

BOWLSWALES ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Held on Wednesday 27th November 2019
AT
SPORT WALES NATIONAL CENTRE

- Present:** Alun Jones (Chair)
Richard Bowen
Ashley Kindred (Finance Director)
Ken Burton
Chris Emsley
Lawrence Hourahane
- In attendance:** Claire Joll (Development Manager)
Sophie Hancocks (General Manager)
Owen Burgess (Sport Wales Senior Support Officer)
Member Associations and NGB's
Dr. Katie Thirlaway (Performance Group Independent Chair)
Zoe Thacker
Peter Brill (Safeguarding officer)
- Apologies:** Cerys Humphreys (Board Director)
John Mansfield (WBA)
Hazel Wilson (WWBA)
Catherine Harvey (WLIBA)
Wyn Jones (WSMBA)
Gethin Smart (BowlsWales Development Group Chair)
Sara Marie Nicholls (BowlsWales Communications Group Chair)

19.11.01 **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair welcomed all and hoped that this would be an informative meeting.

The Chair explained that the delay in staging the first AGM was due to BowlsWales feeling that full representation of NGBs would be beneficial – this was now possible; we would also be able to distribute the annual accounts.

The meeting was intended to be as informative as possible and provide everyone with an insight into what BowlsWales was doing and look at how we intend to move forward together.

19.11.02 MEET THE TEAM

The Chair introduced the BowlsWales representatives – all of whom introduced themselves

Cerys Humphreys
Ashley Kindred
Richard Bowen
Chris Embley
Ken Burton
Lawrence Hourahane
Claire Joll
Katie Thirlaway
Peter Brill

Gethin Smart and Sara Marie Nicholls were unable to attend.

The Chair introduced Owen Burgess, Sport Wales's Senior Support Officer.

The Chair thanked all the above for their help and support over the past year.

19.11.03 BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

The Chair introduced the four Strategic Intent/Pillars of BowlsWales:

- Bowls is for Everyone
- Achieving Excellence
- Excellence Governance
- Facilities and Infrastructure Development

Key moments over the past few years included introduction of 7 Principles of Good Governance, which have been followed since January 2017.

Currently the Board is comprised of 1 initial Director and 6 appointed Directors. General Manager Nia Butler has now left and Sophie Hancocks starts as her replacement next Monday – good luck to Sophie, who was present at the AGM.

Cerys Humphreys is our Equality Lead and we are pleased to report that BowlsWales passed the Insport Ribbon in November 2018 and gained full membership in 2019. We attained the Equality Standard – Insport in July 2019. Claire Joll works on this as well as her other duties.

A whole raft of governance documents has been adhered to – including those governing Whistleblowing and Social Media.

Moving forward, communication needs to be at the forefront of everything – with BowlsWales establishing or re-establishing links. There needs to be clarity throughout.

Sport Wales is our major stakeholder – providing funding for all bowls playing activities. We are currently in talks on the 2020-21 Partnership agreement, which will commence in April 2020.

BowlsWales is also a member of the Welsh Sports Association, who provide us with guidance on a wide range of issues. This advice is also available to all NGBs through BowlsWales - we can benefit from the knowledge pool of other sporting bodies.

19.11.04

DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS GROUP UPDATE

Chris Emsley gave key timelines from the last few years since our establishment in 2017:

- First ideas from Gethin Smart and himself was to put together a Club Survey, sent out to clubs throughout Wales, which identified challenges to be considered.
- Social media platforms were launched at that time, and Club Roadshows were held between January and May 2018, discussing matters with members.
- Claire Joll was recruited in January 2019 and has been a big part of the team since then.
- Development and Communication groups were merged in January 2019.

Claire Joll gave an overview on the current position:

- Funding advice has been given to clubs – bowls was the biggest applicant for grants administered by Sport Wales in the latest round of funding.
- Community Chest awareness is on the up as well – applications can be made throughout the year to local authorities.
- Working with Stroke Association, for example in Bridgend.
- BowlsWales also demonstrated our sport at the Royal Welsh Show in Builth Wells for three days during the summer.
- The recent Schools Sport Survey identified that 16,000 children want to play bowls, so we are working with local authorities to formulate a school's development program. It takes time, but we are working around the country.

Lawrence Hourahane ran through social media numbers on Facebook and Twitter over the past quarter:

- Followers are particularly keen on learning about all international teams and funding opportunities.
- It is planned to introduce an Instagram account next year, while maintaining the website alongside all other platforms.

Claire discussed the future National Development Plans:

- It will be worked through in advance with all NGBs.
- Development and Communication Group membership is growing – we need all NGBs involved in this so we can all work together.

Chris outlined Club Accreditation and Benchmark Clubs plans for the immediate future:

- This will involve all Bowls NGBs and our Clubs.
- Firstly, we will discuss what options can be taken forward for the Club Accreditation model to be decided and introduced.
- We will be looking to establish a list of Accredited Clubs to which budding players can be pointed when they contact BowlsWales.

19.11.05 PERFORMANCE GROUP UPDATE

Richard Bowen illustrated the work that has been ongoing over the last few years:

- The purpose of the Group is to collaborate across all forms of Bowls, and all NGBs and Associations have been on board since April 2019.
- Changing requirements from Sport Wales will require more attributable forms of finance distribution in the future, so this has been a subject of discussion among all bodies.
- Katie Thirlaway is the new independent chair of the group.
- Katie addressed the meeting and informed all present that a clearer vision of a performance program is now visible.
- It has been agreed that we need a Pathway Manager and that a job description is being worked upon. We will circulate thoughts to all NGBs at the start of 2020.

19.11.06 SPORT WALES UPDATE

Owen Burgess outlined his role at Sport Wales:

- Includes working with a number of bodies including BowlsWales, particularly with regards to Governance and Leadership.

Owen Burgess acknowledged the importance of volunteers throughout all sports in Wales, including bowls. Sport would not happen without volunteers.

Sport Wales's vision is to have an Active Nation, with people engaged in sport for life. Sport Wales's purpose is to enable sport in Wales to thrive. Activity is planned to be person-centered – people should have a good experience in sport

Six areas have been identified by Sport Wales:

- To be people-centered
- To give every young person a great start
- To ensure everyone has the opportunity to be active through sport
- To bring people together for the long-term
- To showcase the benefits of sport
- To be a highly valued organization

The aim in Sport Wales was reiterated:

- To help sport in Wales to thrive.
- The focus in Sport Wales in the past year has switched from sheer numbers being involved in sport throughout the country to allowing individual sports to concentrate on what they feel is best for their own game to prosper.
- This change has been well-received from governing bodies.

A number of Sport Wales Business Plan Objectives was discussed:

- Being insight-driven: evidence that methods adopted are working
- Growing capability and capacity
- Advocate and influence sport across different sectors, e.g. the NHS, Town and Country planners, Natural Resources
- Growing participation opportunities for those who are less active – this in particular is an opportunity for bowls and BowlsWales.

Sport Wales needs confidence in the bodies with whom they are working – effective leadership and governance is essential, and he noted that BowlsWales has focused on this, particularly in safeguarding: such commitment is regarded as a bedrock by Sport Wales.

19.11.07 QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION

The Chair explained that he had previously asked for questions in advance, but questions on the day are also welcomed.

Richard Bowen responded to an advance question received regarding Development Plan funding:

- He explained that the new emphasis to be followed was funding based on performance and went through the current proposal on the table for consideration.
- NGBs would remain in control of all their players: a number will then be put forward as a performance group.

- The number of players is currently being discussed by all bodies – possibly 70 to 80.
- Players will then be supported through nutrition, sports science, physical fitness, sports psychology, specialist coaching and bespoke events modules, with a suggested per diem payment to for attendance at such events.
- The current plan is that funding would be made to the NGBs, and not the players.
- The proposal for a Performance Pathway Manager would be responsible for overseeing this model.
- Discussions with all partners will continue in January 2020.
- For the current year, the Performance Group has agreed funding, which will be distributed in the coming weeks – but this is probably the last year that this model will be followed.

Questions from Members were asked:

Female Member – Stated, while this is a good plan for elite bowlers, there is no funding for the 99% of bowlers who are grass roots bowlers - Richard Bowen reiterated that this is performance money, and that BowlsWales helps point to funding schemes. Richard pointed out that to distribute the funding to all clubs would result in only £150 per club.

Pauline Lindley (WCGBA) - Asked the definition of international funding, pointing out that they only compete in the UK – Richard Bowen acknowledged this.

Jean - Asked if all international teams will be funded: Existing Elite; Emerging Elite and Junior Elite levels were identified by Richard Bowen. Money would go to NGBs.

David Phillips (WIBA) - Discussed that only some of the elite 24 will receive coaching and funding which will cause problems with the other squad players. He felt that this is not a new plan – as far back as twenty years ago, the NGBs received the funding. He felt that under-performing elite players would still be selected for financial reasons, rather than form, reasons – Richard Bowen pointed out that there was flexibility by the NGB selectors in putting players on to the elite panel. He also informed the meeting that Sport Wales funding risked being lost if money was not being spent as required by their conditions - Owen Burgess explained that Sport Wales required attributable performance programs, and long term development of athletes – possibly, albeit, at the expense of immediately winning medals.

David Phillips (WIBA) felt that this would encourage two levels of treatment of players. **Other comments added** – It felt that this would not help the loss of players in clubs.

Male Member - Asked who would pick the players? – Richard Bowen replied that he had been in a small squad and funded players had not had any problems with other players.

Janice (WLIBA) – Expressed that it is sad that only 16 junior bowlers had put their names forward for selection, and three had since withdrawn. Some of her players are possibly grandmothers and would not reach physical fitness levels which appeared as an outcome on the plan.

Chris Emsley outlined the aims of the Club Accreditation scheme:

- For clubs, with the support of BowlsWales, to be set up to reach out to potential members and hopefully, help them.
- The form of bowls being played was often not attractive to young players who often preferred to do their own thing.

Tom (WCGBA) - Expressed that the proposed system of Elite players would be divisive within his sport and its clubs. He felt we need a bottom up approach, looking to maintain and build on what we have. Believed this plan did not fit too well into this. He reported that Crown Green has 5,000 members, with a 5% growth in membership this year, of which his sport was proud.

Male Member - Questioned the balance of funding going to the elite players. Richard Bowen reiterated that this is performance funding allocated by Sport Wales.

Female Member - Asked for clarification that teams will still be selected by the NGB selectors – this was confirmed. Also asked who would provide the coaching, as she also represented the Coaches. Richard Bowen confirmed that coaching was part of the plan.

Pauline Lindley (WCGBA) - Highlighted that many of their players represented themselves, rather than their country, in individual events – Richard Bowen confirmed that the Wales Crown Green team would be part of the Elite funding plan.

Katie Thirlaway felt that people's ability to perform should be funded, rather than being funded to perform, and that the playing membership of this group would be fluid.

Owen Burgess informed the meeting that Sport Wales funding was also available for clubs through different mechanisms such as Place for Sport. Katie endorsed this.

Richard Bowen assured the meeting that all the points raised will be considered and discussed in advance with members.

David Phillips (WIBA) - Agreed with Junior and Emerging Players going through the ranks. However, he expressed that he cannot see great benefit in bowls coaches

coming in but could see the benefit of coaches coming in from other sports. He also reflected on the previous Club Accreditation scheme which had not been successful and hoped that the new one was more successful. Also, that the previous schools coaching scheme had not resulted in more than a few new members. He reiterated to Owen Burgess that NGBs were not represented on the BowlsWales Board of Directors, and that this was the first AGM for two years.

The Chair stressed that representation will be discussed at a future Board Meeting and that he appreciated the open discussion.

19.11.08

FINANCIAL REPORT

Ashley Kindred introduced himself and presented the figures for the year in question:

- Turnover of £139,007 largely came from Sport Wales
- Spent on elite and grassroots - £137,333 went out.
- Surplus for the Financial Year was £1,785.
- Cash at bank is £144,540 – this will be distributed to NGBs by the end of this year.
- An additional income balance of £67,377 will come in from Sport Wales.

Questions from Members:

Tom (WCGBA) - Asked for a fair – not necessarily equal – distribution of funds. They had the same amount for 15 years from the previous body and he repeated his request for fair treatment in the future. Richard Bowen pointed out that Crown Green received a larger proportion of performance funding from BowlsWales this year than other bodies. Alun Jones pointed out that Crown Green also receives access to our support staff and performance groups, as do all NGBs.

David Phillips (WIBA) - Asked the procedure for funding for the development squads. Alun Jones confirmed that funding for the new year would cover all items.

19.11.09

ELECTION OF BOARD DIRECTORS

The Chair discussed the possible board vacancies and proceeded with elections and voting. Questions from members were asked:

John Phillips - Asked about Ken Burton and Alun Jones's reappointments. Alun Jones confirmed that Ken Burton and Alun Jones was reappointed to the board for two years last June.

David Phillips (WIBA) - Queried the composition of the board, believing that NGBs would be allocated Directors. Alun Jones informed the meeting that tonight's meeting was being asked to elect up to three Directors, which was advertised in advance, all having specific skills-based requirements.

John Phillips - Asked for clarification that NGBs would not be automatically elected BowlsWales Directors. Alun Jones pointed out that these vacancies were advertised, and directors were assessed by the board annually. There were no places on the Board expressly reserved for NGBs.

David Phillips (WIBA) - Informed the meeting that he was not on board with the proposal, believing that the NGBs would have the opportunity to have a place at the table.

Owen Burgess gave his view on behalf of Sport Wales:

- Governing Bodies had, in the past been given the opportunity to play into the composition of the body.
- Sport Wales recognised BowlsWales as the central coordinating body of the sport in Wales.

Alun Jones confirmed that the transition to form Bowls Wales, over a period of eight months, was made following full discussion with the NGBs.

John Phillips - Expressed that the Directors being skill-based did not reflect bowls. A number of Directors were on the Board for themselves, and that the downward spiral of bowls over the past five years would continue.

Alun Jones explained what BowlsWales was here to represent, and that we were here to put plans in place.

Terry Hopkins (WBA) - Stated that he had not received notice of the meeting or other paperwork.

Mike Doody (WIBA) - Stated that one of the CVs did not appear to have been written by the person. It was pointed out that it was written in the third person. Richard Bowen, with a HR background, felt that this was often the case.

David Phillips (WIBA) - Asked who was eligible to vote for these appointments – and asked that a break was taken for NGBs to discuss the applications. Alun Jones pointed out that these CVs had been circulated in advance.

Tom (WCGBA) – Stated he was happy to proceed.

John (WUBA) - Proposed that nobody was elected tonight as all were under the impression that NGBs would get seats. WUBA, WWBA, WLBA, WIBA all requested a No Vote.

Alun Jones informed that Articles of Association said that a full Board complement of ten would be required and that skills were stated in the original advert.

David Phillips (WIBA) - Explained to Claire Joll, who queried people's bowls backgrounds, that people on the Board were not placed there by the NGBs.

John Phillips - Expressed that he needed more information on the candidates, as a School Governor would be.

Ken Burton stated that he had not been interviewed before his appointment.

Pauline Lindley & Tom (WCGBA) proposed Simon Colwill and seconded.

John and David Phillips - left the meeting.

Pauline Lindley & Tom (WCGBA) nominated Zoe and seconded.

19.11.10

MEMBERSHIP FEES

Alun Jones clarified that the BowlsWales Board can recommend levies for member associations:

- The original levies were £200 for NGBs and £100 for service bodies.
- It was agreed to keep levies at these levels.

Tom (WCGBA) - Thanked Board members. While there may have been lack of unanimity at the meeting, he thanked BowlsWales for their work.

The meeting closed at 7.15 p.m.