



4 September 2026

Dear County Secretaries and Members,

Over recent weeks, the British Crown Green Bowling Association has been through an extremely difficult and divisive period. There has been significant disagreement about the way the Association should be governed, how decisions should be taken and, more fundamentally, what type of organisation BCGBA needs to become if it is to serve Crown Green Bowls effectively in the future.

As Interim Chair, I believe the time has now come to move the discussion away from individuals and towards those bigger questions. The current Board has no desire to prolong the present conflict or to hold on to positions for the sake of doing so. Our responsibility now is to ensure that the next stage in the life of the Association is determined properly, transparently and democratically by its Member Associations.

Before that happens, however, I believe it is important to set out some of the principles that have guided the work of the Board over the past year and which, in our view, should remain central to the future of the Association. These are not simply preferences of the current Board. They reflect recognised principles of good governance across sport, including those promoted through the Code for Sports Governance. Although BCGBA is not currently required through direct Sport England or UK Sport funding to meet every element of the Code, we believe its underlying principles remain highly relevant. Our view has therefore been straightforward; Crown Green Bowls deserves good governance whether or not a funding condition requires it.

A transition in leadership

Recent events have also brought about a significant change in the leadership of the Association. Steve Clamp and I intend to step away from our respective Board roles as part of that transition. This follows the resignations already received from other Regional Board members and our Independent Directors, all of whom have contributed significantly to the work of the Association during a particularly demanding period.

I have also received and accepted Dan Newton's resignation from his role as Chief Executive Officer, triggering his contractual six-month notice period. During that time, Dan intends to continue supporting BCGBA to help the Association move towards a stable and effective future leadership structure. Taken together, these changes mean BCGBA has reached a genuine transition point.

Our responsibility now is not to preserve our own positions, but to create the conditions in which Member Associations can determine the next leadership properly, transparently and democratically through the processes established within the BCGBA Byelaws. For my own part, I will remain as Interim Chair only for as long as necessary to help facilitate that transition. My priority is to leave the Association with a clear route forward and with the membership, rather than competing groups or individuals, determining its future.

The foundations for BCGBA's future

In practical terms, we believe there are four areas in particular which should remain central to the future of BCGBA.

1. Clear and accountable governance

A national governing body needs a structure in which authority, responsibility and accountability are clear. The Code for Sports Governance places considerable emphasis on Boards understanding their collective responsibility for the long-term success of their organisation, with appropriate structures, delegated authority and clear decision-making processes in place. That principle has been central to the work undertaken by BCGBA over the last year.

Our work to consider an appropriate legal structure, including the transition from an unincorporated association towards a Company Limited by Guarantee, was not intended to distance the sport from its members. It was intended to provide clearer

accountability, stronger governance and appropriate legal protection for those entrusted with leading the Association. Other sports and sporting organisations have taken similar steps as they have modernised. Reviewing governance structures, clarifying responsibilities and ensuring the right skills sit in the right places is not a threat to a sport's history or traditions. It is part of ensuring that those traditions can be protected within an organisation capable of meeting modern responsibilities.

2. A skilled and balanced Board

We have heard concern expressed that bringing independent people into the governance of Crown Green Bowls somehow takes the sport away from those who play and administer it. Recognised governance practice across sport points in the opposite direction. The Code for Sports Governance identifies diversity of background, independence, skills and experience as important ingredients of an effective Board. Different perspectives help challenge assumptions, reduce the risk of group-think and improve the quality of decision-making.

Independence is therefore not about removing Crown Green Bowls from the people who understand it. It is about combining that knowledge with people who can bring additional expertise, challenge and scrutiny in areas such as finance, governance, safeguarding, people management, commercial development and organisational strategy. Our belief remains that the strongest future Board for BCGBA should combine both: people with a deep understanding and passion for Crown Green Bowls, alongside individuals who bring appropriate independent skills and experience.

3. Professional standards in finance, safeguarding and operations

The same principles apply to the way the organisation operates. Proper budgeting, forecasting, reporting and financial controls are not bureaucracy added to the sport. They are fundamental responsibilities of a well-governed organisation. The Code for Sports Governance guidance identifies sound finance, transparent financial management, clear responsibilities and appropriate controls as essential elements of an effective and sustainable sporting body. That is why the Board has sought to improve financial planning and scrutiny, understand the true costs of competitions and services, and move away from arrangements which depend too heavily on individual knowledge or historic ways of working.

Any future leadership of BCGBA should therefore be able to explain not only how it intends to administer the sport, but how it intends to finance it sustainably. Safeguarding and welfare carry the same importance. Modern governing bodies are expected to have clear safeguarding frameworks, robust case-management arrangements, appropriate disciplinary procedures and enough capacity to deal with the actual volume and seriousness of the work they face. These responsibilities cannot simply be fitted around whatever time or resource happens to be available. The level of resource and expertise devoted to safeguarding, disciplinary work, finance, governance and administration needs to reflect the responsibilities BCGBA is expected to discharge as the national body for the sport.

4. Long-term sustainability

BCGBA also needs a financial and organisational model capable of supporting Crown Green Bowls for the years ahead. This means being willing to ask difficult questions:

- Are existing income streams sufficient to fund the services members expect?
- Are competitions being delivered sustainably?
- Are staffing structures aligned to the work the organisation actually needs to undertake?
- Do we have the financial reserves, systems and controls required to manage future risks?
- Are we investing enough in safeguarding, governance, communications, development and the other functions expected of a national governing body?

These are not always comfortable questions, but avoiding them does not make them disappear. They have been at the heart of the work undertaken by the Board and Chief Executive over the last 12 months. That work identified areas where BCGBA needed to modernise and strengthen its arrangements, and where historic ways of working were no longer sufficient for the responsibilities expected of a modern national governing body. Not every decision made during that period will have been universally popular. Change rarely is.

However, I believe it would be a serious mistake for the Association to interpret the difficulties of recent months as evidence that the need for change itself was wrong.

The choice now facing the membership

The question for the membership should therefore not simply be 'Who do we want to run BCGBA?'. It should also be 'What kind of BCGBA do we want those people to lead?'

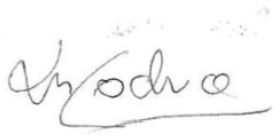
The current leadership will not seek to predetermine that answer. What we do believe is that Member Associations should have the opportunity to consider the issues fully, understand the choices before them and make an informed decision about the future leadership of the Association. Those who wish to take responsibility for leading BCGBA should have the opportunity to explain their vision for the organisation and how they intend to address the governance, financial, safeguarding and organisational responsibilities that come with that leadership. The membership should then decide.

What happens next

The immediate task is to establish the constitutional route through which the future leadership of BCGBA will be determined. The relevant provisions of the BCGBA Byelaws will now be reviewed so that a clear timetable can be set, including any requirements relating to notice, nominations, voting, appointments and the conduct of a general meeting. Our intention is to provide every Member Association with the opportunity to participate, understand the choices before it and make an informed decision about who should lead BCGBA next.

The principle is simple: the next leadership should not emerge through competing claims of authority or informal arrangements. It should be established through the constitutional and democratic processes agreed by the membership itself. Once that process has been confirmed, we will communicate the timetable and next steps clearly to all Member Associations. I would encourage every County and every individual involved in the weeks ahead to approach that decision not on the basis of personalities, loyalties or historic disagreements, but by asking one question: 'What will give Crown Green Bowls the strongest, safest and most sustainable national governing body for the future?'

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Steve Cochrane', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Steve Cochrane
Interim Chair
British Crown Green Bowling Association