



# BOWLS SCOTLAND ANNUAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2024 - AUGUST 2025



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# CHAIR STATEMENT



It is a privilege to have taken on the role of Chair of Bowls Scotland and I am delighted to be introducing my first annual report. Coming into the role, I was clear that I want to ensure that Bowls Scotland is a well governed, and effective organisation that is serving our members. A little under a year in, my overriding view is that only by working together will we achieve our collective ambitions for bowls in Scotland.

Reading the annual report, it is clear that we already have much to be proud of and a solid basis on which to develop. I would like to thank my fellow Board members, our staff team, and all our clubs, city and county associations, affiliates, volunteers and other stakeholders for playing your part in this.

The National Championships is one of the jewels in our crown, with almost 40% of our members competing at stage I. As a competitive club bowler, I know many of us dream of qualifying to the finals at Northfield. I didn't make it as a player this year, but attending as a spectator I was struck by how it has grown into a real festival of bowls. I heard many comments from people who felt it was our best ever finals, with the greens noticeably better than recent years. I was delighted that we were able to increase streaming of the Nationals and secure live coverage on the BBC, resulting in more than 600,000 views during the week. Delivering this quality of event and streaming comes at a cost. I see this cost as integral investment in promoting a positive and modern image of our sport, which will serve our members and allow us to secure further commercial investment into the game.

As a Board, one of our most important roles is to look to the future. There are great opportunities ahead, not least the Commonwealth Games returning to Scotland next year. There are also simple ways we can improve the running of the game for our members, such as our decision to remove the requirement for tournament licenses next year, directly addressing feedback from members. At the same time, we face some real challenges. We are in negotiations with South Ayrshire Council to secure the future of the National Centre for Bowling at Northfield. The world is getting more complex and more expensive all the time, and we face tough financial headwinds. Ensuring that our sport remains financially robust will be a key focus over the next year.

With all this in mind, the Board have decided that in the coming year we will review and refresh our strategy to ensure it puts us in the best place to thrive. We won't do this in isolation and as an organisation will continue to talk with and listen to our members.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Grant', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**Gary Grant**

# CEO STATEMENT

As with our Chair, Gary, this has been my first season in the role. I've made every effort to be out and about as much as possible meeting with our clubs, volunteers, coaches, players and partners. This has given me the opportunity to see first-hand much of the really positive activity outlined in this report.

I was fortunate to spend a day with Alloway Bowling Club, presenting them with their BowlsMark gold award. I had a great day meeting members and hearing about how they were developing their club. While BowlsMark bronze helps clubs get the basics in place and I'd encourage all clubs to aim for this level as a minimum, BowlsMark gold is for clubs that are committed to engaging with their community. This year along with Alloway BC, Strathmiglo BC, Laurieston BC, Thurso BC and Melrose BC achieved the gold award. They are great examples of our strategy to work with clubs to ensure bowls is at the heart of communities. Well done to all of them. Increasing our club support will be key to securing the future health of bowls.

I am also proud that this year we have introduced new youth competitions in response to the wishes of young bowlers. Our new Youth Competitions Advisory Group were the creative driving force behind establishing the new Under 21 Team Challenge. We know that if we are going to attract young people to the sport, we need to evolve the sport with them, not dictate their involvement to them. We will continue to listen to our young bowlers to help us develop a positive and modern game.

A highlight of my year was spending time with our para squad for their test match in Ireland and for the Para Home Nations at Leamington Spa. They played some exceptional bowls and came away as winners on both occasions. I also attended a Scottish Disability Sport Para Festival where our Disability Development Officer, Stuart Chesby, was introducing children with disabilities to bowls for the first time. Both experiences reinforced just how accessible bowls is and the opportunity this presents for us.

Looking ahead, we need to wrestle with the reality that bowls is a sport that has seen a declining membership trend over several decades in Scotland and many other countries. If the definition of madness is continuing to do the same thing and expecting different results, then we need to look at what we can do differently and where changes are required to get bowls in Scotland growing again. We are looking forward to working with you to achieve that ambition.



**Malcolm Dingwall-Smith**

# STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE CLUBS

## Key Highlights

### MEMBERSHIP

808 clubs with 48,511 members

34,153 male

13,119 female

1,239 juniors

### COACH EDUCATION

191 coaches upskilled

117 utilising subsidy fund

499 clubs have a qualified coach

Bespoke courses delivered in rural, island locations and for coaches with disabilities

### DEVELOPMENT

529 Try Bowls clubs registered

65% of affiliated clubs

39 Try Bowls club events supported

91 BowlsMark clubs

33 new awards this year

5 new gold clubs

### CLUB ENGAGEMENT

Development Team conducted

147 club visits

25 local forums across North, East and West engaging 213 clubs and 358 members

# STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE CLUBS

Bowls Scotland made significant strides in strengthening club development and grassroots engagement throughout 2024-25. The National Development Officers (NDOs) and Disability Development Officer played a pivotal role, conducting 147 club visits and delivering 25 forums across the North, East and West regions. These forums engaged 213 clubs and 358 individuals, offering tailored support on governance, funding, safeguarding, recruitment and club development strategies.

808 clubs continue to affiliate to Bowls Scotland, with a total of 48,511 members. This figure can be broken down into 34,153 adult males, 13,119 adult females and 1,239 junior members (U16's). We were delighted to welcome Comrie Bowling Club, Langholm Old Bowling Club, Lerwick Bowling Club and Torphins Bowling Club as newly affiliated clubs for the 2024-25 season.

The Try Bowls programme continued to grow, with 529 clubs (18% increase from 2024), meaning that 65% of Bowls Scotland clubs are now registered. Our Team supported 39 club Try Bowls events and introduced new resources, including poster templates to enhance visibility and an instructional video featuring drone footage to support clubs to run successful and engaging events.

The BowlsMark club accreditation programme saw 33 new clubs join, bringing the total to 91 nationally. This initiative supports clubs through free templates and guidance from our NDOs to modernise their operations and to develop safe, effective and welcoming environments. Five new clubs achieved Bowls Mark gold, demonstrating their commitment to develop and engage their community.



# STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE CLUBS

A comprehensive Facility Survey was conducted to gather baseline data on club ownership, accessibility, internal amenities, sustainability, and health and safety. Issued in March 2025, the survey achieved a 94% response rate, with 767 clubs participating - offering valuable insight into the infrastructure and needs of bowling clubs across Scotland.

In Coach Education, 191 coaches were upskilled, with 117 receiving direct financial support through the Coach Education Subsidy Fund. The re-introduction of the Level 2 Coaching Award saw 13 completions, and the first-ever Introduction to Bowls Coaching Award session for coaches with disabilities was delivered, alongside courses in Stornoway and Shetland to support legacy development from the 2025 International Island Games. Notably, 45 new clubs now have at least one qualified coach, bringing the total to 499 clubs (10% increase from 2024) with a coach - a significant increase in coaching capacity across the country.

Volunteer recognition remained a priority, with eight National Volunteer Awards presented and 128 volunteers supporting the National Championships across a wider range of roles than ever before. The popular National Championships 'Volunteer of the Week' award returned, with Robert Donaldson from Parkside Bowling Club receiving the honour in 2025.



# ACHIEVING POTENTIAL

## Key Highlights

### YOUTH COMPETITIONS

Two new competitions introduced:  
Andy Meekison Gents U25 Pairs and  
U21 Team Challenge

50% participation increase in Andy  
Houston team event

### PODIUM PATHWAY

16% participation increase  
405 athletes competed

189 attended assessment days

116 players selected across women's,  
men's, para's, U25 and U18 squads

### NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Stage 1: 19,158 players from 717 clubs

Finals: 1,316 players from 340 clubs

16,499 visitors over eight days

Introduction of new Para Visually Impaired  
Open Pairs competition

### SCOTLAND

Para gold and Men's silver at 2025 British Bowls  
Internationals

Winners of Andy Meekison Team Trophy at 2024  
Bowls Europe Championships

Gold at 2024 British Bowls U25 Internationals

Silver at 2025 British Bowls U18 Internationals

# ACHIEVING POTENTIAL

2024-25 was a landmark year for Bowls Scotland in delivering competitive success, developing future talent and expanding inclusive opportunities across all levels of the sport.

Youth development was further strengthened with the introduction of the U21 Team Challenge and the Andy Meekison Gents U25 Pairs, both of which received strong uptake. The Andy Houston youth district competition saw a 50% increase in participation, with 144 under 18 players competing.

The 2025 National Championships were a major success:

- Stage One saw 19,158 players from 717 clubs compete.
- Finals at Ayr featured 1,316 players representing 340 clubs.
- The event welcomed 16,499 visitors over eight days - nearly double the 8,728 from 2024, and achieved a 45% increase in revenue.
- Innovations included the introduction of a Para Visually Impaired 3-Bowl Pairs event and a well-received BBQ & Bowls evening, which drew positive feedback and demand for future evening events.

A standout success was the Local Resident Complimentary Pass initiative, with 1,635 passes distributed to nearby homes. An impressive 471 residents engaged, strengthening community ties around the National Centre for Bowling.

Northfield provides a unique venue for the National Championships, home international fixtures and many of our other competitions. With our long-term lease coming to an end, we began negotiations with South Ayrshire Council to secure the future of the National Centre for Bowling.



# ACHIEVING POTENTIAL

At the 2024 Bowls Europe Championships, Scotland secured medals in eight out of 10 disciplines and were crowned the inaugural winner of the Andy Meekison Team Trophy. Scotland brought home gold in the Para and silver in the Men's competitions at the 2025 British Bowls Internationals.

The 2024 British Bowls U25 Internationals saw Scotland dominate with gold medals in the Men's, Women's and Team events. At the 2025 British Bowls U18 Internationals, Scotland delivered a strong performance, finishing second, narrowly missing out on gold to England.

The Podium Pathway continued to grow, with a 16% increase in participation from the previous year. A total of 405 athletes competed in open events, leading to 189 progressing to Assessment Days. From these, 72 players were selected for our men's, women's and para's squads, 28 for U25 and 16 for U18 - demonstrating a strong pipeline of emerging talent.

The performance support team also evolved, welcoming new coaches and selectors to strengthen the delivery of High Performance programme across the Men's, Women's and Para categories.



# A MODERN AND PROGRESSIVE SPORT

## Key Highlights

### LIVE STREAMING

8 days of live streaming at the 2025 National Championships, covering 23 matches

620,072 views across Facebook and YouTube

Finals broadcast via BBC Sport website and BBC iPlayer

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Followers increased to 37,982 (+20%)

Facebook reach increased to 1,316,822 (+18%)

Video views grew to 2,209,877 (+252%)

Newsletter subscriptions grew to 4,244

### SUSTAINABILITY

Business travel emissions reduced to 10,577.8 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e

100% of waste diverted from landfill at 2024 National Championships

47% total recycling and recovery rate

### GOVERNANCE & FINANCIAL STABILITY

New Chair appointed in November 2024

Scots on 10 of 11 World Bowls Committees

Commercial income from more than 20 companies

# A MODERN AND PROGRESSIVE SPORT

Bowls Scotland continues to advance our strategic commitment to modernisation, innovation and organisational resilience. With developments achieved across governance, financial sustainability, marketing and environmental responsibility.

The organisation welcomed Gary Grant as Chair following the AGM in November 2024. Gary brings extensive experience in business operations and a lifelong dedication to the sport and has demonstrated strong leadership and engagement with members and stakeholders. This included instituting a Presidents' group meeting with the President, Vice President, Junior Vice President, Chair and CEO ahead of each Board meeting to strengthen their input on key operational issues. Following the recruitment of a new CEO, the Board has approved an Organisational Improvement Project to ensure our governance, policies, processes and operations are fit for purpose.

We continued to regularly engage with World Bowls to work together to develop a modern and progressive international sport. World Bowls have established a new committee structure to govern and develop the game. With our support, Scots with relevant expertise have secured places on 10 of the 11 committees.

In a challenging climate, we took steps to improve our financial sustainability. We improved our approach to maximising commercial income from the National Championships working with new suppliers to improve to our food and retail options generating additional revenue to offset costs. We continued our partnerships with Gallagher Insurance, Castle Water, Change Waste Recycling and Gilson Gray to provide high quality services to our clubs while also generating funds for Bowls Scotland to reinvest into the sport. Across our business, we generated commercial income by working with more than 20 partners, sponsors and suppliers.



# A MODERN AND PROGRESSIVE SPORT

Bowls Scotland also made progress in its environmental sustainability efforts. Estimated carbon emissions from business travel were reduced from 15,090.0 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e to 10,577.8 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e, reflecting a more efficient operational approach. Recycling initiatives at the 2024 National Championships contributed further carbon savings, with our carbon report being shared in March 2025 and 100% of waste being diverted from landfill for the second year running. Working in partnership with Change Waste Recycling over the Championships in July 2024, over 2,107 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e was saved through recycling with an impressive 47% total recycling and recovery rate.

Bowls Scotland's Marketing and Communications team delivered significant growth and visibility. The 2025 National Championships were live streamed for the first time across eight consecutive days, showcasing 23 matches across all categories. This initiative resulted in a total of 620,072 views across Bowls Scotland's Facebook and YouTube platforms, as well as BBC Scotland's digital channels. The finals of the Mixed Pairs, Para Physically Disabled Open Pairs, Gents Singles and Ladies Singles were broadcast via the BBC Sport website and BBC iPlayer, attracting an additional 22,632 viewers.

Social media engagement increased markedly:

- Total followers across platforms rose 20% from 31,750 to 37,982.
- Facebook reach grew to 1,316,822, up from 1,115,697 the previous year (18% increase).
- Video views across all platforms increased 252% from 627,103 to 2,209,877.
- Monthly E-Newsletter subscribers rose to 4,244.
- 157 news articles were published online, profiling 36 clubs and volunteers.



# A DIVERSE AND ACCESSIBLE SPORT

## Key Highlights

### DISABILITY DEVELOPMENT

Disability Landscape Survey launched

Supported approx. 150 children with disabilities at four SDS Para Sport Festivals

Inaugural Disability Awareness Day at National Championships

### EQUALITY & WELLBEING

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group established to support Equality Action Plan

Continued commitment to Mental Health through SAMH Charter and Action Plan

### SAFEGUARDING

8 CWPS courses - 117 attendees

6 CWPO courses - 70 attendees

311 PVG checks processed

29 new Club WPOs appointed

### IMAGERY

46% women

29% youth

14% individuals with disabilities

Ensuring imagery reflects the diversity of Scottish bowls

# A DIVERSE AND ACCESSIBLE SPORT

Bowls Scotland continued to prioritise inclusion, wellbeing, and safeguarding throughout 2024–25, ensuring the sport remains welcoming and accessible to all.

An active Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group was set up to support the Equality Action Plan work. The team have made progress on the Moving to Inclusion Framework. Progress was also made in ensuring the sport's visual representation reflects the diversity of its participants, with 46% of imagery featuring women, 29% youth bowlers and 14% individuals with disabilities.

Further progress was made in disability inclusion:

- Bowls Scotland attended four Scottish Disability Sport Para Sports Festivals, engaging approximately 150 children with disabilities.
- A Disability Landscape Survey was launched in February 2025.
- 10 new coaches with a disability qualified through a targeted Introduction to Bowls Coaching Award.
- The first Disability Awareness Day was hosted at the National Championships, welcoming 20 guests from Ayrshire SportsAbility.
- Accessibility improvements were made to the National Centre for Bowling, with positive feedback received and recognition that further work is required.



# A DIVERSE AND ACCESSIBLE SPORT

The organisation advanced its commitment to mental health through the SAMH Mental Health Charter, supported by a clear action plan. In partnership with South Ayrshire Council, period products were again provided at the National Championships to reduce barriers for women and girls.

Safeguarding remained a central focus:

- A Safeguarding & Administration Officer was appointed in April 2025.
- Eight Child Wellbeing and Protection in Sport courses delivered, with 117 attendees, a 102% increase from the previous year.
- Six Club Wellbeing and Protection Officer courses delivered, with 70 attendees, up 43% from 49 in 2024.
- 311 PVG checks were processed, more than doubling the previous year's total of 154.
- 29 new Club WPO's were appointed to strengthen local safeguarding capacity.

We continue to work with Children 1st to make progress in implementing the Standards for Child Wellbeing and Protection in Sport. These achievements reflect Bowls Scotland's ongoing dedication to building a sport that is equitable, inclusive and safe for all.



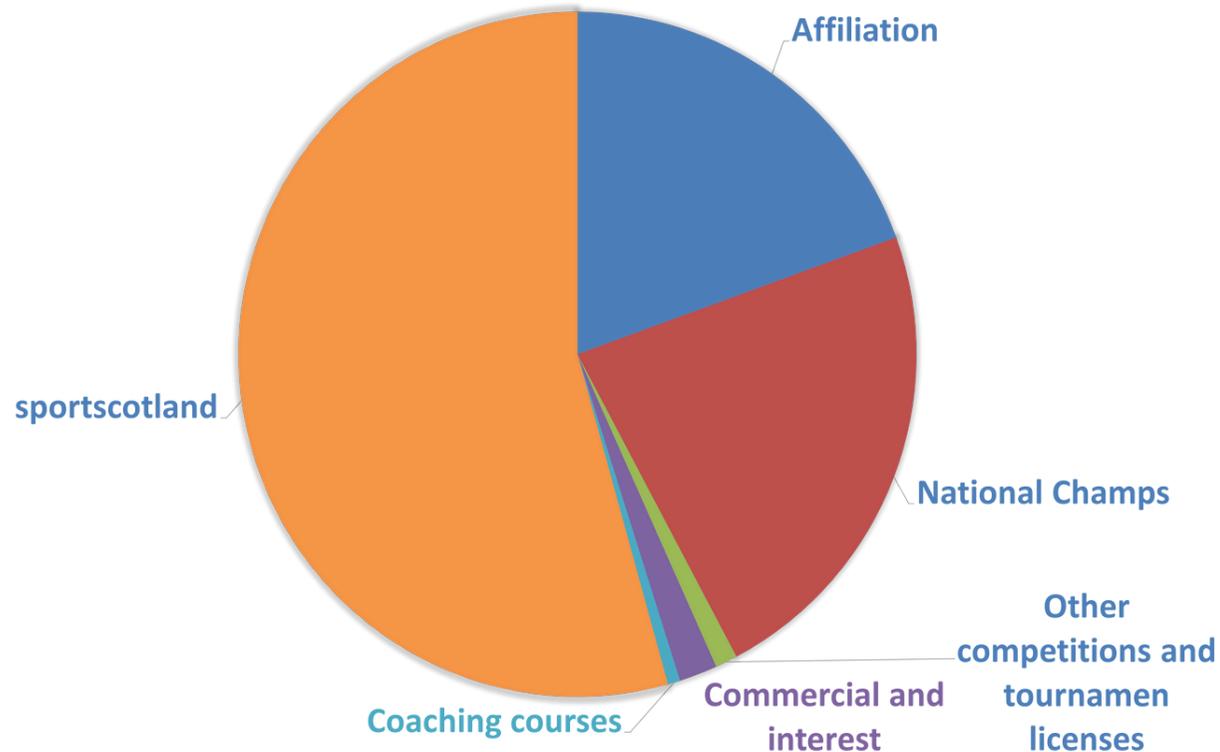
# FINANCE REPORT

This summary should be read in conjunction with the Financial Statements prepared by BDO, accountants to Bowls Scotland.

For the financial year 2024/25, Bowls Scotland recorded a deficit of £15,526, reducing company reserves to £228,669.

Income for the year totalled £1,187,684, reflecting an overall increase. The investment from **sportscotland** rose in the accounts due to deferred income from 2023/24, though our annual grant remained flat. Membership income saw a modest decline of 1.5%, while the 2025 National Championships delivered a 45% increase in revenue, which was fully reinvested into the event.

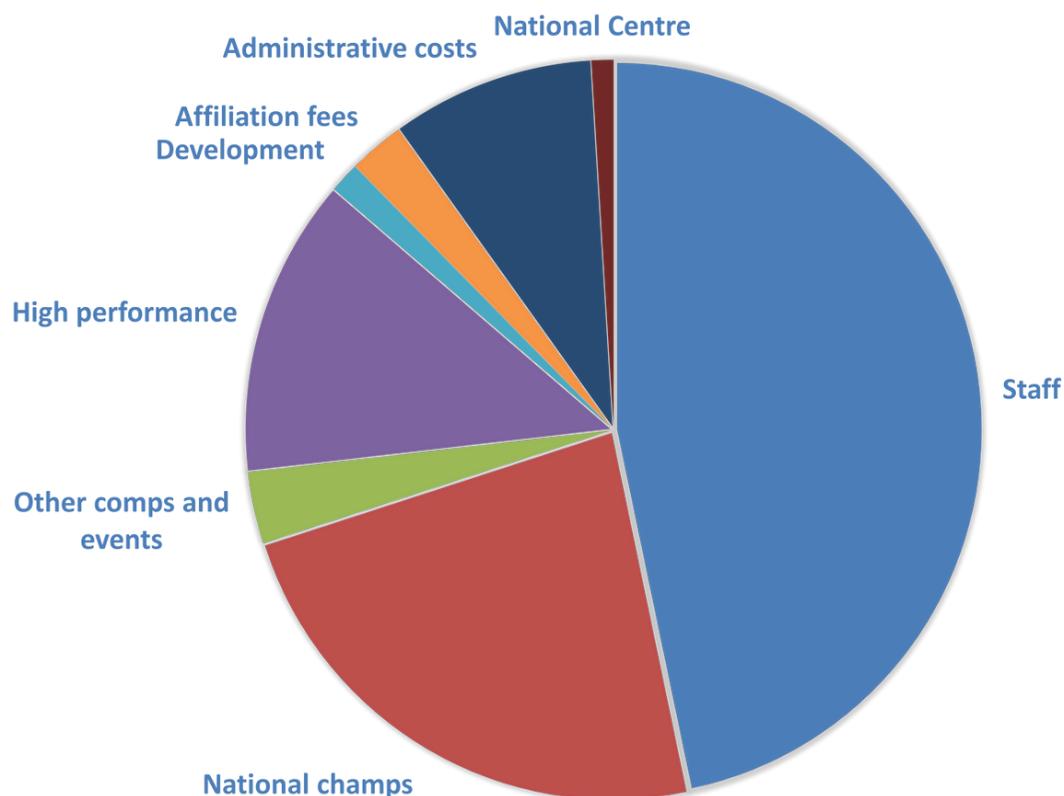
## INCOME 2024-25



# FINANCE REPORT

Expenditure rose to £1,203,210, driven by ongoing cost pressures affecting both administrative and operational areas. Strategic investments were made in cyber security and the 2025 National Championships, including over £20,000 to support the successful addition of eight full days of streaming. A new economic impact report revealed that the Championships' positive contribution to the economy nearly doubled, exceeding £2 million. Staff costs were influenced by higher National Insurance contributions but showed an overall decrease due to staffing vacancies during the year. Spending on the High Performance programme increased in line with a busy international calendar, fully funded by **sportscotland**.

## EXPENDITURE 2024-25



# FINANCE REPORT

Overall, 2024/25 was another challenging financial year, marking a second consecutive deficit. While this was anticipated in the budget, it remains a concern and underscores the need for decisive action to safeguard the organisation's financial sustainability. As noted in the 2024 Annual Report, the cumulative effect of rising costs, driven by inflation and increasing employment costs, is evident. Without intervention, the current trajectory of growing losses is likely to continue.

Looking ahead, the Board and management remain committed to delivering excellent value for members. Alongside a proposed increase in the capitation fee, other key actions will focus on identifying operational efficiencies and generating additional non-member income streams to strengthen the organisation's financial position. Planned measures include the removal of tournament licences from the 2026 season and a targeted strategy to grow commercial revenue. Securing the future of the National Centre is a top priority. While it presents a complex financial challenge, its role as the home of Scottish success, both nationally and internationally, makes it a unique and invaluable asset for our sport. In addition, Bowls Scotland is ambitious about expanding streaming services to bring more coverage and access to members. However, growth in this area will require additional income to ensure the service remains sustainable and continues to deliver high-quality content.

To assure the financial health of the organisation, allow us to continuously improve our service to our members, and to grow the game, the Board is proposing an affiliation fee increase at the 2025 AGM. Members are encouraged to review all supporting documentation provided in the AGM papers and attend pre-AGM engagement events to ensure they are fully informed ahead of this important resolution. Despite the challenges, Bowls Scotland remains optimistic about the future. The organisation continues to evolve, adapt, and invest in areas that matter most to members and the wider bowls community. With the support of our members, partners, and stakeholders, we are confident that the steps being taken will strengthen our foundations and ensure a vibrant, sustainable future for the sport across Scotland.



## THANK YOU

Thank you to **sport**scotland and our commercial partners for their continued support.

**sport**scotland



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[www.bowlsscotland.com](http://www.bowlsscotland.com)