



Report into the European Region Lawn Bowls Seminar held over the weekend of Friday 29th April 2016 – Sunday 1st May 2016 at the Lorne Hotel, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow.

Attendees: Ten of the regional countries were represented at the seminar. They were accompanied by representatives from:-

The European Bowls Union

Welsh Bowls Federation

British Isles Bowls Council

Bowls Development Alliance

Bowls International

Thomas Taylor Bowls

Aero Bowls

Hunter Johnstone

Organising Committee and attendees from WB:

Andy Ewens, European Regional Director and seminar facilitator

John Bell, President World Bowls

Gary Smith, CEO World Bowls

Roger Black, WB administrator

This report is supported by the presentations given by each of the speakers during the seminar. The presentations come in two formats – written Microsoft Word documents or Powerpoint presentations. All documents and presentations can be downloaded from the World Bowls website and permission has been obtained from all authors to utilise their information as required.

During Friday 29th April delegates attended at the hotel for registration and an evening dinner hosted by World Bowls

Saturday 30th April:

Opening of seminar:

The delegates were divided up into five equal tables with a balance of MNA size, experience and involvement in the sport.

Andy Ewens opened the seminar. Having covered domestic and housekeeping issues, he explained the programme and format of the weekend, introduced all delegates and asked that all present played a full and cooperative part in discussions and debate. He then handed onto:

John Bell - President World Bowls

Presentation available from WB website

John started by thanking everybody that had attended the seminar explaining that the initiative to host the seminar was an important part of the World Bowls Board's Development Strategy which has been formulated to redress the problem and barriers that are hindering the wellbeing and development of our sport worldwide. The President believed that an event like this was long overdue. The fact that it had attracted the best and most influential minds, and positions, in European Bowls clearly shows that it was a very positive step forward and created a platform for the sharing of ideas and learning from all present on what we could do to effectively develop our sport across Europe and indeed the world.

There was encouragement to all delegates to actively participate in an open and honest environment for the benefit of all.

Exercise Delivery - All delegates were asked in their tables to identify their expectation of the seminar and what they both personally and organisationally wanted and expected to achieve. This was recorded on flipcharts and posted on the walls of the seminar room (*appendix a*).

Day one morning

The morning session was dedicated to the image, promotion and marketing of the Sport of Lawn Bowls. Sadly, due to illness Mel Evans MBE who provided the live streaming coverage of the Atlantic championships held in Cyprus during December 2015 was not able to attend. Referral was made to the most poignant of his slides, especially the astounding viewing figures both during and following the event.

A very thought provoking session that discussed issues such as the use of the media, written, interactive and social media all evidenced what could be achieved by anybody – but there had to be a commitment to produce results and all processes had to be treated as “live” as old news is no news. If we are to brand and promote our sport, it has to be lively, appealing and interesting.

Presentations on the WB website are from:

Jay Johnstone and Clare Leonard from Hunter Johnstone Marketing Solutions

Tom Hamilton – Bowls Scotland, Director of Marketing, Branding and Communication

Sian Honnor - Editor of Bowls International

Mel Evans MBE.

Day one afternoon:

The afternoon session was split into two halves concentrating on events and coaching.

Events were opened by looking at the profile of our sport in staging International events, competitive bowls for the “less well established nations” through the European Bowls Union and an open tournament (Dutch Open)

All three presentations were delivered “from the heart” and concentrated the mind on what there was in the bowling world, what support MNA’s were providing to help stage and develop events across the region, the difficulties that could and indeed would be encountered and the ongoing work to provide competitive bowls throughout the region.

Gary Smith’s presentation is available through the WB website.

Eddie Williams and Tom Keenan (EBU) along with Corrie Windle (Organiser of Dutch Open) provided speeches from documents that are not available

The later part of the afternoon received evidence of the fantastic work that has been undertaken by Bowls Scotland in the development of Bowls Coaching at grass roots and High Performance levels. Colin Hutchison identified the work that had been taken since an audit of coaching within Scotland before he came into office. It became very transparent from his presentation that the issues experienced by Scotland several years before were replicated across the region.

Tony Allcock MBE (Bowls England) supported Colin’s presentation by telling the delegates that he had recently gone through the Level 1 coaching programme in England. He had coached bowls for many years. Undertaking the structured programme with the support provided had evidenced to him the value of what was happening in Scotland and indeed England.

Rhona Howie MBE supported Colin’s work and that of Bowls Scotland by then delivering a presentation on High performance coaching, asking what High performance meant to the delegates and then clearly identified the processes that had been applied within her own programme in Scotland. All delegates were very grateful to Colin and Rhona for sharing their knowledge, skills and experience and some of their trade secrets. It was a fine way to conclude the formal section of day one.

During the evening Bowls Scotland hosted an evening meal and visit to the nearby St Vincent’s Bowls Club who provided excellent hospitality and for some a first visit to their magnificent trophy room.

Presentations on the WB website are from:

Colin Hutchison – Bowls Scotland National Development Manager

Rhona Howie MBE – Bowls Scotland High Performance Manager

Day two morning

The day started with a review of the presentations and issues raised during the previous day, comparing the expectations listed at the start of the seminar and the progress so far.

Ellen Falkner started day two by describing her personal thoughts on how a Bowls club could be managed, how initiatives for recruitment could be made, how to portray a club within a community and a superbly managed section of live play that highlighted two different ways to capture the interest of a person new to the sport when they cross the threshold to a club.

It was a recurring theme throughout the whole weekend that the image, warmth and commitment of clubs and their members to really promoting our sport as an interesting and welcoming activity was a message we all had to take away.

Who looks at and captures the skills and experience of members away from the bowling green? Have you got accountants, teachers, caterers, publicans etc. etc. amongst your members all of whom could bring their experience and feel more welcome than two or three members being the willing volunteers every time!

Paul Humphreys from The Bowls Development Alliance, a body within England that has been supported by Sport England, Bowls England and the English Indoor Bowls Association for all kinds of Bowls across the country, Flat Green, Crown Green, Para, Short Mat – you name it they do it. They have a programme similar to that used in Scotland as described by Colin Hutchison the day before.

Providing new initiatives, coaching standards, publicity material, avenues of funding, sport partnership hot spots across the country have all provided a real impetus into recruitment across all age groups and abilities.

Evidence presented to the meeting identified real progress in the recruitment and retention of new personnel into the sport.

To conclude this first session, Alistair Hollis identified what Bowls England were doing from their HQ to create effective relationships with counties, clubs and members. Their strategic intentions include the increase in participation in outdoor flat green lawn bowls, support of counties and clubs and the provision of leadership and direction.

Advice, campaigns, communication, participation, support, funding were all matters that Bowls England has provided to their members to support the sport.

The latter part of the morning was started by Gary Smith who introduced a written paper on the importance of creating a solid foundation for development.

Drawing upon many years experience it was reiterated that any country seeking support from WB needed to be able to evidence a strong administrative foundation to achieve effective progression. World Bowls cannot and will not support initiatives on a whim and without evidence of commitment and ability from requesting countries.

The right people with the right skills in the right positions was a good start, the ability to support coaching and officiating initiatives and the opportunity to “train the trainers” and then allow WB to withdraw whilst still supporting MNA initiatives was essential.

The presentation gave a lot of advice and warnings about getting the foundations right stating that authorities should not attempt to “run before they walk” a problem that has been evidenced in places throughout the world over time.

The morning concluded with a real “start from scratch” story and followed the introduction of the sport of Lawn Bowls in the Lyon and Ardeche regions of France. The Fédération Française de Lawn Bowls is the culmination of years of hard work by a group of French volunteers who have a passion and drive to establish our sport in France in partnership with

the Bowls Sports League, a vision that combines the sport of Bowls, Petanque, Raffa Volo and Boules Lyonnaise.

There is a total belief that Bowls is more than a sport – it is a way of life and has “social chic”. The applause and response given to the presenter and Chairman of FFLB Mr Patrick Duvarry who delivered in perfect English and his French colleagues was one of the highlights of the weekend.

Presentations on the WB website are from: -

Ellen Falkner – former sports development officer, CEO Aero Bowls UK

Paul Humphreys – Development Manager, Bowls Development Alliance

Alistair Hollis – Operational Service manager, Bowls England

Gary Smith – CEO World Bowls

Patrick Duvarry – Chairman FFLB

Day two afternoon

If the previous session had captivated the audience, the first delivery of the afternoon mirrored the effect and brought back memories from virtually all of the audience.

Ozkan Akar from Bowls Turkey gave a factual and humorous account of his move from Martial Arts sports to becoming a recognised bowler on the world stage.

Starting from flicking through Eurosport channels and seeing Lawn Bowls played for the first time, experiencing cultural and recognition difficulties in his own country, throughout the European and across the World Bowls stage, Ozkan’s experiences were all too familiar with things we had all seen yet perhaps done nothing about to allow others to learn from our experiences.

The culmination of Ozkan’s travel through bowls development has to be the remarkable achievement of a rink of ladies from Turkey who, through his coaching and guidance, have successfully qualified and earned the right to play at the World Championships in New Zealand in late 2016.

The final presentation of the weekend came from Andy Ewens who drew upon considerable experience as one of the leading umpires in the world. He identified to the audience the work of the WB Laws committee, dispelling some of the myths about the “North / South” divide and gave a plea for the MNA’s and other bodies present to make use of and support the officials that give their time freely to ensure that the sport runs freely.

At the World Junior Championships held in Australia during March 2016, Andy was given permission to speak with the Australian squad on their perception and understanding of the umpiring and marking role. Their feedback, along with that of their National Coach Steve Glasson was reproduced verbatim within the presentation.

Presentations on the WB website are from: -

Ozkan Akar – Bowls Turkey

Andy Ewens – WB Laws Committee / Regional Director (Europe)

Following a short break Andy Ewens provided a brief summary of the seminar, once again looking at the expectations flip charts and drawing feedback from the audience. It was stated that the presentations would be circulated to all delegates

(NB. Following the seminar it has become too big a task to circulate all of the presentations especially with the size of some. It has been decided that all presentations will be available through the WB website.)

Closing remarks:

In thanking all of those involved with the first ever World Bowls development seminar President John Bell highlighted the exceptional quality of the presentations given to the seminar. He was in no doubt they contained a huge range of advice, information, and initiatives which could be applied to the individual situations of all the attendees' national associations. It was of paramount importance however that the thinking, learning and application did not stop at the end of the seminar. Action is the watchword if we are to arrest the decline in memberships and raise the profile of our sport. He also outlined some of the other initiatives undertaken by World Bowls in recent months, including assistance for India, France, Samoa, Niue, Fiji and the Cook Islands, the application for IOC recognition, along with the development of the new website. He reminded those present that this had been done on the back of a secure but limited financial platform, which emphasises the need for our global bowls community to work together and cooperate with each other to achieve maximum benefit. He concluded by reaffirming that the World Bowls Board is determined to be proactive in addressing and resolving the problems and barriers that are preventing our sport from developing. Its organisation of this successful seminar bears strong testament to that aspiration.