

2020 - ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

At the Annual General Meeting held on 7th December 2019 we recorded our thanks to retiring officers David Bateman, Avril Coyne and Paul Debnam and welcomed new Safeguarding Officer, Bill Smith (Bitton Park BC).

Alan Mann (Chair) and David Tucker (Treasurer) gave notice that 2020 would be their last year in their respective offices.

Christine Marshall (Crediton BC) and Bob Dowdell (Buckfastleigh BC) were installed as Presidents, Aileen Rowden (Bitton Park BC) and John Abbott (North Tawton BC) as Senior Vice Presidents and Paul Debnam (Bideford BC) as Junior Vice President. The position of Ladies' Junior Vice President was left vacant and we were delighted when Sandra Andrews (South Molton BC) was elected to the post in mid - July.

We also congratulated David Tucker on being elected as Chair of Bowls England. David took up the post formally at the Bowls England Annual General Meeting on 22 February for a three-year term. I know that David is committed to giving his time to the challenges that lie ahead.

You will not be surprised to see that the remainder of my report relates to Covid-19.

In March 2020 Bowls England announced the cancellation of all its domestic events in response to the latest Government advice and growing concern from bowlers about how the virus outbreak would impact our sport.

Whilst there would be no change in the support given by Bowls England, we were advised that headquarters staff would be working from home until further notice.

The Bowls England Presidential Team was "deferred" for one year so that they might enjoy a full year in office. This decision would subsequently be mirrored by Bowls Devon.

Celebration Matches would be cancelled for the year as were the National Championships (including all County Championship qualifying rounds) and the National Competitions.

As a gesture of goodwill to support clubs, Bowls England refunded, to County Associations, the Affiliation Fee and National Championship entry fees. Bowls Devon subsequently refunded Affiliation Fees and National Championship entry fees to our member clubs.

During the next few months, Bowls England continued to provide advice to support clubs on subjects that included:

- Coronavirus guidance

- The minimum amount of Greens Maintenance required so that greens would be playable when bowling was resumed

- Funding (including Club Loans and encouraging bowlers to support their clubs financially by continuing to pay their annual subscriptions)

- Recruitment

- Insurance

Supplementary advice was later issued to clubs on arrangements for play and the opening of bars and restaurants. This enabled more of our clubs to open and for our members to enjoy a game of bowls and generate much-needed income.

The national campaign launched in August by Bowls England Chief Executive, Jon Cockcroft, invited people to "bowl up" to their local green with friends and family through the remainder of the summer. Many of our clubs embraced this message and were delighted at the response.

Clubs have faced many challenges this summer and Bowls England has provided regular updates to ensure that clubs and players who wish to do so have been able to return to the green.

Information was circulated to clubs and county associations in August to assist with the initial administration of affiliation fees and National Championship entries and to enable planning for 2021. The main headlines were:

No affiliation fees to be collected on 30 September 2020
Affiliation fees for 2021 to be based on playing members at affiliated clubs as at 1 May 2021
Entries in National Championships and National Competitions to be accepted from any individual that will be a member of a club affiliated to Bowls England on 1 May 2021
The closing date for return of National Championship entries and National Competitions to Bowls England to be 1 March 2021

A further revision document issued by Bowls England in September highlighted:

Use of rinks and format of play
Gatherings
Social activities/Spectators
Short Mat Bowls
Committee Meetings/AGMs

Following the success of the “Let’s Roll” marketing initiative, plans are already underway for a national recruitment initiative ear-marked for the Spring Bank Holiday of the 2021 season when we can encourage new people to come along to our clubs, take part and be active. This national open weekend will take place from Friday 28 May to Monday 31 May 2021 inclusive. With a window of four days for the national campaign rather than a single day, it is hoped that this will enable clubs to organise activity that best fits within their club’s calendar. For example, any activity on the Friday night could lend itself to a “social” event whilst a Saturday or Sunday morning session might be more attractive to families.

Many of our gatherings, including the County Luncheon, Club and County meetings, have sadly had to be cancelled but we look forward positively to 2021.

It would be remiss of me not to thank Bowls England staff for their support and help. Led by Chief Executive Jon Cockcroft and Chair David Tucker, their assistance has been most beneficial.

I would like to thank all our clubs and their members for their commitment during this difficult period and our team of officers for their contributions during 2020.

Finally, I would thank our retiring officers Chair Alan, Treasurer David and Ladies’ Administrator Ciss, for their much-valued support and advice.

Harry Riley
County Administrator
1 November 2020