

**General Secretary report 2024**

2024 has been a very busy year. It was the first year as a fully mixed county under one administration. Our aim was to align the working practices of the two associations, to reduce duplication, to reduce costs. It would be fair to say that we have made major inroads to achieving this, but we still have a way to go.

We were hoping to have a joint presentation dinner this year, but finding a venue at a reasonable cost has proved very difficult. If you know of anywhere that can hold up to 180 people and provide a meal and venue for between £40 - £45 please let me know.

**FINANCES**

The Board are very conscious, that they are the custodians of the memberships money, therefore it needs to be spent wisely.

They have been looking in detail where the money is currently being spent, it soon became apparent that there were two major areas where we were making a loss.

**They were** **coaches for matches**, the cost of coaches has risen considerably, not wishing to raise the match fee we have reduced the number of coaches for 2025 and are looking to reduce them even further for 2026.

**Also assistance for players at Leamington in competitions**. We are withdrawing the players assistance for Leamington. However, we will be raising the prize money for winners of the championships that lead to Leamington, this will be based on the number of entries.

The aim of the Board is not to make a big profit, but also not to make a loss. We want to keep Bowls Surrey affiliation and competition fees as low as we can for our members.

**AREAS**

The first thing we had to do was to establish the Area committees, I would like to thank all those who made themselves available to serve on those committees.

We always said that we may not have got it exactly right, this has proved to be the case, so we are fine tuning them based on this years’ experience.

It was good to have the combined areas committee with both Men and Women participating.

It is important that we have all positions filled within the areas, as we rely on them to keep in contact with the clubs.

**OFFICERS**

I would like to thank all the officers for their help and major contribution to the running of the county.

I would like to make special mention of Sheron Mitchell our Administrator who is standing down this year, she has done a tremendous job, and has been one of the main drivers to bring the two associations together, it has been a pleasure to work with her.

Her contribution to the county has been immense, we would not be where we are today without her commitment and sacrifice. I am sure she will still be involved in the background somewhere.

It is essential that we fill the following vacancies, Administrator, Women’s Vice President for 2025, Development Officer, Men’s Vice President 2026, if we do not find people who are willing to run Bowls Surrey or Clubs, they will fold, there would not be any more competitions, matches, administration of clubs, etc. There is only so much that those already working for the county & clubs can do & we are not getting any younger. I am not sure how much longer I can go on being General Secretary, my appointment comes to an end at the 2025 AGM, so if you think you can help in any way please contact either Sheron or myself.

**BOWLS ENGLAND**

We continually receive communications from Bowls England asking us to do things on their behalf, our workload is increasing every year. The main things we are currently working on are Safeguarding & changes to the competitions run by Bowls England, they are also reviewing the affiliation process, also the disciplinary regulations which I am sure Sheron will cover in more detail in her report. We have a ZOOM meeting every month with Bowls England, there is always something new happening, which involves more work for the counties.

**COMPETITIONS**

Due to circumstances changing in his job, Jamie Butterworth was unable to fulfill the role as Competition Coordinator, I want to thank the Assistant coordinator Ann Rapley & the other competition secretaries in helping to get the competitions run successfully.

Whilst we are under competitions, I would like to congratulate the women for winning the Walker Cup for the eight time.

Also the Men for winning the Home Counties League for the twelfth time since 1971.

My thanks go to Caroline Duarte, Barrie Emanuel & Debbie Souter for their commitment to the Senior & Junior teams, also to the players for making themselves available & support.

Other notable successes were:-

Jemma Tuohy & Yasmina Hasan reached the Junior Pairs National Final at Leamington.

Southey women reached the National Final of the Top Club at Leamington.

Congratulations go to all those who played in the Nationals at Leamington.

Area Four won the Walter Cross Trophy.

The “Top Four” competition was introduced for the women this year, this proved to be a very popular competition, this competition has been running for many years for the men. It is a club entry competition, in which only one badged player can play in the rink, teams can be changed for every round if you wish.

The winners of each area go through to the semi-finals & Finals, as we play for 3rd & 4th place, each club represented in the semi-finals will win money for their club, the amount depends on which position they end up in.

They will also represent their area in the combined areas matches against the Presidents the following year. There are no badge restrictions in these matches.

A club can enter as many teams as it wishes. We would encourage clubs to enter this, as it allows up & coming bowlers to play in a county competitive competition without coming up against a team of all badged bowlers.

The standard of greens for the latter stages raised its ugly head again, so instead of the Competitions secretaries finding greens, it has been agreed by the Management committee that the Areas are to be asked each year to recommend five greens in their area. The competition coordinator & Assistant coordinator will then use those greens if available, if not available they will look for alternatives.

I need to inform you that the way competitions are currently run within the county is under review. Area four has submitted a proposal, a working group consisting of area representatives, plus interested parties has been set up. If there is a final recommendation it will be put to the members for approval, no later than the AGM 2025.

**MATCHES**

As you all know the world of bowls is changing rapidly, so much so, that things that have been long established are having to change if they want to survive, for example, we have lost three inter-county men’s friendly matches this year, the women have lost one. Warwickshire informed us that they will no longer be playing us due to travelling costs.

We almost lost Leicestershire, we managed to save this by arranging for both the Men & Women to play on the same day at different venues, this enabled us to share one coach rather than having to use two.

Kent men have taken the initiative and have asked us if we are willing to play home & away in the same year, we have agreed to this for 2025.

We are also looking at mixed county matches against smaller counties that struggle to put out teams. This year we got close to being a mixed match we had 3 rinks of women & 3 rinks of men on the same green playing against Hertfordshire. Next year we already have two truly mixed county matches.

Believe it or not we ourselves struggle on many occasions to put out a team, so I would encourage as many as possible to apply for matches.

I would like to thank Tony Bourne and Pam Garden (who for most of the season was not at all well) for all the hard work they put in to ensure we have teams for matches.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

I want to thank Charlotte Emanuel for the wonderful work she does as our communications Officer, being able to communicate what in some cases is deemed to be boring information, but essential, in a way that makes you smile, is a gift, which she has in abundance.

I trust you are signed up to the BS Newsletter which Charlotte produces once a month. She also looks after the social media side of BS. Charlotte is always looking for news items, so please let her know what is happening at your club.

Whenever we have communications from Bowls England, we try very hard not to pass onto clubs things that are irrelevant, we know that clubs receive a lot from us, but believe me we do not send you everything.

**GOVERNANCE**

It is essential that every club has an up-to-date constitution which conforms to the rules & regulations of both Bowls England & Bowls Surrey. To help you achieve this & more regarding governance of your club, David Tucker our Governance Officer, is there to help you.

David will be taking on an additional role next year as Men’s Vice President, I wish him a very enjoyable time over the next two years.

**DISCIPLINARY & MISCONDUCT**

Once again, it is essential that if your club needs to deal with a Disciplinary or Misconduct case, that you follow the rules in Bowls England’s regulation 9.

I would recommend, that before you start proceedings, you contact our Disciplinary Officer Colin Mitchell, who would be more than willing to help / advise you on the process.

**INFORMATION & TECHNOLOGY (IT)**

Many of you are aware of the online system that we use at county level for affiliation, competitions, matches. What you may not know is that clubs can now if they wish run their own matches, competitions using the system, in addition to this there is now a rink booking system available to clubs. You can choose which of the modules you wish to use, if you choose all three it will cost your club £75 per year, £25 if you only choose one module. If you wish to know more about this please contact me John Tucker.

I am also pleased to announce that Hampshire, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Berkshire, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, & Leicestershire are now using our system. As a result I have had to do a lot of travelling around the country doing presentations and providing support.

Brian Collis my assistant, will be looking after the Surrey clubs using the system next year.

When we first set the system up eight years ago, never in our wildest dreams did we see this happening.

In addition to this we have our own website, which we endeavor to keep up-to-date. There is a lot of information on this website, especially if you sign-in to the “members” pages, there is help for clubs under “Club support”, also there is a lot of history. Please spend time during the winter months having a look.

Finally, Please remember, the Area committees, the Management Committee & the Board are here to serve & help you, please use us.

**John Tucker Bowls Surrey General Secretary**