



BOWLS SCOTLAND
ANNUAL REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2025 - MARCH 2026

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CHAIR STATEMENT

This is an unusual Annual Report, in that it only covers a seven-month period, September 2025 to March 2026. This reflects the decision, approved by members at our AGM, to move our financial year to April-March. This change will simplify the management of our finances and help us to provide improved financial transparency to our members, with the bowls season now falling into a single financial year and alignment to the **sportscotland** annual grant that represents half of our income.



As a result, we are reporting on a shortened financial year to facilitate this move. This period covers the tail-end of the 2025 season and the 2025-26 off-season.

Although, as you can see from the report, 'off-season' was a bit of a misnomer this year, with preparation for the Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games at full pace across the period. Every bowls club committee will also know that there is plenty of work to do in the off-season to keep the club running smoothly and prepare for the following season - Bowls Scotland is no different. Our staff continue work hard behind the scenes during this period, ensuring that they can fully focus on delivery activities during the season.

In my foreword to the 2024-25 annual report, I discussed the tough financial headwinds facing Bowls Scotland. As anticipated, even with the implementation of several cost-saving measures, we are again reporting a financial loss for this period. This is clearly not a sustainable trend and led to the proposal passed by the membership at the 2025 AGM to increase the capitation fee. The additional income from this decision will not be received until October 2026, but along with the welcome confirmation of an increase in core funding from **sportscotland**, has put Bowls Scotland on a more secure financial footing for the future and avoided the need for harsher cuts across our operations. We do not take our income from either members or **sportscotland** for granted and will continue to make sure we spend this wisely and efficiently for the benefit of clubs and bowlers across the country.

The level of activity delivered outside the season that can be seen throughout this report is thanks to the hard work and dedication to bowls of many individuals and organisations. I would like to thank my fellow board members, staff, volunteers, clubs and partners for everything you continue to do every month of the year to ensure that we continue to have a game to be proud of.

Gary Grant, Chair of Bowls Scotland



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER STATEMENT

Our work doesn't stop with the last bowl of the season. Even before one season has finished, we have started planning for the following year.

In October, we re-affiliate our clubs. While we again saw a decline in membership, I take some comfort that the 0.5% reduction was a smaller drop than we had seen in recent years and that there is evidence that the hard work of our clubs, volunteers and development team is working and the decline has slowed significantly. In fact, half of the clubs that renewed their affiliation last year grew their membership, with the decrease driven by a small number of clubs closing or choosing not to renew. Our aim now has to be to drive membership growth and support clubs to thrive.



Our staff team works throughout the winter helping clubs to put in place plans to grow. One vital aspect of this as we look to attract more youngsters into the game, is to support clubs have all the necessary safeguarding standards in place, with 175 PVGs processed on behalf of clubs and training to allow 48 clubs to appoint new wellbeing and protection officers. This can be unseen work within both clubs and Bowls Scotland but is hugely important.

In preparation for the new season, we also launched our inaugural National Try Bowls Weekend, to build on the success of the Try Bowls programme. Learning from what has worked in England, by targeting events on a single weekend we hope many clubs and volunteers will want to be part of something bigger, and Bowls Scotland will be able to generate extra publicity of the weekend to encourage more people to get down to their local club and give bowls a go. We were encouraged by the strong take-up of this initiative in its first year and hope to build on this in future years.

This period was marked by far more on the green activity for our national players that would normally be the case, with strong performances in the final outdoor internationals against Wales and at the Atlantic International Challenge in Canada. This was followed up with three medals at the inaugural World Cup in Malaysia. Attention then turned to preparation for the Glasgow Commonwealth Games, with a programme of indoor international competition and training sessions over the winter. Thanks to the Scottish Indoor Bowling Association (SIBA) and many indoor clubs for working with us to deliver these. This included a successful partnership with SIBA to send a Para team to the Indoor Home Nations in England, returning with the Team Gold.

Malcolm Dingwall-Smith, CEO of Bowls Scotland

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm'.

STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE CLUBS

Despite this reporting period covering just seven months and falling largely during the off-season, Bowls Scotland continued to support clubs across the country to build strong foundations for future growth. Through club development, accreditation, membership support and coach education, our focus remained on helping clubs become sustainable, welcoming and resilient community organisations.

The Try Bowls programme continued to be a key vehicle for club development, with 570 clubs registered by the end of the period. While no Try Bowls events took place during the winter months, significant preparation was undertaken for the 2026 season, including updates to resources, the introduction of a new planning guide and increased access to regional equipment kits for rural clubs. The launch of the inaugural National Try Bowls Weekend also generated strong momentum, with over 70 events registered across Scotland. The 2025 Try Bowls Survey was completed and the findings published, with insights showing the programme continued to demonstrate its value as a recruitment tool. Data from the 2025 season showed that clubs delivering membership recruitment events recorded overall membership growth, while clubs that did not undertake recruitment activity experienced a decline in membership. This reinforces the important role Try Bowls plays in helping clubs attract new participants and support long-term sustainability.

Our National Development Officers continued to engage directly with clubs through a programme of Development Forums. Across 24 forums, 149 clubs were represented by 283 attendees, providing opportunities to share good practice, discuss challenges and access support on topics including club development, safeguarding and BowlsMark accreditation.

The BowlsMark accreditation scheme continued to support clubs in developing safe, effective and welcoming environments. By the end of the reporting period, 80 clubs held Bronze accreditation, 12 held Silver and 11 had achieved the highest Gold standard, demonstrating a strong commitment to governance, community engagement and club development.

Membership affiliation for the 2025/26 season was completed during the period, with 799 clubs affiliating to Bowls Scotland and a total playing membership of 48,226. While overall membership reduced slightly compared with the previous year, the longer-term decline appears to have slowed significantly, suggesting a period of relative stabilisation. Encouragingly, 378 clubs (almost half of all affiliated clubs) reported an increase in membership, with growth particularly evident among clubs engaged in the Try Bowls programme. More clubs than ever before also provided Equality, Diversity and Inclusion data, helping Bowls Scotland build a clearer understanding of its membership and shape future support. Women also continue to play a strong role in club leadership, representing 35.5% of committee positions and 38% of Presidency team roles among responding BowlsMark clubs.

Coach education remained an important area of investment, with 103 individuals completing coaching qualifications during the period. To ensure opportunities remained accessible, £1,120 of subsidy funding supported 32 participants from underrepresented groups through reduced course fees, securing a further £2,700 of funding for 2026/27.

ACHIEVING POTENTIAL

Activity across the performance programme remained exceptionally high during the winter off-season, as Scotland's athletes prepared for a busy year ahead. Alongside ongoing development work within the national programme, the Scotland squad continued preparations for the 2026 outdoor season, while athletes shortlisted for Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games selection took part in an intensive programme of indoor training and competition.

Scotland's athletes continued to deliver strong performances across the international stage. The period began with Team Gold at the Wales Test Match, followed by further success at the Atlantic International Challenge, where Scotland secured overall Team Gold and Para Team Gold, with the Women's team winning Gold and the Men's team claiming Silver. At the inaugural World Bowls World Cup in Malaysia, Scotland earned three medals, securing silver in the Men's Pairs and Mixed Physically Disabled Para Pairs, alongside a bronze medal in the Women's Physically Disabled Para Singles. Success also came at the Hong Kong Classic, where Scottish athletes won Gold in both the men's and women's pairs competitions.

The Bowls Scotland indoor international programme continued with an impressive performance at the February Internationals, hosted in Scotland and featuring competitors from Ireland, Jersey, the Scottish Indoor Bowling Association (SIBA) and Bowls Scotland. Scottish athletes secured gold and silver medals in both the Men's and Women's Pairs, silver in the Women's Singles, and silver and bronze in the Men's Singles. The Scotland v Australia Test Series also provided valuable high-performance competition for a wider group of athletes and played an important role in informing Commonwealth Games selection decisions. In a separate event, Scotland's Para team secured Team Gold at the Indoor Home Nations, where Bowls Scotland worked in partnership with SIBA to support Scotland's participation. Further success followed at the Four Nations event in Glasgow, where Scotland won four medals against competition from Ireland, Malaysia and Australia, including two gold medals in the Para Women's Pairs and VI Mixed Pairs, silver in the Men's Singles and bronze in the Para Men's Pairs.

Preparations for Glasgow 2026 remained a key focus throughout the period. The Performance Pathway programme delivered training opportunities in November and January, with strong engagement from athletes and coaches helping to inform future programme development. The Commonwealth Games selection process also reached a significant milestone, with athlete shortlists finalised ahead of final team selection. Interest in the Podium Pathway continued to grow, attracting more than 450 expressions of interest for the 2026 programme and over 350 entries to the Podium Open events, demonstrating the depth of talent emerging across the sport.

This sustained level of activity and success throughout the off-season reflects the strength of Scotland's performance system and provided a strong platform as athletes continued their preparations for the 2026 competitive season and the Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games.

A MODERN AND PROGRESSIVE SPORT

Progress continued across a range of strategic, commercial and governance priorities as Bowls Scotland worked to strengthen the long-term sustainability and growth of the sport.

A major focus was the continued development of the organisation's commercial activities. Work progressed on a new sponsorship package and the appointment of a specialist agency to support partnership development, alongside planning for a Bowls Scotland Connect event designed to engage prospective commercial partners and advertisers. These initiatives aim to generate additional revenue streams to support future investment across the sport.

The period also saw important progress in governance and strategic planning. An independent governance audit was completed during the spring, achieving a 'Good' rating, the second highest of five possible outcomes and providing a strong level of assurance. The audit also provided valuable insight to support ongoing organisational improvement. The Board undertook a skills audit to inform future director recruitment, while preparatory work began on a review of the current strategy and plans for membership consultation ahead of the development of a new strategy for 2027-2031.

Work also commenced on a review of competition structures with District Coordinators and District Youth Coordinators, laying the foundations for wider member engagement following the season. At the same time, participation in national competitions remained strong, with National Championship entries increasing by 333 compared with the previous year.

Digital engagement continued to increase, with Bowls Scotland's social media following growing to 38,895. A national tender process for the official kit supplier was also completed, resulting in the appointment of Henselite through Scottish based business, Greengauge. In addition, discussions continued with South Ayrshire Council regarding the long-term future of the National Centre for Bowling, helping to ensure the sport remains supported by sustainable facilities and infrastructure for years to come.

This work reflects Bowls Scotland's commitment to being a modern, progressive and financially sustainable governing body, while continuing to evolve and adapt to meet the needs of members, clubs and partners across the country.

A DIVERSE AND ACCESSIBLE SPORT

A number of disability inclusion initiatives continued to be progressed during the reporting period. The first draft of new Reasonable Adjustments Guidance for clubs was completed, alongside a revised Bowling Aid Equipment Guidance document designed to support greater accessibility across the sport. Disability Inclusion Training also entered the development phase, while mental health resources were updated to include disability-specific support information.

The publication of the Disability Landscape Survey results provided valuable insight to help shape future priorities. The survey received 131 responses from bowlers with disabilities and long-term health conditions and found that 66% of respondents had an acquired disability. Significantly, over half (53%) of those respondents were already participating in bowls before acquiring their disability, highlighting the sport's ability to support lifelong participation and enable people to remain active, connected and engaged following changes in their health or circumstances.

The Disability Development programme also continued to raise awareness and celebrate positive stories from across the sport through a range of features, including Scottish Disability Sport Week, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and National Volunteer Awards.

Safeguarding remains a fundamental part of Bowls Scotland's commitment to ensuring everyone can participate in the sport safely and inclusively. The organisation maintained safeguarding compliance and continued to provide free training and support opportunities for members and clubs. During the reporting period, six Child Wellbeing and Protection in Sport courses were delivered, with 76 attendees gaining qualifications, while three Club Wellbeing and Protection Officer courses were completed by 35 attendees. A total of 176 PVG applications were processed between September 2025 and March 2026, and 48 new Club Wellbeing and Protection Officers were appointed, further strengthening safeguarding capacity across Scotland.

These achievements reflect Bowls Scotland's ongoing commitment to creating a sport that is accessible, inclusive and safe for everyone, while continuing to remove barriers to participation and support the wellbeing of all members.

FINANCE REPORT

This summary should be read in conjunction with the Financial Statements prepared by BDO, accountants to Bowls Scotland. This finance report covers the period 1st September 2025 to 31st March 2026. The accounts are therefore not directly comparable to the previous twelve-month financial period.

This shorted financial year is to facilitate the move to an April-March financial year, approved by members at our AGM. This change will simplify the management of Bowls Scotland's finances and assist in providing improved financial transparency to members, with the bowls season falling into a single financial year and alignment to the **sportscotland** annual grant that represents approximately half of Bowls Scotland's income.

For the financial year 2025/26, Bowls Scotland recorded a deficit of £13,979, reducing company reserves to £214,690.

Income for the period totalled £518,898. Although affiliation took place during this period, with total membership income similar to 2025, due to the shortened financial year only 7/12 of the income is recorded in this period, with 5/12 deferred into 2026-27. Competition income received in this period is also deferred into 2026-27 to coincide with the delivery of the competition to which that income relates. The majority of grant funding is received from **sportscotland** and continues to represent a significant and important percentage of Bowls Scotland's income.

Expenditure for the period was £532,877. Costs incurred during this period related to staff salaries, operational administrative costs, delivery of age-group national team activity at the end of the 2025 outdoor season, and a busy performance programme. The World Bowls affiliation was also paid during this period, although as with our affiliation income, only 7/12 of the expenditure was recorded in this period due to the shortened financial year.

The negotiations with South Ayrshire Council to agree a new future operating model for the National Centre continued during this period. Bowls Scotland are committed to securing a financially sustainable deal and have been able to secure an extension to the existing arrangements and charges while these negotiations conclude. However, it is still expected that Bowls Scotland will take on greater responsibility and cost burden for the future running of the pavilion, stands and greens at the Centre. This increased cost will be reflected in the accounts once these negotiations conclude.

Overall, as expected, the financial outlook for Bowls Scotland remained challenging during this period, marking a third consecutive deficit. Whilst this was anticipated in the budget, it required action as without intervention the current trajectory of growing losses was likely to continue.

The Board and management are committed to delivering excellent value for members, while ensuring financial sustainability of the organisation. The Board welcomed the decision of the membership at the 2025 AGM to approve an increase to the affiliation fee. This increase will be reflected in the affiliation payments made by clubs in October 2026 and partially reflected in the 2026/27 accounts and fully reflected in the 2027/28 accounts. In addition, there was welcome confirmation from **sportscotland** of an increase in their core annual grant from 2026/27, responding to inflationary pressures faced by Scottish governing bodies of sport over recent years. This additional income will be reflected in the 2026/27 accounts. As a result, these accounts reflect a period of transition and investment rather than a deterioration in the organisation's underlying financial position, although a continued focus on cost control and financial sustainability will remain important over the coming years.



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

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