



# 2025 Bowls Scotland AGM

Frequently Asked Questions

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## **I. ABOUT THE AGM**

### **When is the AGM?**

The 2025 Bowls Scotland AGM will take place via Zoom Webinar on Wednesday 26th November at 6.30pm.

To attend and vote at the AGM, voting members must submit an authorised representative form to Bowls Scotland no later than 6.30pm on Monday 24th November 2025.

### **Who votes at the AGM?**

In line with our Articles of Association, all Member Clubs and Associate Members who have completed the affiliation process by 31st October are entitled to vote at the AGM.

### **Why is the AGM online?**

Following the 2023 AGM, Bowls Scotland undertook a survey of member clubs and associations to gather views on holding the AGM online, hybrid or in-person. 53% of responses preferred an online AGM (22% hybrid, 27% in-person).

At that time, costs of hosting an AGM in-person were estimated to be £4,000-5,000, primarily due to covering travel expenses for attendees. The cost of the hybrid model was estimated at £6,000-£7,000 with the technology to ensure equal voting and participation for people online and in-person complex. The cost of an online AGM was estimated at £180.

Given the continued financial pressures we face, the desire to allow as many members as possible to vote at the AGM, and the results of the 2023 AGM survey, we propose holding the AGM online as a virtual meeting again this year.

This year we introduced a series of pre-AGM engagement evenings to strengthen our engagement with members, including through in-person opportunities. Again we saw higher attendance at the online than in-person events.

### **What is being proposed at the AGM?**

The Board are presenting four significant resolutions to the AGM for approval.

Two resolutions present options to increase the capitation fee for clubs from £5 to either £7 or £8 per adult member. If passed, this increase would come into effect in October 2026.

The remaining two resolutions propose changes to our governance, with limited impact on our members. The first would change Bowls Scotland financial year from Bowls Scotland from September-August to April-March. The second would remove named titles from all Board members except for the Chairperson and Director of Finance.

A background to each of these resolutions is provided in the AGM notice, with further detail provided in the FAQs below.

### **How can I ask questions at the AGM?**

We welcome questions as part of the AGM. However, with a very full agenda of important proposals, we will prioritise time for questions and discussion of the resolutions. Then under item 11 'Questions to the Board' we will prioritise questions submitted in advance of the AGM. Questions should be submitted to [info@bowlsscotland.com](mailto:info@bowlsscotland.com) by 6.30pm on Monday 24th November. If time allows, following questions submitted in advance, we will take questions on the night from attendees. However, given the agenda we cannot guarantee that there will be time to answer all questions on the night. We will, of course, commit to following up any unanswered questions directly to you following the AGM.

### **What are the Pre-AGM Member Engagement Evenings?**

Ahead of our 2025 AGM, Bowls Scotland will be holding four pre-AGM Member Engagement Evenings. At these events Board members and senior staff will provide an update on the organisation's delivery and finances over the past year, look ahead to 2026, outline the resolutions being presented at the AGM, take questions and listen to views from our members. Three of these sessions will be in-person around the country, with the fourth being held online for those unable to travel to the in-person sessions.

To see dates and venues and to book your place, visit:

[www.bowlsscotland.com/news/pre-agm-member-engagement-evenings](http://www.bowlsscotland.com/news/pre-agm-member-engagement-evenings)

### **How do we vote if our club/association can't attend the AGM/ How do we vote by proxy?**

Proxy forms have been issued to all voting members with the notice of the AGM. Proxy forms must be completed, signed and returned to Bowls Scotland by 6.30pm on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> November.

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## **2. CAPITATION FEE**

### **What is being proposed?**

The Board are presenting two options to increase the capitation fee for clubs from £5 to either £7 or £8 per adult member. If passed, this increase would come into effect in October 2026.

There is no proposal to increase the cost of associate or affiliate membership.

In proposing this increase, we believe that we need to provide transparency to our members on why this is required, our finances, and what Bowls Scotland provides to our members.

### **Why are there two different options?**

The Board are recommending a £3 increase from £5 to £8. In the context of a challenging financial outlook and a high level of uncertainty in other areas of our budget, the Board believe that this is the responsible option to assure the financial health of Bowls Scotland, allow us to continuously improve our services to our members, and to grow the game.

We recognise that some members may be unwilling to support this increase. Therefore, we are providing the option of a £2 increase from £5 to £7. The Board believe this is the minimum viable increase to allow us to manage the financial position of the organisation, secure the future of the National Centre, and continue to deliver our competitions and support services to our members. However, it would increase our financial risk and limit our ability to make improvements to our existing competitions, events and services.

### **If I support a £3 increase, should I vote for a £2 increase as well?**

Yes. We appreciate that the two options could cause some confusion. At the AGM, the proposal to increase the fee by £3 will be voted on first. If the £3 increase is passed, the proposal to increase by £2 will be withdrawn. If the £3 increase is rejected, the AGM will move on to a vote on the £2 increase.

If you are voting by proxy ahead of the AGM, you will not know the result of the first vote. Therefore, if you support a £3 increase, it is important that you vote for both the £3 and the £2 increase to ensure that your vote counts in both instances.

### **Why is an increase to the capitation fee being proposed?**

The Board are reluctantly proposing an increase in the capitation fee due to increased costs and a challenging financial outlook.

The last increase in the capitation fee was approved at the 2021 AGM. In the four years since that AGM, inflation has increased by 25%. A simple inflationary increase would raise the capitation fee to £6.25.

We have also been impacted by increases in the employer National Insurance contribution and Real Living Wage. These factors combined have significantly increased our costs. At the same time, public funding has remained flat and the commercial and sponsorship market has become more challenging.

In addition, we are in negotiations with South Ayrshire Council to secure the future of the National Centre for Bowling.

### **What would be the impact of not passing an increase?**

Bowls Scotland has made a loss in the past two financial years. There is currently a gap between our income and our expenditure. With continuing cost pressures, our current trajectory will see losses grow. Securing the future of the National Centre will increase losses further. This is not sustainable, and action is required.

If an increase in the capitation fee is not approved at this AGM, the Board will need to look at significant changes to our current operating model, including potentially losing the National Centre for Bowling and either withdrawing or charging for some of our services to members. We believe these changes would negatively impact on our members. More detail of what we provide to members is outlined below.

### **What benefits do members get from their membership of Bowls Scotland?**

We believe that Bowls Scotland offer a wide range of benefits to members, providing good value for money. These benefits include:

- **Advice and support to clubs:** We respond to a wide range of ad hoc enquiries from clubs. This includes through National Development Office visits, our phone line, and our enquiries inbox.
- **Try Bowls:** 65% of our clubs have signed up to our national campaign aimed at getting new people into bowls and increasing memberships in clubs.
- **Bowls Mark:** Almost 100 clubs are accredited through our programme which aims to support clubs to develop safe, effective welcoming practices and improve participant experiences based on good practices.
- **Coach education:** We provide four formal coach education qualifications. We provide free places for Bowls Mark clubs and **sportscotland** funded subsidies for individuals from target groups. Almost 500 clubs now have a qualified coach.
- **Safeguarding support & PVGs:** We processed over 300 free PVGs this year for our members and offer free safeguarding courses. We recently appointed a Safeguarding & Administration Officer to help meet the increased demand from member clubs.
- **National Championships:** Over 700 of our clubs enter the National Championships, with almost 40% of club members participating at stage I. Over 1,300 players from 340 clubs qualified for the finals at Northfield this year.
- **Adult & youth competitions:** We deliver a number of other national competitions, including a variety of competitions for young bowlers to keep them engaged and allow them to develop against their peers.

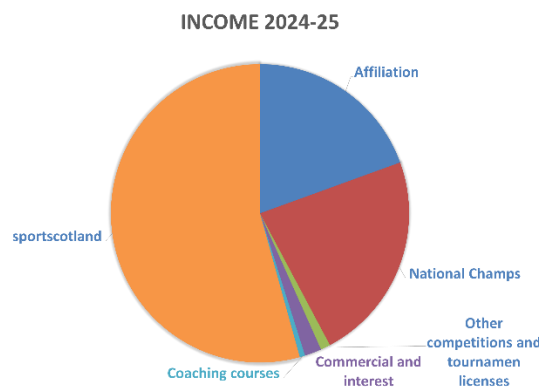
- **Senior and age group Scotland squads:** Through the podium process any member can put themselves forward for selection to our under 18s, under 25s, men’s, women’s and para’s national squads to represent Scotland in international competition.
- **Partnerships:** We have negotiated partnerships with water, waste and recycling, insurance, and financial services companies who can offer high quality and cost-effective services to our member clubs.
- **World Bowls affiliation:** Through Bowls Scotland, member clubs are affiliated to World Bowls supporting the overall development of our game across the world.

### Where does Bowls Scotland income come from?

Our income is approximately £1.2m.

Just over half of our income comes from **sportscotland**, the national agency for sport. This funding is ring-fenced for specific staff posts and activities. If we do not spend it on those staff and activities, we have to return the funding to **sportscotland**. We are not allowed to move the funding to cover other activities.

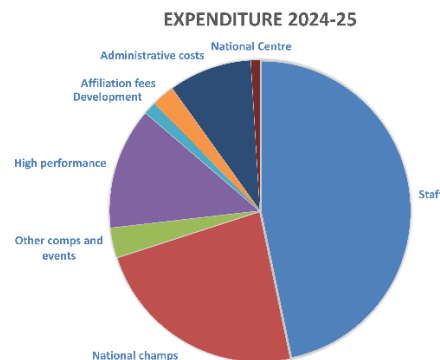
Around 25% of our income is generated from our National Championships through competition entry fees, spectator ticket sales, a council grant, and income from vendors, the bar, programmes, raffle, etc. Affiliation fees are the next biggest area of income, with around 20% generated from membership fees. The remainder is made up from other competitions, tournament licenses, commercial income, coaching courses, etc.



### What does Bowls Scotland spend its money on?

Our total expenditure is also approximately £1.2m.

The biggest area of expenditure is staffing costs. The next largest area of spend is the National Championships, followed by our high performance programme (our men’s, women’s and para’s senior national squads). More detail of each of these areas is provided below.



### How many staff do Bowls Scotland have and how are they funded?

Bowls Scotland operate a small staff team with 18 staff. Taking into account part-time staff, we have the equivalent of 16.67 full-time staff. Staff are our biggest asset, allowing us to deliver all our services to members. Our staffing breakdown is:

- CEO
- Development: 6
- Performance: 3
- Competitions & Events: 2
- Marketing & Communications: 2
- Operations & Finance: 4

14 of our 18 posts are fully or partly funded by **sportscotland**. In 2024-25, **sportscotland** funded 83% of our wage bill.

### How does Bowls Scotland staffing level compare to other similar organisations?

Compared to similar Scottish Governing Bodies of amateur sports, Bowls Scotland has a small staff team for the number of members we are serving.

	Members	Staff
Bowls Scotland	48,511	18
Scottish Gymnastics	32,469	29
Scottish Swimming	22,645	32
Scottish Athletics	19,414	34
Netball Scotland	9,805	18
Scottish Curling	8,868	12
Judo Scotland	8,662	17

### How much do Bowls Scotland pay staff?

In line with the wider sports sector, Bowls Scotland does not pay high salaries. Only 2 of 18 staff earn above the national average salary for a full-time worker. Our lowest paid staff earn the Real Living Wage. The three members of our senior leadership team have all been recruited in the last three years on lower salaries than their predecessors.

### Why do the Bowls Scotland National Championships cost so much to deliver?

The Bowls Scotland National Championships are one of the biggest domestic bowls events in the world, with over 1,300 players competing and 16,500 visitors over the 8 days of competition. It is a real festival of bowls and we received very positive feedback this year, with satisfaction levels of players and spectators over 94% across all categories – event organisation, venue, ticket prices, food & drink, park & ride, and overall experience.

Putting on large scale sports events comes at a cost, with inflation in the events sector having been very high since the pandemic. The event costs well over £250,000 to deliver. Examples of areas of spend include £22,000 in prize money, £16,500 in umpire expenses, £16,000 on stage 1 and stage 2 medals, £21,000 in food vouchers for players and volunteers, £20,000 on streaming, £20,000 on security, £26,000 in marquee hire, £16,000 on toilets, fencing and modular units, £26,000 on park and ride and traffic management, £7,000 on waste management and cleaning, and £2,500 on first aid. We know the level of many of these costs may come as a surprise to those not involved in delivering large scale events.

Overall the event is roughly breakeven, without accounting for staff salaries. Any surplus generated by holding the National Championships will be reinvested back into the event and the wider sport.

### Why is securing the future of the National Centre for Bowling important?

The National Centre for Bowling at Northfield has become an iconic home for Scottish Bowls. As the home of our National Championships, as well as the venue for age-group and full international fixtures, and other Bowls Scotland competitions, we know that many members dream of playing at Northfield. While other venues have been considered, with five greens and spectator seating, Northfield is the only venue that could hold the National Championships in their current form and scale.

Our long-term lease is coming to an end. During this period the Council have not increased our rent. We are paying the Council less annually now than the Scottish Bowling Association was paying the Council 20 years ago simply for hosting the men's National Championships. The Council has informed us that the current arrangements are untenable. While negotiations are ongoing, the Council has indicated that we are required to take on the management and full costs of the pavilion and stands at Northfield or the building will close and the stands will be removed. The cost to Bowls Scotland of retaining the National Centre is estimated at £70,000 per annum.

Without an increase in the capitation fee, Bowls Scotland are unlikely to be able to secure the future of the Centre and exit our agreement with South Ayrshire Council.

### How does the Bowls Scotland capitation fee compare to other similar organisations?

An increase in the capitation fee would be broadly in line with Bowls England capitation fee. The Bowls Scotland membership fee would remain significantly below the membership fee for other Scottish Governing Bodies of Sport.

	Membership Fee
Bowls Scotland	£5
Bowls England	£7.10
Scottish Gymnastics	£24/£50*
Scottish Swimming	£55
Scottish Athletics	£24
Netball Scotland	£16/£43
Scottish Curling	£31
Judo Scotland	£40

\*Lower membership fee is for non-competitive participants. Higher fee is minimum paid by those taking part in competitions.

The Bowls England from £5 to £7 for the 2024 season. For 2025 it is £7.10 and due to increase again by inflation for 2026. This is likely to increase it to £7.35.

### What other action is Bowls Scotland taking to increase income?

The Board do not want to continuously pass cost increases on to members through the capitation fee. Our aim is to increase other income streams to minimise future capitation fee increases.

We believe there are opportunities to increase sponsorship and generate greater commercial income from the National Championships. We are part of wider efforts across the sports sector to call for increased funding from Scottish Government. We also see opportunities to bring charitable funding into Bowls Scotland to help us to deliver our ambitions. Along side these moves we will continue to look for efficiency savings in how we operate.

### How should clubs handle an increase?

The Board are acutely aware that our member clubs are also facing financial challenges with rising costs. We do not make these recommendations lightly. Our clubs are the heart of bowls and we never want to negatively impact our clubs. Setting the membership fee a year in advance is intended to allow clubs to pass any increases in the capitation fee on to members. We would encourage our members

to consider passing this increase on to your members, providing transparency to them as to how much of their club membership is paid to Bowls Scotland.

#### **What happens if clubs under declare membership?**

Bowls Scotland belongs to and exists to serve its member clubs, associations and affiliates. You, our members have collectively agreed that we should operate a club membership fee based on the number of playing members in the club. This is enshrined in our articles. Accurately reporting membership numbers to Bowls Scotland is a condition of membership contained in our Articles. While disciplinary action can be taken against clubs who breach this condition, we hope and trust our clubs will act honourably in declaring their membership accurately.

The Board is aware that we need to better articulate the benefits that members receive through their membership of Bowls Scotland. We hope that our communications throughout the year, our annual report, the AGM documents and our pre-AGM engagement evenings will help to build this understanding. Ultimately, any clubs which under declare their membership are cheating their fellow clubs by not playing their fair share. We hope you will agree that is not in keeping with the fine traditions of bowls and our commitment to fair play and mutual respect.

#### **If the £3 increase is passed, will there be further increases proposed next year?**

We do not want to recommend further large increases to our members in future years. We believe that the recent years of freezing capitation fees, which ignores inflation, followed by large jumps is unhelpful to clubs and to Bowls Scotland. Therefore, if the £3 increase is passed, we commit to limiting any proposal at next year's AGM to only an increase in line with inflation.

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### **3. FINANCIAL YEAR**

#### **What is being proposed?**

We are proposing amending the accounting reference date of Bowls Scotland from 31 August to 31 March in each year.

The 'accounting reference date' marks the last day of a company's financial year. Bowls Scotland currently operates a financial year of 1 September to 31 August. We are proposing changing our financial year to 1 April to 31 March.

#### **What are the advantages of this change?**

This change will allow us to simplify the management of the Bowls Scotland's finances and help us to provide improved financial transparency to our members.

The current timing of the financial year end falls during the bowls season. This complicates budgeting with seasonal costs falling across financial years. It also requires some of our staff to focus on the financial year end at a time when we would prefer them to be fully focussed on operational delivery.

Finally, it would align our financial year to the annual grant we receive from **sportscotland**. This grant currently represents approximately 50% of our income and requires complicated financial adjustments, with income deferred from one year to the next. These adjustments inevitably make it harder to clearly communicate our finances to our members.

#### **Will the timing of affiliation payments remain the same?**

Yes. The affiliation window and payment of affiliation fees will remain in October. We do not anticipate this change in our financial year having an impact on member clubs.

### **How will the change to the financial year be implemented?**

If passed, to transition to a 31 March year end, we would run a seven-month financial year from 1 September 2025 to 31 March 2026. We would then return to twelve-month financial years from 1 April 2026.

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## **4. BOARD STRUCTURE**

### **What is being proposed?**

The Board are recommending removing named titles from all Board members except for the Chairperson and Director of Finance.

### **What is the current Board structure?**

The Board currently consists of:

- Chairperson
- Director of Finance
- Director of Development
- Director of Marketing, Branding and Communication
- Director of Governance
- Director of Competitions and Events
- Up to four General Directors

### **What would be the new Board structure?**

If this proposal is accepted the new Board would consist of:

- Chairperson
- Director of Finance
- Up to eight General Directors

### **What are the advantages of this change?**

This change would allow the Board more flexibility to recommend the appointment of directors with the skills and experience required at that time. For example, the Board currently believe that additional expertise in generating commercial and sponsorship income would benefit the Board.

This change also recognises that the Board's role is to provide governance and set the strategic direction of Bowls Scotland. This is a non-executive role. Our operational delivery is undertaken by our staff and volunteers, including our District Coordinators.

### **Would this change the remit, size or appointment process for the Bowls Scotland Board?**

No. The Board would continue to set the strategic direction of Bowls Scotland and oversee all aspects of our delivery and operations. The size of the Board would remain the same with a minimum of 2 Board members and a maximum of 10. We currently have 5 Board members and the Board plan to recruit new Board members following the AGM if this proposal is accepted. The appointment process for Board members is outlined in our articles of association and will not change as a result of this proposal.