

## **Agenda Item 11**

### **To Gloucestershire County Bowls Association**

Over the past nine months it has been my privilege to serve as the Marketing Director for the Cotswold Bowls Club. I decided at an early stage that one of my main objectives would be to attempt to recruit young people to the club to develop a strong Junior Section. This was prompted by my concern that the average age of our membership seems to be increasing whilst our overall membership is in slow decline. Being aware of this problem I have taken time to talk to members of other clubs about their recruitment issues and it has become increasingly evident that membership across all age groups is in a slow decline. A number of the clubs are finding it difficult to fulfil all their fixtures across the Summer and Winter seasons. Our club has on a number of occasions this season supplemented visiting clubs with our members to complete their teams.

On August 12<sup>th</sup>, we held an 'Open Day', which attracted over 30 people, of various ages, to try their hand at bowls. I believe that most enjoyed the experience and we hope that some of them will want to come back. We have followed up on many of them and wait to see who returns. The day was successful because we spent time and money on extensive publicity, and on ensuring that visitors were welcomed on arrival and assigned a mentor to equip them with woods and shoes, and to provide a taste of how the game is played.

My concern is that whilst we had a relatively successful day the problem the Counties clubs are facing is that the slow decline in participation in our sport is not being comprehensively addressed by the County Association. All our clubs do what they can to recruit new members, but this is an issue that requires a more strategic approach conducted on a County wide level. Our sport needs to demonstrate to the wider community what it has to offer, and this can only be done by involving all the clubs in a planned recruitment program designed to promote the game of bowls in the first instant and then the availability of local membership.

The image of the game is that of a sport for retired and older people. This must be addressed if we are to generate the essential interest of younger, working age people who will be the future of the game in Gloucestershire. We can no longer be complacent about this issue as to do so will see our sport plunged into crises over the next few years.

I am aware that the County is currently without a Press Officer, but I would strongly suggest that this is a problem that needs to be addressed as a Development Project and not dismissed as simply a marketing issue. As a County Association you are in a strong position to attract funding and expertise to commit to the future development of the sport. Failure to take a lead on this will be to abdicate your responsibility for the support and development of the sport we all love. I do urge you to discuss this issue as a matter of urgency.

Peter Iles  
Marketing Director  
Cotswold Bowls Club