

Message from the Chair (Friday 22nd May 2020)

I trust this message finds you safe and healthy as we look ahead to the Bank Holiday.

Last week, the Government announced that facilities associated with outdoor sports and physical activities, including lawn bowls, could reopen. This was a small, but positive step, as we look towards the future.

The physical and mental wellbeing of our bowls community is of paramount importance and we are keen to support those clubs that wish to reopen in order that those who would like to play may do so. Within 24 hours of the Government guidance being released, our sport-specific guidance had been finalised and approved by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) for circulation to our clubs.

The guidance has been very well received, and it is great to see many Clubs opening up. I have also been delighted to see some of the innovative approaches taken by Clubs in their return to the green - indeed whoever would have thought that you would need to book a rink for a 'roll-up'? However, I must reiterate that there is no pressure on clubs to open or individuals to participate. They should only do so when they feel it is safe to do so.

The use of technology has helped some clubs to reopen, through the use of online booking systems, and similarly it will be key to engaging with current and potential participants over the coming months.

In support of this, last week we arranged three social media webinars, hosted by Matt Hamilton from Ilminster BC in Somerset. This session was organised to help Clubs understand platforms such as Facebook and Twitter and the positive impact that these free tools can have in developing your clubs. We were delighted that representatives from more than 200 Clubs attended these webinars and that those who were present found the content beneficial. I would like to place on record my thanks to Matt Hamilton for his involvement with this initiative.

Coach Bowls has also announced the launch of its new online 'Adult Safeguarding in Bowls' course, providing an ideal opportunity for all bowlers to increase their knowledge of safeguarding from the comfort of their own home. The courses are delivered via a virtual classroom and I'm delighted to report that the first two sessions are already 'sold out'. More information on this can be found on the Coach Bowls website at:

www.coachbowls.org

The last week has also seen our Covid-19 Club Survey draw to a close, with nearly 1000 responses, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who responded. We are now in the process of evaluating the results and will communicate the headline figures shortly and the findings will be used by the Board to develop our ongoing support package for clubs. Our Club and County Support Advisor John Hughes has already been in contact with the vast majority of respondents to offer assistance - a massive undertaking but one that has been appreciated by all he has been in contact with.

This is my final briefing before our new Chief Executive, Jon Cockcroft, joins us on 1st June. I know Jon is looking forward to the challenge ahead and working with the Board and the staff team towards a brighter future for the sport. I would like to publicly thank all of the staff for rising to the challenge over the past couple of months in support of our members in such unprecedented times.

Finally, I wish to remind you all that Mental Health Awareness Week is taking place this week (18-24 May 2020), with this year's theme being 'kindness'. We are aware that there is a huge difference of opinion between our members on returning to the green - please be respectful of each other and

the wider bowling community when commenting on social media, including our own channels. If you do follow us on any of our social media channels, please take a moment to watch the Mental Health Foundation video that we have shared.

Stay safe.

David Tucker
Chair
Bowls England