are wading through lots of difficult work rather than the tangible prospects of performing to the strategy.

It was very apparent by the staff team that effective data management is an issue therefore Goodform, a specialist agency, had been engaged to provide a plan. The documentation was presented to the Board, who agreed this needed to be a focus for the next operational year.

Discussions took place that included the alignment with the previous operational plan, data management, visibility, marketing relationships, the Bowls Development Alliance and super volunteers.

Following a discussion on current club services, it was resolved that we remove the Bowls England tournament licenses and allow clubs to hold events without applying for a license. This would free up officer time, to be used elsewhere.

The Chair thanked the CE and the Staff Team for the detailed operational plan and review.

11. World Bowls Background

The Chief Executive Officer of World Bowls was attending the Board Meeting, under agenda item 13 to present the current workings of World Bowls. In advance, the CE had prepared a background paper for the Board to review ahead of the meeting.

Discussions took place on the global event programme, finances, visibility, return on investment for the member nations, the governance structure and the representation of each member nation.

12. World Bowls

The C gave a warm welcome to Neil Dalrymple, the CEO of World Bowls, and thanked him for coming to speak to the Board.



ND thanked the Board for allowing him to attend; and then gave a background on himself, the role at World Bowls and the sport in Australia. He discussed the changes that he had seen take place within the sport over the last 15 years.

His overview of World Bowls included the Background, Events, Governance, Shorter Formats, Commonwealth Games, Olympics and Commercial Rights.

The Board, through their discussions with ND, sought further information on the formats of events and the commercial rights that are available when hosting events.

13. Adam Tanner Australia Trip

DEV had recently visited Australia as a personal trip, whilst he was there he attended a number of Bowls Australia events and he presented the Board with his findings, the overview included five key areas; participation, supporting features, tournament delivery and the sport profile.

The C thanked Dev for his thoughts.

With the business of the Board concluded, the Chair asked for any views on the Affiliation Working Party to be sent directly to the FIN.

The meeting was closed at 16.25 p.m.