

Development report for AGM 2022

2022 was seen as a chance for clubs to continue its recovery following the impact of Covid, not just from playing numbers, but also from the following changes that been see in clubs:

- Lower activity in Club
- Disappearance of Meals during/after matches
- Coping with Covid as it still exists

Bowls England ran their 2nd Bowls Big weekend which saw 46 of our clubs register to hold an event on the last weekend in May, the week before the Queens Jubilee.

Out of these only 18 clubs (at time of writing) have advised me of their figures. Results were mixed, however of these:

- 377 visitors attended (approx. 21 per club) M=217; W=160 (Higher % of women than last yr).
 - 29% were aged 55-70
 - 15% were 35-55
 - 11% Under 18
 - 9% were over 70
- 188 attended a follow up
- 109 new members
 - 43% aged 55-70
 - 13% over 70
 - 10% 35-55
 - 2% Under 18

These figures give an indication only, as it is a low sample & still, we are finding clubs across the country that do not send in the returns.

I would like to highlight a couple of clubs who have done really well this year – Lutterworth Town - 17 new members & my own club Birstall who had 21 new members join from the BBW.

I would like to thank all clubs that held an open day for new bowlers for doing so. The hard work of those involved on the day & those involved in coaching is very much appreciated and without you all, this game would be in a bad place.

The overall success of the event across the Country is not yet known due to a few issues at Bowls England. I expect that this will be updated at the BE conference later next month.

We do know that registered clubs for BBW increased on last yr.

They also ran a free & enlightening series of Webinars on how to hold a good BBW and whilst not many clubs participated in the live Zoom meetings, they were recorded & are still available on the BE website but hidden behind the Club Log On page. **I would recommend that during the winter months any club who has not seen them all, especially those that did not hold an open day or did not have much success, please this opportunity to view them.**

The impact of covid is still being felt by clubs & it is clear that there has been a lifestyle change as:

- Far fewer clubs are doing meals
- Clubs are not wanting to travel as far
- Clubs having to result to smaller teams playing triples or less rinks
- Clubs with static or declining membership

The last return of membership numbers shows that we have 24 clubs with less than 30 members, with 12 of these having 20 or less playing members.

Unless we support all our clubs, we may start to see a rapid decline in the number of clubs in Leicestershire and I therefore feel we as a county need to work closer with them.

The impact must be taken seriously – If the smaller clubs close then all of their scheduled opponents will lose a fixture or two and then leave that bigger club without matches to satisfy their own players. This could be the start of a domino effect.

- The bigger clubs will lose players, who are not getting a game
- The smaller clubs will close down because they do not have a sufficiently large volunteer pool.
- Impact on Club & County finances

If incomes decrease then Club fees will have to go up or expenditure go down - this may lead to a further deterioration in the quality of the greens & impact on the enjoyability of this sport.

The next few months will see the County start to review the development role - one suggestion would be to look for say 4 individuals, who could link up to a couple of Council district areas and the bowls clubs within them.

The aim must be to create a confidence & belief within all clubs to recruit effectively, give closer guidance to someone within the club, share best practice – introduce social media. Some clubs need to recognise that they need more members & volunteers.

I believe that Leicestershire is doing quite well compared to other Counties, we are highly thought of by the people working at Bowls England:

1. **Our overall membership** is on a slight upward & consistent trend with numbers up as at 30.09.21 & also at 31.05.22 – 14 of the 36 counties have shown decreasing numbers in that period.
2. Our **Club engagement with BE** for:
 - a. **Commonwealth Games Activators** was at nearly **33%** (doesn't seem high) that put us **4th** in the Country – only behind Lancashire, Surrey & Somerset.
 - b. **Bowls Big Weekend engagement** – **56.6%** placing us **5th** behind, Lancashire, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Dorset
 - c. **Play Bowls** **4.8% - 5th**

- d. **Bowls Bash engagement** – n/a no details yet
- e. **Club Hubs** – look out for this in 2023
- f. **Club Health checker – Community Clubs engagement** 1.9% - 4th
- g. **Club Development Engagement** – 21.7% - 2nd

District Council areas are now in the process of reviewing their **Playing Pitch Strategies** with **Harborough DC** about to release their plan shortly and both **Melton** & also **Rutland** starting the process for data gathering from Club. **Leicester City Council** also now starting a review of Bowling Clubs as part of the PPS. Thank you to all those that have taken the time to complete the questionnaires when received.

If anyone wishes to seek any clarification on anything in this report, please contact me either by email or by phone.

Steve Bacon

23rd October 2022