



ESSEX QUESTIONS ANSWERED...

1) Will there be a Bowls England Yearbook printed for 2022? If so, how much will it cost?

- There will be an Annual Report as there was in 2021. It will be free to download online and a small charge for printed copies.

2) Why were the Bowls England Dinners and Prize Presentations cancelled for November 2021 and February 2022?

- We have replaced the two annual dinners with an Annual Awards Event. The Awards Event will retain the social element of the dinners but will be an event that is aligned with the BE strategy and reflects the more inclusive, progressive NGB we want to represent.
 - **The new event will be a modern, relevant occasion for all**
 - It will not create a divide on gender lines as the annual dinners did – wherever possible, everything we do will bring greater gender equality and integration.
 - It will not dedicate even more resource into national competitions, which already take up a disproportionate amount of focus and leads to accusations of elitism
 - The Awards will be meaningful to the entire bowls community and celebrating all contributions to our sport at all levels – aligned to our strategy
 - **We are showcasing trophy winners at Victoria Park so no need to do it at a function.**
 - We will elevate moment of winning on the green at VP through creating an amphitheatre, stands, cameras, MC etc. This is the moment trophy winners treasure and our plans are to make that the moment they truly savour.
 - Diminishing added benefit for the winners to then receive the trophy again at a hotel in the Midlands
 - Circa 30% of winners were in attendance at the dinners showing that there's not sufficient demand from winners to stand in a line and have their names read out in this way.
 - Insight shows the dinner is the lowest priority from winners in terms of the prize package.
 - **The Awards will reward and recognise volunteers**
 - They will generate great stories from across all aspects of our sport at all levels, which we can use to celebrate all sorts of achievements in our sport.
 - They will inspire and motivate clubs and players as people recognize that their sort of contribution is valued, and one day they may win an award.
 - The online voting engages the sport rather than being a closed shop
 - **The Awards will be financially viable**
 - Dinners made a +£5k loss (excl. county expenses)
 - Economies of scale from having one event



- Broader focus means a greater market for ticket buyers
- More sponsor value and interest
- Half the staff time

We hope Essex have plenty of nominations and that the county and Essex clubs will support the new event so it becomes a showpiece in the bowls events calendar.

3) We need much more time to gather information when asked for a response to a question from B.E.

Not sure the context of this but we always try and engage with clubs and counties affording reasonable timeframes.

4) We cannot plan our domestic calendar unless we have more notice of National Dates. This has a knock-on effect for clubs as well as counties.

We appreciate the importance of planning and it has been a challenging year or two with Covid and B2022 in terms of forward planning. Hopefully the schedule will be more settled from 2023 onwards, although we have to be a little more agile than we have been historically if we are to embrace new opportunities.

5) The National Championships have been moved back a week in 2022 to commence 25th August, but the date for the registration of competitors has been moved forward a week to 8th August. Why?

Last year we did not leave anywhere near enough time to get entrants details to plan key elements of the event such as player engagement and inclusion of player details in the event guide.

6) There have been no forms to nominate anyone for Junior or Senior International trials, or for the Junior Academy. Why?

No trials scheduled at the moment. Ongoing discussion about BIBC and BIWBC for 2022.

7) No form received to invite a representative from B.E. to attend the County Luncheon. Why?

Seems strange as the Presidential team attended an array of county lunches. Perhaps a communication got missed?

8) At the National Championships this year it was felt that the Leamington Spa B.C. could not be supported as usual because B.E. had taken it over for corporate hospitality on alternate days.

Not sure the relevance to Essex bowls but we are working with Warwick District Council, Royal Leamington Spa BC and the Café to ensure everyone is part of the exciting journey we're on to make the National Finals are showcase for our sport and event of significance, commensurate with its title.



9) Moving the National Championships to finish on the 11th September 2022 will impact on entries, especially those working in education. They will not be able to have time off to attend the championships.

Our hands have been tied by B2022 but we have scheduled the Finals to minimize the impact as far as is practically possible, with the majority of events for younger players and those of working age completed by Sunday 4th September. Entries to National Competitions have started well, which is positive. The dates could impact on entries but there are more fundamental issues for the decline in National Championship entries which has dropped by circa 28% since 2014. Some of the issues which we need to address include declining player numbers, increasing age of bowlers, inability of working age people to commit the amount of time required and a lack of co-ordinated marketing across the country.

10) B. E. make it very difficult to plan when they say in one paragraph that there will be 48 competitors qualifying in each competition as this year, with the top 13 counties with the most entries having 2 competitors and the others 1, then say that they are reviewing the format of play and point at which each competition proceeds to the National Finals. They also mention the introduction of Regional Finals, using the reason that it will cut down on travelling for the competitors! How does this correspond to having 48 qualifiers? This will again impact on the number entering the competitions. At grass roots level they will be thinking that their chances of qualifying for Leamington will be greatly reduced, so why bother? Bowls is becoming a more and more elite sport. Where are the elite players of the future going to come from if we don't encourage our players to compete?

This is a question of terminology – Championships and Competitions are different, which is one reason why things are confusing. Below is from our website -

National Championships will be 48 – Singles/Pairs/Triples/Fours/Two Wood Singles

National Championship 2022 – Formats and Qualification

Following an analysis of the survey results and feedback from counties, we will be running all the National Championships using the following formats:

- **Singles (including Junior Singles) – 21 up**
- **Pairs (including Junior Pairs) – Four bowls 18 ends**
- **Triples – Three bowls 18 ends**
- **Fours (including Senior Fours) – Two bowls 18 ends**
- **Two-bowl singles – Two bowls 21 ends**

For the integrity of the events, the same format must be played at all stages of the Championships including county qualifying rounds. As in 2021, there will be 48 qualifiers for the National Finals in Championship events. The 13 counties with the most entrants in each event will receive two qualification places.



How many players/teams in each National Competition will qualify for the National Finals?

- The last eight (quarter-finalists) in all Individual National competitions and Inter-Club Competitions will qualify for the National Finals.
- In Inter-County competitions the last four (semi-finalists) will qualify for the National Finals.

The regional finals will provide a stepping stone to Leamington and our research tells us there's appetite for these to reduce travel and create local events. Over 2500 compete at Leamington in the National Finals so it is hard pressed to describe the event as elitist.

11) Only 1 Car Park ticket for whole County compared to 20 in previous years. Why?

The car park is currently running at a loss. We don't understand the rationale of people expecting things for free when it comes at the cost of investing into the promotion and development of the sport.

12) What/Where is the Emergency Evacuation Plan for Victoria Park

The Emergency Evacuation Plan for Victoria Park forms part of the wider event plan that is prepared by Bowls England and Warwick District Council for sign off by the Safety Advisory Group, which includes representatives of a number of stakeholders including the emergency services.

13) Dates of Middleton and John's Trophy Finals? We were told these would be played alone.

These events were played as standalone events in 2021 because, at the time of finalising the National Finals schedule there remained significant doubt as to whether we would be permitted to hold these events in 2021 due to Covid restrictions. As restrictions eased, we were able to organise these events and held a separate finals weekend. We were however keen to get these two events back within the national finals as two of our 'blue riband' events.

Johns Trophy – Sunday 28th August
Middleton Cup – Saturday 10th September

14) 1st May an odd date for all affiliations. What was the reasoning behind this date?

We pushed this back because of Covid but it a sensible time as by May clubs will know their membership numbers and will have received their membership subscriptions. They can then pay their affiliation.

15) Communication circulation/format for clubs and Bowls England Delegates. Still unclear who receives the communications.



Club leaders receive Club Together and all on our email list receive The Jack. Counties delegates receive information ahead of the clubs getting Club Together so they are aware of any information the clubs make speak with them about. There is no need for the county to forward the same email as the club will not want it twice, but we would encourage the county to incorporate anything relevant from Bowls England in its own communication with clubs for example an upcoming deadline or an opportunity to take advantage of a promotion.

16) Friends of Bowls England current and future role?

FEB is an important partner and we will work with them to raise awareness of FEB and help FEB membership grow. FEB income currently goes into the National Finals, historically because of a lack of commercial income to help fund prizes etc. We are meeting with FEB to discuss what the best place to invest FEB donations is. Clearly BE wants to ensure it provides could value to be part of the FEB membership, mindful that a proportionate amount of the FEB donation should be spent on servicing the membership. There needs to be clean money to invest into the sport, and we are sure that's what FEB members want from their donation too.

17) T.V cover is very expensive. How will B. Eng. fund this?

We would like to cover this by removing travel expenses to qualifiers, which really makes very little difference to most players. We know of no other sport that pay grassroots players travel expenses to compete in the national finals.

18) How can he/we persuade clubs there are benefits from belonging to B. Eng.?

Please read the benefits and promote them. See attached document.

If that fails, explain to them the value of having an NGB. Bowls England's role as an NGB is broad and encompasses –

- Promoting lawn bowls and lobbying on its behalf to ensure its voice is heard.
- Investing in lawn bowls whether it be through the generation of commercial revenues or through the channelling of government funding.
- Providing practical support to affiliated lawn bowls clubs and grassroots players.
- Developing and delivering new ways to play the game to grow participation.
- Administering and staging international and national lawn bowls competition and events.
- Providing the structures to educate and develop coaches, umpires and volunteers.
- Managing the international teams including lawn bowls contingent within Team England, England's Commonwealth Games Team.
- Managing talent development pathways to help players fulfil their potential.
- Interfacing with World Bowls and other partner organisations.
- Regulating the environment in which the sport is played including discipline and safeguarding.

If we don't do all this, who would? Covid management is a good example of the value of an NGB.



The affiliation fee is a fraction of what most sports charge. Despite the cost being calculated per bowler, affiliation does not deliver individual benefits as such. In effect, playing members are contributing to their club being affiliated and it is the club which benefits from the services we provide.

A common mistake is to see affiliation as just about competitions. It is not. All playing members of a club, whether they play in competitions or play the Bowls England formats, must be declared and affiliated if the club wishes to affiliate. This is because the benefits are for the whole club, and all members will be advantaged if their clubs makes the most of its relationship with us. If affiliated clubs wish to play in national competitions, there is a separate charge for this.

We are a not-for-profit organisation and affiliation income is reinvested back into our mission namely to enrich the lives of participants, connect communities and ensure lawn bowls is healthy for future generations. Check our strategy (also attached) to see what our plans are over the coming years which will help all affiliated clubs grow and prosper.

If people care about the long term wellbeing of the sport, parting with a fiver per year is a no-brainer.

19) How familiar is CE with the rules and regs and history of the Sport of the game of bowls?

As a history graduate I do think the past is important in terms of shaping the future and I will focus my energies on using my knowledge and experience to arrest the systemic decline in our sport.

20) How are the talks with the different Coaching bodies going?

We met with EBCS and had a positive meeting. We then followed up with some reflection and areas that needed to be considered for greater collaboration. Despite multiple chases, we have not heard back from EBCS with their perspective. The Coach Bowls board is considering other options because there is demand across the country for one coaching body.

21) There is a general feeling BE are concentrating on the Elite bowlers and not enough on the grass root bowlers. Can you comment.

- This is utterly unfounded. We care about all players –
 - International players as we are proud to manage the national team and understand its importance in making our sport visible and inspiring young and old. Our international programme is chronically under-funded and relies on a paltry amount of Sport England money.
 - National competition bowlers who are an important, committed section of our player base and we continue to invest huge effort to manage competitions and put on the finals for them.
 - Local club players, the majority of bowlers who have been largely ignored by BE to the extent they don't know what the affiliation fee is for or why an NGB exists



- New casual bowlers as this is where the biggest growth lies if we can sort our crippling accessibility issues. For many, playing a casual game will be a stepping stone to playing in more seriously/competitively, for others they'll just enjoy what they're doing and not upset anyone.

The accusations of elitism seem to be to be around Bowls England and the counties disproportionate focus on national competitions at the expense of the club bowler. Hence the club bowler not valuing Bowls England and not really understanding the nature and value of their club affiliation.

22) In 2022 do Bowls England intend to cut down on the number of Celebration games played 1) if so Why 2) and what criteria do they intend to use to select these games

The celebration matches are an important part of what we do and we want them to deliver as much as possible for the effort put in. Currently the players involved enjoy them and they are a good social occasion but we would like clubs to leverage them more, and for more players to be engaged. So selection for celebration matches will be linked to a club putting on a real occasion for their whole club and engaging the local community, and priority will be given to those who are promoting and developing their clubs in order for them to thrive eg. taking part in Bowls' Big Weekend or running a junior section.

23) We have seen stories that it is intended that the British Isles Championships is to be permanently cancelled. Is that true? If so, why?

No, not true. We're endeavouring to evolve the format so it better prepares our top players for world level events and our investment in this event is more focussed. At the moment there are differing views on how this is achieved across the home nations, with some seeing the event as more of a grassroots exercise that what it should be – top level, elite, high performance sport.

Regarding 'Pay and Play' What is thinking behind the Initiative? BE are asking for companies to tender for the work, with the intention that it will be in place by July 2022 If every club in the country decides that they are best placed to manage recruitment locally and not via a BE Portal, they may decide to not make any sessions available at their club - in that case, the cost of he Portal will be a waste of money - who will be paying for it? There must be better things that BE can finance.

We know a good % of clubs want a pay and play platform, which will help this get off the ground, and it is a key part of our shift to providing more ways in which people can access and enjoy bowls. It is currently far too difficult for people to enjoy a game of bowls, even if we've managed to persuade them that it would be a fun way for them to spend an hour or two.

We have work to do to help clubs realise the potential of this and overcome the various obstacles. Rather than writing this off before we start, let's be positive and have a can do attitude. As with golf and many other sports, clubs derive income from membership and more ad hoc play, and there is a significant revenue stream that help our clubs,



25% of whom say they are unsustainable at current membership levels. A club could earn £240 per hour which is about the value of three memberships. Casual play will also provide a stepping stone for some who will go on to become club members, and maybe future national competition entrants.

24) 1. Explain why the championships are still being played on a reduced ends format. The great majority of players want the traditional format. 2. Why were BE directly economical with the truth when communicating with Essex on the changes to competitions. Essex were not the only county to complain, yet we were told we were. 3. When will the Middleton Cup go back to a group format rather than knock out.

1. The main issues people had with the changes made because of Covid have been addressed. The data is not as clear cut and actually people want a game of bowls to last 2-3 hours and those who are not playing in competitions cite not enough time as the main reason for not playing. So we need to create a balance that arrests the 28% decline in entries since 2014. The modest shortening of a couple of formats will hopefully keep all those already playing but give us an opportunity to attract new players.
2. This is simply not the case. We were working in a very challenging environment with a national lockdown and no confidence the season could happen. The changes we made we felt gave us the best chance of delivering a competition summer. Scotland cancelled theirs. We shared with counties the plans at two meetings and there was time for that to be challenged. Of course we would have liked to have consulted more but there wasn't time, as we were making live decisions. We are immensely proud that the competitions season happened and feel this criticism is utterly unreasonable and unfair, and frankly irrational given the world we were living in with uncertainty around the vaccination programme and whether the tiered restrictions would be lifted on the planned dates.
3. There'll be a vote at the AGM on this. There is a different opinion across the counties, as with most topics so not as clear cut as the assumptive tone of the question.