

Bowls Scotland Board Meeting

Monday 28th April 2025, 5.30pm

Teams Meeting

Present:

Gary Grant – Chair (GG), Gavin Smith (GS), Henry Robertson (HR), Chris Holloway (CH), Nicola Wilson (NW)

In Attendance:

Malcolm Dingwall-Smith – CEO (MDS), Kareena Cuthbert - High Performance Manager (KC), Brogan Sinclair - Business Operations Manager (BS), Fiona Lilley – sportscotland partnership manager (FL), Gemma Whitehouse – Events Manager (GW – item 7 only).

Apologies: Michael Cavanagh (MC)

1. Welcome

1.1. **Chairs Opening Remarks:** GG welcomed attendees and noted apologies from MC. He also shared an update on the Presidential Group's engagement, noting that to make the most effective use of their time, we have agreed that they will receive board papers and provide input via pre-meeting calls with the Chair and CEO, rather than attend board meetings.

1.2. **Declarations of Interest:** GG confirmed the Board's register of interests is up to date. No conflicts declared in relation to the agenda for this meeting.

2. **Approval of Previous Minutes:** Minutes from the meeting held on 24th February 2025 were approved.

2.1. **Matters arising:** Action and decision logs were reviewed. One outstanding action - leadership team profile mapping - to be integrated into the July away day.

3. Executive Management Report

MDS introduced a new format for the report, combining operational updates with standing items. Key Updates:

- Staffing: Recruitment underway for a full-time Pathway Lead.
- Junior Membership Data: CRM issues identified; potentially 109 clubs inadvertently underreported junior members. Manual verification in progress.
- Minimum Operating Requirements: This objective as set out in the strategy is being reviewed. MDS is currently collating feedback from stakeholders. The President's group have provided input on this issue, which will help inform the Board's final decision. A recommendation will be presented to the next Board meeting for decision.

3.1. Safeguarding

Disclosure Scotland 2020 Act legislation update April 2025: The Board agreed that the provision of bowls for U18s is a main purpose of Bowls Scotland, meaning PVG scheme membership checks will be required to be submitted for all Board Members and Leadership Team members by 1st July.

3.2. EDI

UK Supreme Court ruling on the definition of sex noted. Awaiting publication of guidance from EHRC expected this summer. We have indicated to sportscotland that further guidance would be helpful. We are also aware that World Bowls are considering the issue of transgender participation in bowls. We have provided member clubs that have contacted us with an update and holding position until the further guidance is available.

FL shared that all UK sports councils are also currently looking at this issue. MDS will provide an update to the Board when further guidance is available.

3.3. Anti-doping

Our annual submission to UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) has been completed. Our player and coach training is underway.

3.4. Additional comments

- Commonwealth Games: GG noted positive engagement with the staff working group to look at how we maximise the opportunity of the Commonwealth Games. Board members encouraged by planning progress. The Board will be kept updated as this progresses.
- Chair and CEO engagement: GG shared that a regular rhythm of communication has been established with MDS which is facilitating strengthened collaboration and support from the board. GG and MDS have also been out and about engaging with members and other stakeholders.

4. Business Plan 2024-25 Q2 Update

Updates to Board now being aligned to our financial quarterly reporting. Try Bowls target exceeded (500+ clubs). Membership: We know the target of maintaining 50,000 members was not met. We were not at 50,000 last year, so hitting this target would have required membership growth, not just maintenance. Discussion held on improving data quality, refining membership metrics, potentially shifting toward tracking active participants, and improving data integrity. The actions related to the KPGM audit and reviewing our articles of association have now been incorporated into the Modernisation Project outlined later on the agenda.

5. Finance 2024-25 Q2 update

Forecasted year-end position: ahead of budget. Missed accruals and unbudgeted income noted. Sponsorship: target relating to National Championships. HR, MDS, BS and our Finance Manager have spent a lot of time examining the finances in detail over the last month. MDS and HR acknowledged the need to improve internal financial processes, particularly around year-end accruals. The timing of the National Championships (close to the financial year-end) complicates accurate forecasting and accruals. The Board discussed the potential benefits and risks of changing the financial year-end from August to March to better align with operational and funding cycles. HR emphasized the importance of improving accrual accuracy and suggested involving external expertise if the financial year-end is changed. NW requested a progress update on the sponsorship target at the next meeting.

6. Modernisation project

MDS presented a two-year organisational improvement plan, which covers our internal processes and procedures rather than external delivery which we will look at separately. The project will serve as an umbrella framework for prioritising and delivering improvements across six key areas: governance, strategy, business planning, finance, operations, and staffing. Board noted that they can support areas of this plan with specialist skills and experience and discussed taking an agile approach to delivery of the project. It was suggested that the name of the project should be changed as 'modernisation project' has unhelpful negative connotations that do not reflect the current reality of the sport and Bowls Scotland.

Board Discussion and Feedback:

- **Scope and Structure:** The Board welcomed the structured approach but noted the breadth of the project and discussed whether there was sufficient capacity in the organisation to deliver the full scope along side operational delivery. Members supported breaking the work into smaller, manageable phases, potentially using an agile delivery model to prioritise and sequence tasks effectively.
- **Staff Turnover:** Concerns were raised about the impact of staff changes on continuity. MDS acknowledged this and emphasised the importance of completing discrete work packages to reduce disruption.
- **Board Involvement:** Board members offered to support delivery, particularly in areas where they have relevant expertise. MDS welcomed this and committed to identifying opportunities for board engagement.
- **Delegation of Authority:** The need for clearer governance on what decisions require board approval was highlighted. MDS confirmed that a review of delegation protocols is part of the project.
- **Terminology:** Several members expressed discomfort with the term "Modernisation Project," suggesting it implies the organisation is outdated which is not the case.
- **Financial year:** External expertise may be required to support a change of financial year. Bowls Scotland can apply to sportscotland's expert resource to support this.

Board agreed:

- The overall approach as a framework for organisational improvement, with an updated project name and adopting an agile approach to delivering the project.
- Finance Group to explore changing financial year-end from August to March and bring a recommendation to the Board.
- A revised strategy timeline covering April 2027 to March 2031, aligning with the Commonwealth Games and sportscotland funding cycles.

7. National Championships

GW joined the meeting

MDS introduced GW as having joined the organisation in January and bringing expertise from previous experience in the events sector. GW presented a comprehensive update on event planning and improvements planned for this year's National Championships. GW outlined that a review of the 2024 National Championships has been undertaken to identify what worked well and will be delivered again in 2025 and where there are opportunities for improvements.

Highlights:

- Enhanced infrastructure, accessibility, and layout.
- New bar provider and catering options.
- Increased sponsorship and ticketing strategies.
- Community engagement with local residents.
- Improved live streaming.

Board Feedback:

- The Board praised the level of detail and ambition in the planning.
- GG noted overall positive feedback from District Coordinators meeting.
- GS highlighted the importance of green quality and encouraged continued engagement with South Ayrshire Council to ensure playing surfaces meet national standards.
- CH and HR commended the community engagement strategy and the commercial improvements, particularly the in-house bar and sponsorship approach.
- The Board supported the direction of travel and encouraged continued innovation and data collection to inform future improvements.

GW left the meeting.

8. AOCB

HR commended the quality of board papers. Board away day confirmed for 6th July 2025. Board members to confirm availability for Nationals and Commonwealth Day (26th July).

The meeting closed at 19:55