

## **Bowls Scotland Board Meeting**

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025, 17:30**

### **Melting Pot, Edinburgh**

Present: Gary Grant – Chair (GG), Gavin Smith (GS), Michael Cavanagh (MC), Henry Robertson (HR).

In Attendance: Malcolm Dingwall-Smith - CEO (MDS), Brogan Sinclair - Business Operations Manager (BS), Kareena Cuthbert - High Performance Manager (KC).

Apologies: Nicola Wilson (NW), Fiona Lilley – **sportscotland** partnership manager (FL).

#### 1. Welcome

1.1. Chairs Opening Remarks: GG welcomed attendees and thanked the Board for their continued support and engagement. GG noted that a meeting had been held with the Presidents' Group to gather their views on the matters to be discussed by the Board.

1.2. Declarations of Interest: No conflicts declared in relation to the agenda.

#### 2. Approval of Previous Minutes: Minutes from the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2025 were approved.

2.1. Matters Arising: The Board noted that several actions from the previous meeting had progressed. Anti-doping documents referenced in October have now been circulated to members. The update on the Children 1st Health Check, which was previously outstanding, has been completed and included within the December Board papers. In addition, the Podium Pathway engagement update, which had been delayed, was delivered during this meeting through a detailed presentation by the Head of Performance.

2.2. Action Log: The Board noted that most actions from previous meetings have been completed, with only the return of the skills audit matrix still outstanding.

2.3. Board Decision Log: The Board noted the only decision taken outside formal meetings since the October session relating to capitation fees.

#### 3. Executive Management Report:

The CEO provided an overview of operational activity since September, covering safeguarding, EDI, anti-doping, competitions review, membership trends, development work, and international engagement. The Board noted the report. The Board noted the report and commended progress across these areas.

The Board discussed the update on club affiliation numbers, noting that not all clubs have yet withdrawn. It was noted that a small number of clubs have indicated that they will not be re-affiliating with the primary reason given being club closure. Bowls Scotland will be contacting clubs that have seen significant drops in membership to assist the identification of clubs that need support or would benefit from engagement in Bowls Scotland development programmes. A further update will be provided to the Board once the final few clubs have affiliated.

3.1. Safeguarding (standing item):

The number of PVG applications processed more than doubled compared to last year (311 vs 154), and participation in CWPS and CWPO training increased by 80%. Work continues to meet the Standards for Child Wellbeing and Protection in Sport, with 50% of criteria currently assessed as satisfactory. Outstanding actions include strengthening safeguarding processes for U18 athletes, improving feedback mechanisms, and reviewing policies due for renewal. The off-season provides an opportunity to close these actions before the next investment panel in February. The Board agreed to delegate responsibility to NW for providing Board approval for policy updates relating to compliance with Standards for Safeguarding in Sport. Delegation on proviso that Children 1st confirm they are content that this approach provides adequate assurance.

3.2. EDI (standing item):

Bowls Scotland delivered a range of EDI initiatives during the period, including campaigns for Scottish Women and Girls in Sport Week, Scottish Disability Sport Week, and World Mental Health Day. The organisation also supported the LGBTQ+ short film BOWL and celebrated success at the Scottish Women in Sport Awards, where Julie Forrest won Scottish Sportswoman of the Year. The EDI Working Group has reconvened, and its Terms of Reference will be reviewed early in 2026. Progress against the Equality Action Plan and the Disability Landscape Survey was discussed, alongside plans for a Club EDI project.

3.3. Anti-doping (standing item):

Plans for additional training for Commonwealth Games athletes are underway, with mandatory completion required for any new squad appointments.

4. Finance:

The CEO presented the finance update, noting some significant changes since the September budget. The Board discussed the revised financial outlook and agreed actions to address the projected deficit.

4.1. Budget update:

BDO advised a change in accounting treatment for affiliation income during the seven-month financial year, resulting in a projected deficit. There were also notable movements relating to deferred income and National Centre costs for this period. The Board approved an updated budget for 2025-26, including a potential drawdown from the Development Fund. The updated budget for 2026–27 will be presented before April.

4.2. Sponsorship approach:

The CEO outlined a proposed tiered sponsorship model, including Principal Partner and Official Partner categories. Options for engaging an agency were discussed to maximise financial return, with a preference for commission-based arrangements to minimise financial risk. Work will continue early in the new year.

4.3. Kit tender:

Following a competitive tender process, the Board approved Bowls Scotland's kit supplier for 2026 to 2029.

5. National Centre:

The Board received an update on negotiations with South Ayrshire Council regarding the future of the National Centre at Northfield. The current lease for office space expired on 27 November 2025, and Bowls Scotland has secured a temporary License to Occupy to allow time for final negotiations.

The recommended approach is to take on a 25-year lease for the pavilion and spectator stands at a peppercorn rent.

The Board approved continued negotiations toward agreement of a long-term lease for the main pavilion and stands at the National Centre, with final approval required from the Board before signing.

6. Governance and strategy:

The Board considered governance matters and future planning, including the development of the next strategic cycle, Board recruitment, AGM minutes, and meeting dates for 2026.

6.1. Strategy development

The CEO presented the proposed timeline for developing the 2027–2031 strategy, which aligns with **sportscotland**'s four-year investment cycle. The timeline includes member consultation between January and June 2026 through staff workshops, District Coordinator and Youth Coordinator meetings, stakeholder engagement, an online questionnaire, and three member workshops. A draft strategy will be produced by mid-2026, with Board review scheduled for October and presentation to **sportscotland** at the Strategic Review in November, along with a final online survey to gather final member feedback. The final version will be approved in early 2027, followed by design and public launch in April 2027. The Board discussed the importance of balancing meaningful consultation with timely delivery to secure investment and agreed that the proposed approach provides sufficient opportunity for member input while maintaining efficiency. The Board approved the approach and timeline for the strategy development process.

6.2. Board recruitment

The board noted the outstanding action to return the skills audit matrix to the Board recruitment sub-group to support plans for 2026 recruitment. The sub-group will then take forward board recruitment.

6.3. 2025 AGM reflections and minutes

The draft minutes of the 2025 AGM were reviewed and agreed for publication on the Bowls Scotland website. It was confirmed that Maureen Wallace, District Coordinator for District 9, has been appointed as Junior Vice President following the process agreed at the AGM.

6.4. 2026 Board dates

The Board reviewed and agreed the proposed schedule of meetings for 2026. The plan includes four online meetings in February, May, August, and November, alongside two in-person away days in April and October. The October away day will incorporate the pre-AGM meeting, with the AGM scheduled for 28 October 2026. The Board agreed to move the AGM from late November to October following approval at the 2025 AGM to move the financial year end to 31 March.

7. Performance update presentation:

KC delivered a detailed presentation on the High Performance Programme and Podium Pathway. The Board was reminded of the strategic objectives: achieving four or more medals at major competitions, implementing a progressive world-class pathway, and embedding a positive coaching culture. The approach focuses on three pillars—opportunity, coaching, and performance environments—supported by inclusive selection processes and tiered progression aligned with the “What It Takes to Win” model.

The update highlighted significant progress in 2025:

- **Pathway Engagement:** 405 entrants participated in podium events, 189 players were assessed at the Assessment Ways, and 72 selected for the national squad. A shortlist of 20 athletes for the Commonwealth Games group has been confirmed, with individualised development plans underway.
- **Programme Delivery:** Six pathway days were held, and all squad members competed internationally. Attendance at pathway days was 92%, with positive feedback and improved performance culture.
- **International Success:** Scotland secured medals at the World Cup (three medals) and British International Series, and won the Wales test, while the Australia Test was described as a learning experience for player development.

Plans for 2026 include eight competitive opportunities for the wider squad, up to 18 training days for the Commonwealth Games group, and international tests against England and Wales. The Commonwealth Games selection period ends in April, with nomination to Team Scotland by May. The Board noted the dual focus on elite preparation and development opportunities for emerging players, alongside integration of U18 and U25 programmes.

Risks discussed included resource constraints, volunteer capacity, cultural change in coaching, and potential negative reactions following selection decisions. The Board welcomed the update and acknowledged the progress toward establishing regional performance environments by 2028.

8. AOCB

No additional items were raised.

The meeting closed at 20:00