

Bowls England Board Minutes

Date: 26th June 2024

Venue: Delta Hotel, Warwick

Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

Board Chair: David Tucker (Chair)
Senior Independent Director: Dr Anna Molony (AM)
Member-elected Director: Mr Adam Tanner (AT)
Member-elected (Finance) Director: Mr Stephen Hemsley (SH)
Independent Director: Mr Jo Doust (JD)
Independent Director: Mr James Wurr (JW)
Member-elected Director: Mr Mal Evans (ME)
Member-elected (Competitions and Events) Director: Mrs Margaret Docherty (MD)
Chief Executive: Mr Jon Cockcroft (JC)
Head of Business Operations: Mrs Victoria Underwood (VU)

1. Apologies

Member-elected (Governance) Director: Mr Foster Johnson (FJ)

2. Previous Minutes – accuracy/matters arising.

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th April 2024 were approved to be signed as a true and correct record.

The Board Meeting Action List was discussed and updated.

ITEM 4 Operational Update Overview: The Operational Update provided an overview of key activities since the previous meeting, delivered by board members and Bowls England staff. A summary of the information discussed can be found below.

Member Services and Development:

Affiliation:

- Affiliation numbers have decreased by 1% to 91,823, with a 2.6% reduction in affiliated clubs, indicating growth within affiliated clubs.
- Female membership increased from 32.6% to 33.3%.
- Affiliation income rose by £178,586 compared to last year as the fee increase kicked in, but is projected to be £10k below budget after late affiliations.
- Affiliation increased in nine counties, while 23 showed declines.

ACTION: BE staff to ring-around to gather county associations' views with a detailed exercise to correlate other data against these trends.



ACTION: Differentiation required between Council Owned and Managed Clubs, and Council Leased Clubs. This needs to be added to the survey.

Bowls Bash:

- Marketing efforts increased, with 159 clubs accredited and 81 attending information sessions.
- Data on trends showed steady engagement growth.

ACTION: Identify how to capture clubs information from clubs that don't want to register on the portal

play-bowls.com:

- Club data is being uploaded, with manual work for contact details of clubs without email addresses. Testing and communications to stakeholders are forthcoming.

Bowls' Big Weekend:

- Anecdotal reports from the weekend were largely positive. A survey has been distributed to clubs and attendees to ascertain the quality, impact and effectiveness of the event to clubs. The Board will receive a full review in August.

ACTION: Survey results presented at the next Board Meeting (August)

Bowls Development Alliance:

- A data aggregation project has been agreed upon to provide a global view of bowls participation, aligned with Sport England's data and evidence-based approach.
- Discussions with BDA Chair Malcolm Douglas forming a sub-committee to focus on Sport England relationships and funding.

Relationship with the BDA continues to strengthen and BE is working closer and more effectively with them, which in turns leads to positive outcomes at club level.

Celebration Matches:

- Three fixtures have been completed with positive outcomes. 21 fixtures planned for the next season.

Championships and Competitions:

Competitions Management:

- The playing season is progressing well, with most competitors adapting to managing entries via the portal.
- Development work for the Competitions Portal is progressing well and expected to go live by the end of June.

Under 18s Open Singles:

- Successful event held at Oxford City & County BC. Future events planned for 2025.

The Board commended this event and suggested that it should be an annual event.

Competitions Review and Implementation:

- Work on the 2025 Aviva National Finals schedule and timeline is ongoing.
- Proposed pricing increase for championship entries from £2.50 to £4 per player, with junior and inter-county entries free of charge.

The Board discussed the proposed price increase in length, looking at the cost / benefit and impact. The price has not increased for over 10 years and costs of administering these competitions combined with inflation has risen significantly. To ensure the quality and delivery of the competitions review recommendations the Board agreed unanimously to increase the fee as proposed and which in future will be subject to a CPI increase.

Vote: ALL in agreement to raise the fee by £1.50 to £4 per player for Championship events from the 2025 season.

A separate communication will be sent to County Associations to explain this increase.

ACTION: Communication plan created to ensure counties understand rationale behind decision.

Aviva National Finals:

- Planning and preparations are progressing well.
- Ticket sales are increasing in line with expectations.
- Improvements to the event have been factored in including better Portaloos and contracting a steward and security member.
- County President's Day is a new addition, with good uptake from Counties.

The Board are happy with the progress being made. Discussion was had about the content for Club Zone sessions and how we would maximise our time with key stakeholders on site.

ACTION: Club Zone plans to be shared with the Board.

International Success:

Performance Strategy:

- Implementation plan has been developed and the strategy shared with coaches and Counties.
- Funding submission for the next period will focus on acquiring and retaining young players.

Performance Planning:

- Preparations for the British Bowls event are on track.

World Bowls Constitution and Governance:

- Governance transition to World Bowls Ltd (Australia) is underway, with significant challenges highlighted.



JC informed the Board of the recent exchanges and developments that are happening to move from World Bowls Ltd (UK) to World Bowls Ltd (Australia). Bowls Australia have been very helpful to ensure this meets the good governance standards. An AGM has recently taken place, with an SGM due in September 24 to confirm the proposed new constitution, and an AGM in November 24' to elect a Board.

World Bowls Event Series:

- This series has now been launched, with Aviva National Finals and British Bowls events included in the schedule.

Commonwealth Games:

- Glasgow identified as next venue for a smaller CWG hosting just 10 sports.

The Board discussed at some length the important of Bowls being one of the 10 sports and how we can support this happening. It was felt that World Bowls will have the most significant impact on this, and we need to continue to keep encouraging them and supporting where possible.

World Championships Bidding:

- Expression of interest document received, with an event budget being developed.

The Board were very supportive of developing a bid to support us hosting the World Championships in Leamington Spa. A number of benefits were identified including the opportunity to develop the site with permanent seating and office space, demonstrating our commitment to push the sport forwards and increase our profile. It was noted that some of the positive effect of hosting a major championship may not be reaped initially, but over a longer time period as our influence grows.

Coach Bowls:

Operational Activity

- New Level 1 and 2 qualification portfolios developed
- Website issues are still a major challenge and are under investigation.
- Workforce and membership numbers are above target.

ACTION: The Board require further information and detail on the numbers, courses and trends.

Commercial and Finance

New Business Development:

- Active discussions with 6 potential sponsors from a variety of backgrounds and propositions.

The Board had a discussion around types of organisations that BE would want / not want to be associated with and what the thresholds are for balancing brand values and financial needs. There was a discussion on the importance of sponsors fitting with the image of the sport and its values.

ACTION: Board discussion at next Board meeting on Brand Values and Sponsorship to identify what the parameters are for commercial relationships.

Commercial Partnerships:

- Aviva, Riviera, and Dennis engaged in promoting events and partnerships.

Brand and Communications:

- Steady growth across communication channels with strong levels of engagement during Bowls Big Weekend.

Governance and Overheads:

Patron:

- Bowls England has been advised by Buckingham Palace that the King will not become our Patron as it was not possible for him to fulfil all the patronages of the late Queen Elizabeth II Alternatives are being explored.

ACTION: GWP to explore options for new Patron.

British Crown Green Bowling Association:

- Discussions on collaboration are ongoing.

Warwick District Council:

- A meeting will be taking place in July for WDC to feedback on Bowls England's partnership vision and business case for infrastructure investment in Victoria Park.

Governance Working Party:

- Significant progress towards meeting Sport England's Tier 3 requirements.

Committee Terms of Reference:

- TORs for Audit, Remuneration, and Governance & Risk Committees presented for approval. **Board Approved.**

Presidential Team:

- Survey feedback to be analysed and reported at the next meeting.

Worthing Property:

- Rent review negotiations are ongoing.

Disciplinary:

- Focus on a complex disciplinary case nearing conclusion.
- Guidance on Regulation 9 and appeal procedures will be provided to Clubs & Counties.

Safeguarding:

- Safeguarding survey received 700 responses, raising awareness.
- Two new cases added, total of seven national cases.



- Training requirements by May 2025 for clubs to have a named Safeguarding Officer.

Staff Satisfaction Survey:

- Currently live, to be analysed early in July.

Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP):

- Completed and sent to Sport England.
- Nominations Committee to convey messages during board appointments.

DIAP was created principally by the BDA in order for them to submit this to Sport England for approval. BE have also created a BE specific one that has more detail around how equality, diversity and inclusion will be embedded into the culture and fabric of our membership.

ACTION: BE Specific action plan to be finalised and circulated.

ITEM 5 Risk Register:

The Risk Register was discussed and the Board was happy with the mitigations that are in place to manage these risks effectively.

ACTION: Create a Fraud Policy (EH).

ACTION: Ensure initials / board names are correct

ACTION: Update buddy system information

ACTION: Revisit mitigation on Board being voted against.

ITEM 6 April 2024 Management Accounts Summary

Financial Highlights:

- **Overall:** Year-to-date deficit of £135k, favourable by £57,000 compared to budget, mainly due to timing differences.
- **April Accounts:** Deficit of £52,000.

Departmental Performance:

- **Member Services:** £6,000 favourable variance, primarily due to timing on maintenance fees and revenue improvements.
- **Competitions:** Breakeven achieved with small variance due to pre-purchased prize badges.
- **Aviva National Finals:** Minimal activity, favourable variance due to salary allocations.
- **International Bowls:** £18,000 favourable variance due to pending invoice query on VAT.
- **Coaching:** Spending slightly higher pending final figures from previous year.
- **Commercial:** On target, concerns on securing additional sponsor.
- **Branding:** Potential for savings as season progresses.
- **Overheads:** Increased spending in identified areas, offset by IT savings.

Overall Financial Performance:

- Close monitoring of variances; expected spending adjustments throughout fiscal year.
- Budget reforecasting recommended to align with current financial trajectory.

All the above Management Account Summary was approved by the Board

End of Year Forecast:

- Forecast shows bottom line of £36,191, £12,416 worse than budget.
- Key variances: shortfall in affiliation income, no new commercial partner, under-budgeted depreciation.
- Risks identified around Aviva National Finals ticket sales and limited savings areas.

Significant discussion over current forecast and the importance of moving to a break-even position.

ACTION: Bowls Bash figures for next Board meeting.

Cashflow and Investments:

- Over recent meetings the Board has discussed moving some of its reserves into a low-risk investment fund. It was proposed that an initial investment of £150k was made, subject to signatory approval by the Audit Committee Chair. **BOARD Approved**
- Cambridge Building Society holds £93,000. The **Board approved** that this account is closed and funds transfer to the HSBC Account for investment.
- Following data on cash-flow, it was agreed to maintain bank balance at a minimum of £250k.
- Lloyds Bank Account British Isles Women's Bowls Council (Dormant) - £2404.75. **Board approved** that the funds from this account are removed, and the account closed. These funds will be distributed between relevant parties.

ITEM 7: Committee Terms of Reference:

The GWP has confirmed the Terms of Reference for three new committees.

- Remuneration, to begin in September 2024
- Audit Committee to begin in January 2025
- Governance & Risk, to begin once the GWP have completed their action plan.

The Nominations Committee's first meeting is planned for August 2024.

Discussion followed that the independent directors will be required to take up a number of committee roles given the SE Tier 3 directives of having 2 independent directors in each committee. It was felt that this was achievable but required some planning.



ACTION: AM, JD and JW to decide on their involvement on the Committee and relay back to the Board.

ACTION: GWP and DT (Chair) to update the Articles

ITEM 8 Safeguarding in Outdoor Bowls:

Bowls England aims to ensure a safe environment for all individuals involved in sports and physical activities, emphasizing zero tolerance for abuse or harassment.

In 2022, Bowls England mandated that all affiliated clubs must appoint a dedicated Safeguarding Officer by May 2025. Non-compliant clubs face potential disaffiliation. To assess current compliance, a survey and county-level discussions were conducted.

Safeguarding Survey (Summary)

- **Survey Overview:** A May 2024 survey gathered responses from 675 entities, including 550 clubs (81%) reporting a designated Safeguarding Officer.
- **Implication:** Majority of clubs have appointed a Safeguarding Officer, with indications that actual compliance may be higher.

County Call

- Objective: Held with County Administrators, Safeguarding Officers, and Bowls England staff to discuss new information, support strategies, and compliance solutions.
- Key Points:
 1. **Mandatory Officer:** Every affiliated club requires at least one Safeguarding Officer.
 2. **Recommended Diversity:** Encouragement for clubs to have both male and female officers for inclusivity.
 3. **Non-Member Eligibility:** Non-members can serve as Safeguarding Officers, pending reference checks and commitment.
 4. **Training Requirements:** Basic training is mandatory, accessible through various courses including a free introductory session and paid safeguarding awareness courses.
 5. **Sharing Officers:** Clubs can share officers, and counties can provide temporary support for local clubs.
 6. **Reporting Structure:** Safeguarding should be a regular agenda item in committee meetings.

The Board was pleased with the progress that had been made in this area and appreciated that there were various views and opinions about how the target could be achieved. They were supportive of the new suggestions to ensure compliance, although there is still a lot of progress to be made. There was some concern over the counties that didn't have a Safeguarding Officer and how we could support this to happen. There was also discussion on a penalty system that could be imposed if clubs do not comply. This is SE mandated activity, so it needs to be achieved.



ACTION: Identify a penalty system for clubs that do not comply.

ACTION: Revisit progress and SGO numbers at every Board meeting

Item 9 Improving Engagement with Public Bodies: Strategy and Recommendations

Currently, Bowls England lacks a consistent core script for engaging with public bodies. Developing such a script is crucial to ensure a unified message that resonates with the strategic objectives of major funding bodies.

Independent Director JW presented a paper on how and why Bowls England could improve their engagement with public bodies.

1. Demographics of Participants

- Highlight Bowls as an inclusive sport for all ages and abilities, addressing inactivity challenges targeted by bodies like Sport England.
- Utilize statistics, such as from the Active Lives Survey, to demonstrate Bowls' popularity across diverse demographics, surpassing other sports like Rugby Union and Athletics in participation.

ACTION: Compile comprehensive data from various sources to build a compelling case for Bowls' societal impact and alignment with public health goals.

2. Funding Per Participant

- Contrast current funding levels for Bowls with other sports (e.g., Judo, Fencing) to illustrate disparities and advocate for equitable support.

ACTION: Update funding comparisons with current figures to underscore Bowls' potential impact with increased financial backing.

3. Facilities

- Address the lack of comprehensive data on Flat Green Bowls facilities and their operational challenges, such as closures or mergers.
- Advocate for investment in Bowls facilities to support community engagement and local sports infrastructure.

ACTION: Conduct research to map Bowls facilities nationwide and assess their social and economic impact, leveraging findings to lobby for support from local authorities and Sport England.

4. Legacy and Economic Impact

- Evaluate the impact of major events like the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games and local championships on the economy and community engagement.
- Use data to support bids for hosting future events like the 2027 World Championships.

ACTION: Gather and analyse data on the economic benefits of Bowls events, aligning with broader regional development strategies and funding criteria.

5. Core Asks Lists

- Define specific funding priorities and projects that Bowls England would pursue with increased public funding, beyond current initiatives like performance strategies.

ACTION: Develop a tiered list of funding requests aligned with strategic objectives, facilitating targeted engagement with funding bodies.

Engagement Strategy

Bowls England currently lacks a structured approach to engaging with public sector organizations and individuals. Leveraging flagship events like the Bowls Big Weekend and Aviva National Finals presents prime opportunities for strategic engagement.

Recommended Actions for Events Engagement:

1. Bowls Big Weekend

- Use this event to engage with MPs, local authorities, and public sector leaders.
- Increase visibility through targeted invitations and social media campaigns.

ACTION: Send personalized invitations to key stakeholders, showcasing Bowls' community impact and inviting them to participate in local events.

2. Aviva National Finals

- Extend invitations to senior public sector figures, emphasizing Bowls' national significance and community engagement.
- Highlight the economic and social benefits of hosting such events.

ACTION: Early distribution of invitations with accompanying core script materials to maximize attendance and media coverage.

Further Engagement Strategies:

1. Local Authority Engagement

- Support clubs facing closure by advocating to local authorities, emphasizing Bowls' role in community wellbeing.

ACTION: Proactively engage with local authorities using core script arguments, especially once comprehensive facility data is available.

2. Yearly Reports and Strategy Sharing

- Regularly update public sector stakeholders on Bowls England's progress and strategic initiatives.

ACTION: Distribute annual reports and new strategy documents to key individuals and organizations, reinforcing alignment with public policy goals.

3. All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs)

- Consider establishing a dedicated APPG for Bowls to enhance parliamentary engagement and visibility.

ACTION: Initiate the process post-general election for establishing an APPG, or engage with existing Sports APPGs to build relationships and influence.

Next Steps

- **Priority Assessment:** Determine the priority and resource allocation for implementing these recommendations.
- **Core Script Development:** Undertake research and finalize the core script to align with public sector priorities.
- **Stakeholder Management:** Update the stakeholder management document to evaluate and track engagement efforts effectively.
- **Execution and Evaluation:** Implement the engagement strategy outlined, evaluating effectiveness annually to refine tactics.

The Board was pleased with paper and steps. They agreed with the questions of "how can we become the 'go to sport' for people over 55 years and get Sport England to invest in us to this end"? to the importance of speaking Sport England's and DCMS's language, target specific areas of inactivity and create The Case for Bowls relative to 'movement' was noted. It was agreed that JW would continue to lead this area with full support from JC and assistance from VU.

There was also discussion around identifying the questions that need to be answered to present our case most effectively. This may require more longitudinal studies looking at health stats, social benefit and research into objective measures of the impact of the sport on fitness and lifestyle.

Regionality was also considered as there is a distinct variance around the country on health and wellbeing. Bowls needs to identify what its impact is on local and regional bases as well.

ACTION: JW and JC to lead this area

ITEM 10 24/25 Operational Planning Priorities

The information below is a summary of the leadership team's perspective on the 2024/25 operational planning cycle for Bowls England. It outlines current progress against the "Fit for the Future" strategy and proposes main priorities, resource considerations, and metrics for measuring progress.

2024/25 Operational Planning

1. **Progress Against Fit for the Future Strategy**
 - Overview of achievements and remaining tasks across five strategic priorities: Building the Brand of Bowls, Making Bowls Truly Accessible, Creating Positive Playing Experiences, Supporting Communities, and Leading with Purpose.
2. **Main Priorities for 2024/25**

- Identified nine key workstreams for the upcoming operational year:
 - Competitions Review implementation
 - Building Bowls Bash and play-bowls.com
 - Enhancing Club Services and developing a single view of clubs
 - Completing the Governance Working Party
 - Progressing EIBA amalgamation
 - Delivering disability bowls integration
 - Improving business systems and staff productivity
 - Growing and maximizing Super-Volunteers
 - Elevating Coaching and the Junior Performance Pathway

The Board discussed the considerable progress that has been made to date to deliver the strategy, however there are areas that have had to change in their priority level due to market forces. It was noted that some of these priority areas are dependent on receiving external funding and if we aren't successful in achieving this then they will be removed from the list.

It was observed that the capacity and capability of the counties to deliver on initiatives can vary considerably. There needs to be thought on how we can support the counties in a bespoke way where appropriate, but also focus time and resources on those that are able to deliver on new initiatives to make the sport more accessible and future proofed.

3. Resources

- People: Highlights the impact of the team's composition and the role of super-volunteers in achieving goals. Emphasizes the need for capability growth, strategic partnerships, and specific hires for disability bowls and performance departments.
- Financial: Discusses income projections and dependencies on external funding sources like Sport England, Commonwealth Games, and Aviva.

4. Measurement

- Outlines the strategic measures to monitor progress including brand sentiment, reach, player demographics, and stakeholder feedback. Proposes implementing annual player, club, and stakeholder surveys to enhance measurement and feedback processes.

The discussion concluded by underlining the importance of Board input in finalizing the detailed plan and budget for the 2024/25 operational year. It stresses the need for continued strategic alignment, resource optimization, and effective measurement to ensure successful execution of the "Fit for the Future" strategy.

ITEM 11: ANF Briefing

A rota for Board attendance has been created and circulated. Accommodation has been organised. Board meeting to be held at Woodside Grange on the 28th August.

ACTION: What are the 3 key messages that the Board need to get out during the ANF and are there any sensitive topics that need to be managed with care.

Board meeting finished at 15.00