

REPORT ON REGIONAL MEETING

Together with Pat Finney I attended a Regional Meeting – East arranged by Bowls England. This was an inaugural format to invite delegates from within the various regions to take part in discussions with Bowls England representatives and to debate, in small groups, certain important issues relevant to County Associations. Present were Tony Allcock, Chief Executive, Alistair Hollis, Operational services Manager, Margaret Docherty, Competitions, Penny Maguire, Business Services Manager, and Adam Tanner, the Independent Director. Four Delegates, two of each gender, from Beds., Cambs, Essex, Herts, Hunts and Suffolk, attended. The meeting was held at Chesterton Bowls Club, Cambridge.

Tony Allcock opened the meeting and explained that this was an experiment and depending on the feedback received, a decision would be taken as to whether they would become an annual event. It was designed to give association representatives the opportunity to debate aspects of proposed policies of the Governing Body, and discuss issues of concern.

1) Bowls Development Alliance.

We were advised that the BDA had received their funding for the next four years. Funding was in place to assist with recruitment. Clubs will be able to apply for a grant of £250.00 to assist the setting up and running Open Days. The window for 2017 applications is now closed. A new window will open on 3rd July 2017 and close on 31st August 2017 to accept applications for 2018. They want to see recruitment aimed at the over 55s and those over 16 with disabilities.

2) Coach Bowls Tony Allcock stressed that we should use the terminology “Coach Bowls” at all times. Ownership of coaching will remain with the BDA until 31st March 2019. The National Governing Body will assume ownership from 1st April 2019. They will continue working closely with the BDA and the EIBA to ensure a smooth transition. They believe that previous coaching has been mainly good. They emphasize that the Level 1 qualification is a universal qualification, similar to Level 1 in all sports. It was recognised that there were cost implications. However, there was a bursary of £130.00 available from Bowls England and there were other avenues for funding to be obtained.

3) English Bowls Umpires Association

Concern was expressed at the serious decline in the number of qualified umpires. The numbers nationally, have fallen from 950 to 463. In Beds they have 3, Cambs 7, Herts 16, Hunts 0, Lincs 8, Norfolk 13, Essex 37. We were given an explanation concerning how they are funded. A lot of delegates expressed the view that the decline in number could in part be explained by a dislike of the new uniform.

We were asked to consider the advantages of introducing a Membership scheme. It was unanimously agreed that whilst it might be a good idea in principle it was not likely to happen. It was believed that the risks vastly outweighed the benefits, the current figures are clubs 24000 and membership 110,000.

We were asked to discuss the National Championships

Everybody expressed the view that there should be no more new competitions. Some asked that the Amy Rose be played at the end of the first fortnight and the Middleton Cup at the end of the second fortnight. Margaret Docherty explained that scheduling was always a problem.

Competitors doubling up were the main difficulty to deal with. Tony Allcock was very clear that, despite the cost implications, dead rubbers should be played. He stressed that it was a golden opportunity to look at players not included up to that point, especially having failed to progress. The women were split, stating that the cost was the defining point.

Finally, we were asked to consider the merits of an amalgamation between the Indoor and Outdoor. All considered this a most unlikely scenario although there were obviously a couple of areas where co-operation between the two organisations was possible, even advantageous, there would need to be an amalgamation at the very top, something it was believed would not happen.

Alex Wightman

County Secretary