

BOWLS ENGLAND LOOKS FORWARD TO START OF 2021 OUTDOOR SEASON

22nd February, 2021 by **Matt Wordingham**

Today's roadmap for the easing of lockdown restrictions enables Bowls England, counties and affiliated clubs to prepare with confidence for the 2021 outdoor season. The Prime Minister's announcement confirmed that outdoor affiliated bowls clubs will be able to open from 29 March.

Our overriding objective is for as many bowlers as possible to enjoy our sport in a safe manner this summer. Bowls is a naturally socially-distanced, non-contact activity and plays a key role in the mental and physical health of many across the country. The positive prospects for the new season provides a great boost to bowlers and the sport in general.

Whilst the overwhelming majority of existing bowlers are eager to start playing and are likely to have received their first vaccine, we understand there is a degree of nervousness about returning to the sport. We will be working alongside our development partner, the Bowls Development Alliance, to support affiliated clubs across the country to create Covid-safe environments, building on the fantastic efforts of many club leaders last year. This work will include:

- 'Return to Play' guidance for affiliated clubs
- Resources and best practice to support the safe running of clubs
- Online rink booking and cashless payments
- Promotional material and funding advice

We also aim to facilitate as much domestic competition as possible. We have developed a series of Covid-contingency scenarios and, with the information now available, will look to reshape our national competition schedule. We will issue a further update on the championships and competitions programmes once we have had the opportunity to consult with counties and clubs on any potential changes.

Our [National Open Weekend](#) planning will continue and we believe there's a good opportunity to encourage people, who are looking for a new fun, family outdoor activity, into our sport. We will be working with affiliated clubs who sign up to empower them to deliver Open Weekend events that are Covid-safe and give new players a fantastic first experience.

Chief Executive, Jon Cockcroft, said: "With the roadmap laid out by the Prime Minister, we are excited about our sport's prospects for the coming season. With sensible interventions in place, bowls is a sport that can be enjoyed authentically and safely within the government guidelines and it will be a huge boost for the wellbeing of the bowls community to be playing the sport they love and connecting back in with their local communities. We will be working in partnership with all stakeholders, notably affiliated clubs, to navigate through any challenges and, whilst mindful to retain a level of caution, are very excited about the outdoor bowls season beginning soon."

We understand today's developments will provoke a range of questions and we would ask people to bear with us as we work through the various implications. As soon as we can, we will be issuing more detailed guidance on the Bowls England website.