

COVID-19 CONTINGENCY PLAN APPROVED AT BOARD MEETING

5th March, 2021 by **Matt Wordingham**

With the start of the 2021 Bowls Season, the Bowls England Board has approved a robust Covid Contingency Plan which will enable the sport to better navigate through the government roadmap and get as many people back bowling as possible.

Whilst great progress has been made with the vaccination programme, it is clear that the 2021 season will be affected in some shape or form. A recent survey showed that the vast majority of players who responded are keen to return to the green this summer. With this in mind, the Bowls England team have reviewed the impact of Covid-19, with the aim of ensuring a safe return for all to our sport. The Covid Contingency plan, was shared with County Associations at the Annual General Meeting featuring plans to see the 2021 season taking place as normally as possible and leaving flexibility to react quickly and efficiently to what will no doubt be a fairly fluid situation. In undertaking this work, we have been mindful that the well-being of our community is paramount and we must always ensure that we comply with all Covid-19 government guidelines.

The plan features several key business areas. The most complex area of work is around the Competitions, Championships and National Finals. A number of factors have been taken into consideration including travel, accommodation, number of players, duty of care and spectators. This has included a review on the timings of the competition schedule, particularly the qualifying stages of national events, and the potential for regional variations. Other areas considered are Celebration Matches, Events and Affiliation. We had previously announced that we would be delaying the affiliation returns until 1st May 2021, allowing clubs and members more flexibility in renewing their membership. In the International arena, whilst the British Isles Women's Bowls Council and the British Isles Bowls Council have cancelled all International events for the 2021 season. We still have plans and provision for a focused high performance programme to enable our athletes to get the best training and preparation for the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

The Annual General Meeting of Bowls England took place on Saturday 27th February, with two delegates from each County Association entitled to attend. A full report including minutes and synopsis will be circulated in due course.

Looking ahead and recognising the positive impact that Bowls has on physical, mental and social wellbeing, we are continuing to collaborate with both clubs and counties on Bowls' Big Weekend at the end of May. As a non-contact/socially distant outdoor sport we feel we will have a head start on many other leisure activities in the next few months and wish to capitalise on this opportunity. Bringing new people into the sport is going to be vital for the long-term future of our clubs. The Bowls' Big Weekend Working Group has continued to meet regularly to progress our plans for the campaign. The comprises Bowls England, Bowls Development Alliance, British Crown Green, Coach Bowls, Disability Bowls England and a representative from the County Associations. Over the next couple of months in conjunction with our

colleagues at the Bowls Development Alliance, we will be producing 'Return to Play' guidance ahead of the season that will take into account the latest Government requirements when published, including any relevant information on vaccinations.

The inaugural 2019 version of the Story of the Year was so successful, that the 2020 format will remain similar. With the hard work demonstrated by many club members throughout the Country during a difficult 2020 season, we hope to receive many deserving nominations. We are therefore, planning to release a final Shortlist, rather than determining the final winner. The shortlisted nominations will then be opened to online voting. The nomination process is now open – more information and the online nomination form [can be found here](#). The deadline for entries is Monday 15th March.

To read the full minutes of the recent Board meeting, please [click here](#).