

Whitchurch Hospital Bowls Club
Addressing the Impact of COVID-19

Introduction to Whitchurch Hospital Bowls Club.

Whitchurch Hospital Bowls Club (WHBC) is located in the grounds of the old Psychiatric Hospital in North Cardiff. It is a small but well-respected Private Greens Club that is affiliated to the East Wales Private Greens Bowling Association, South Glamorgan County Bowling Association and the Welsh Bowling Association.

Club membership was opened to all when it was decided to close the Hospital in 2010 but many of our 40+ members are ex-NHS employees residing locally within the CF14 Post Code area and are over 70 years of age.

This group is identified as being amongst the most vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19. The WHBC Management Committee is very conscious that the physical health and mental well-being of Club members should not be overlooked during this unprecedented period. Within Government guidelines we encourage Club Members to support one another with particular emphasis on those who live alone. Regular contact with and between Club members is being maintained through WhatsApp, Facetime, email and phone calls.

Bowls is a social, skillful, competitive sport that provides exercise, generates friendship and appeals to people of all ages. It helps players retiring from more physical sport to maintain a competitive spirit and competitive edge and offers younger people an appreciation of sportsmanship and respect for others.

WHBC is fortunate to have a steadfast and committed membership that is very tight, caring and loyal. These attributes have shown the Club to be of great service and value in our community.

Financial Impact of COVID-19 on Whitchurch Hospital Bowls Club.

The Club is non-profit making and funded by membership subscriptions, players match fees, match raffles, post-match refreshments, fund raising social events and a small amount of local sponsorship.

Amongst the WHBC membership there is a small army of volunteers whose gallant efforts keep costs down. There is a weekly rota for cutting the bowling green playing surface, three times weekly in the summer and once during the winter. In addition, all required upkeep, repair and maintenance of the bowling green, its environs and the Club premises are undertaken as required throughout the year.

There are of course costs that cannot be avoided e.g. professional servicing and maintenance of mowing machinery, mowing equipment fuel, services of a fine green maintenance contractor etc.

Strict control over costs and enthusiastic income generation activities have always facilitated a balance of income and expenditure in previous years.

The advent of COVID-19 has had a devastating effect on WHBC finances. There is little room to further reduce expenditure and this, consequently, has remained constant.

By comparison, there has been no competitive bowling this year resulting in a loss of income required to maintain the balance of income and expenditure this year.

Planned fundraising events, social activities and a Club Tour to compete in Pendine were all cancelled and income from Sponsorship, Match Fees, Post-Match Raffles and a Lottery Bonus Ball Fundraiser has dried up.

Although there has been no competitive bowls, WHBC's loyal membership have fully paid up their membership subscriptions providing income of £4,030. In addition, a members' only lottery has been introduced and targeted income is being achieved.

Despite best efforts, there was a real fear that WHBC would not be in a position to meet all of its financial obligations this year and that its future was at risk.

Financial Support from Sport Wales

As a consequence of COVID-19, Sport Wales received financial allocations from the Welsh Assembly Government and the National Lottery Fund facilitating the creation two charitable funds to support and protect the future of at-risk sports clubs and community organisations & groups that help people to be active and take part in sport at grass roots level in Wales.

- Emergency Relief Fund (ERF) to help with costs during April - June 2020
- Be Active Wales Fund (BAWF) to help with costs during July - September 2020

Whitchurch Hospital Bowls Club submitted an application for each of these Funds. Our ERF bid was partially successful in June 2020 and our BAWF bid was successful in September 2020.

This financial support could well be the difference between the demise or continuation of the Club. The WHBC Management Committee and all Members are extremely grateful to the National Lottery Fund, Welsh Assembly Government and Sport Wales for their help.

Who better than 95-year-old Mr. Sid Daw, our oldest, most respected and enthusiastic member, to explain the importance of this financial support to our Bowling Club and community and our optimism for the future?

"I feel it a great privilege to be able to pass on my feelings regarding my membership of Whitchurch Hospital Bowls Club. I am very proud that in a couple of months I will be commencing my 35th year of membership. My wife was also keenly associated and, along with other member's wives, worked for many years preparing tea and meals at our games. We also had Annual Tours around Britain, and we really were like ONE BIG FAMILY.



Unfortunately, my wife died 18 years ago in 2002 and the wonderful support from all club members was unbelievable.

The Club is such a big part of my life, and despite the terrible conditions in which we find ourselves in this sad day and age, **I sincerely hope that the means can be found to keep W.H.B.C. ongoing in my lifetime with a future full of optimism.**

On that note, can I say that I have always been a super-optimist. This was important to me when I served 5 years in the Infantry during and after WW2; still a few of us about. There are so many "youngsters" with a long life ahead and I would wish upon them all the joy and happy days that I have had in my bowling years."