

**BOWLS DURHAM
ANNUAL REPORT OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

GENERAL

The challenges faced by the bowling community, and particularly those at County level and within our clubs, have not changed since my last Annual Report. The reductions in funding provision from government and local authority sources and the difficulties faced by clubs in maintaining and attracting new members and funding streams continues. Coupled with the continued lack of decent greens provision and maintenance this has resulted not only the loss of some clubs but the lack of investment in many others. Whilst this is disheartening, we have on the other hand seen many clubs fighting the trend and even expanding their membership. We are aware of the work and contribution many of you are making in this area and congratulate all our clubs for their resilience and fortitude in keeping the game alive.

The excellent progress with the development of junior members is now bearing fruit which I know Sue Almond may touch on later in her Report on the success of the Amy Rose Team this year. However, it would be remiss of me not to mention the work of our academy team under the guidance of David Bolt with the excellent support of county Officers and in particular the parents and guardians of our players who give up so much of their valuable time to bring the players to every match and get-together.

This along with the work done throughout the county gives us great hope for the future, with these players now making their mark and are the yardstick of what we can do and achieve. It would be remiss of me not to mention that Sophie Wood has once again been selected and played for the England Junior Team. She shone in the Junior International Series in Northern Ireland in September.

However, it is not always the younger players who come to the fore and I would like to pay tribute to Kevin Bone of Lyndhurst B.C. who became Bowls England National O60's Champion for 2025. This is a tremendous achievement to be crowned with this title which his performances in a hectic schedule truly merited.

You will recall that in last year's Report I raised the thorny of safeguarding and the appointment of safeguarding officers. I am pleased to report that every affiliated club in the County now has a safeguarding officer in post. This will give clubs the confidence to deal with any issues that may arise by using the staff, facilities and tools available from Bowls England. Whilst we know it is a worry

we are available through the County and the Bowls Development Alliance and Bowls England to offer advice and guidance to clubs. We know of the difficulties, particularly for smaller clubs to not only exist, but appoint officers and committees. Please do not hesitate to contact any county official to discuss how we can help.

Unfortunately, Joseph Hobson our County Safeguarding lead has retired from the post. Until we appoint a successor, please direct any queries to me or any other officer. It is worth remembering that non affiliated clubs faced with an issue of this nature have no access to the free advice and services we offer.

Similarly, you will also be aware of the need for clubs to have a Constitution and Rules and Regulations by which they manage and run the club. Also to have in place disciplinary and health and safety procedures. These are imperative and protect both the Club, its Officers and Committee and members themselves. If you are in doubt about any of these please contact the County Officers.

Notwithstanding this however it is pleasing to report that we have managed to operate at a functional level to ensure decisions were implemented to no detriment and above all the County and National Championship Programmes were successful. This was in no small part to the work of the Officers, District Secretaries and the excellent work of Club Secretaries and their officers and committees who are the life blood of the County, and without whom we would struggle. A special thank you is once again extended to Peter Coulson the County Competitions Secretary who ran them with his usual efficiency and led to another successful Joint Championship Finals Weekend in July. Thank you to the many who embraced the changes that have been introduced this year and through their participation in these initiatives have seen clubs flourish despite the difficulties they met. The County's thanks and appreciation go to each and every one, and I have no hesitation in repeating this statement

A special thank you to Richard McKie our Publicity Officer for his work in promoting the county through many channels, along with his pod cast co-host David Bolt, those clubs who helped us by hosting championship and county matches. In addition, we once again wish to include our umpires who selflessly give up their valuable time to act at our county matches and championships and often go unthanked and appreciated.

Whilst face to face meetings were held by our Executive Committee at a reduced level in accordance with the new arrangements all the necessary work and decision making was implemented including via email and telephone. In addition, every piece of information from Bowls England was given to clubs and this was important. You will find that subject to the provision of the correct contact information more information will be sent direct to clubs.

Can I also thank our Officers and District Representatives for their invaluable hard work for the County.

Our thanks go to the Officers and members of Houghton Dairy Lane B.C who have made their facilities available to the Association.

COUNTY TEAMS

So far as the men's county teams are concerned the Muras Trophy was not played, again Following discussions at the Northern Counties AGM in November the decision was taken to not play the competition. This is a sad end to this long-standing event, but it has become apparent that was a lack of desire from some counties to compete in it,

In the Middleton Cup we returned to a mini league system and a rejuvenated squad topped the Northern Group with some outstanding bowls to qualify for the quarter finals. They met Lincolnshire, last year's winners and lost a very tight game which went down to the last bowl on the last rink on the green. The players can be extremely proud of themselves, and the small team management group did a fine job. It bodes well for the future

It was not to be third time lucky for the Alsop Trophy Team as their performances were well under par this year and they finished towards the bottom of the league table..

Again, it was the case of nearly but not enough in the Balcomb Trophy. In the revamped format played over two, days at Redcar Bowling Club the team could only finish second to Northumberland who went on to represent the Northern Counties at Leamington.

It was a similar case with the White Rose Team at the regional event at Northallerton. With our team including three players under the age of 12 and playing under the new format of Singles, Pairs, Triples and Fours the gave a sterling performance under the guidance and direction of our Youth Team Managers Jordan Harston and Tom Cairns. Unfortunately, other teams had players at the maximum age range permitted and were too strong for us.

..

We all know that good coaching and umpiring go hand in hand with bowls. There are plenty of opportunities for those who wish to go down this route and qualify in either discipline. Please consider this. We now have a County Coaching Co-Ordinator in post (Susan Walker) who has and will be holding get togethers for Coaches and Umpires to discuss mutually working as a group to benefit bowls in the County.

As you are also aware the County has adopted the provisions of Bowls England Regulation 9 in respect of disciplinary and misconduct matters. It has also been adopted in similar fashion by several District Associations and Clubs. With the continuing increase in the number of cases and subsequent litigation it is imperative that to safeguard clubs and as a condition of affiliation all clubs should adopt the Regulation R9. We are fortunate, touch wood, not to have had too many cases to deal with but there is a plethora of them nationally.

To assist in the process and aid clubs the Executive Committee have agreed to create a position of Conciliation and Misconduct Officer to oversee the administration of complaints made to Bowls Durham under Regulation 9A and working closely in liaison with the County's Safeguarding Officer provide advice on such matters.

Details of the terms of reference are included along with the advertisement for applications for the role on the County Website

COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Winners		Runners Up	
Singles	Mark Higgins(Seaham Town)	Ian Smith(Jarrow W.E)	.
Pairs	Mark Ralphs Andrew Kirtland(Darlington RA)	Jaxon Mckenna David Bolt (Silksworth)	
Triples	Tony Humphries Lee Pope Tom Pope(Dunston)	Lee Harrison Jimmy McAdoo Dale Oram(Houghton D.L.) Joe Sutherland(Sub)	
Fours	Jaxon Mckenna Neal Ridley John Leeman David Bolt(Silksworth)	Mark Hodgson Ian Jackson John Mansfield Paul Hartley(Blackhall)) Danny Ray(Sub)	
U25	Layton Sykes(Silksworth)	Alex Wood(Darlington R.A)	
Two Wood	Dave Newman(Darlington R.A))	Brian Poulter(Usworth)	
Champion of Champions	Steve Slaughter(Eldon Grove)	Tom McEwan(Elm Tree)	
Senior Fours	Mark Ralphs Mark Jones Dave Newman Tony Macey(Darlington R.A)	Albert Ward Gary Docherty Ian Jackson John Mansfield(Blackhall)	
U 25 Pairs	Layton Sykes(Silksworth) Alex Wood(Darlington R.A))	Owain Moss Liam Brodie(Darlington S.P)	

Congratulations are extended to all winners and runners up. All the qualifying players took part in the National Championships at Leamington and the Northern Counties Championships.

Of these I am delighted to report that Mark Higgins won the Northern Counties Singles Championship

BOWLS ENGLAND MATTERS

So far as these matters are concerned there is little to add to that mentioned in the report as all the advice and information that has been received from headquarters has been disseminated to all clubs throughout the year and in 2024, either by Bowls England or myself. Rather than cover old ground I am happy, as are other officers to answer any questions you may have on any Bowls England related matters.

CONCLUSION

On behalf of the Executive Committee and the Management Committees may I take this opportunity to thank all the member clubs for their support of the Association and their Officers

F.JOHNSON
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR