Dear Colleagues,

This communication is not connected with the present emergency, but relates to the new

National Membership Register for our sport, which is ready to ‘go live’. Everybody from your club (all affiliated members, that is) affiliated to Gloucestershire and Bowls England needs to go on this.

The Register has been talked about for many years, but has never moved beyond the preliminary stages. Bowls England now has to grasp the nettle and begin to put this in place. A Project Officer has now been appointed, Jamie Chestney, specifically to take this forward. There is a page on the BE Web site devoted to it ( <https://www.bowlsengland.com/membership-register/> ) and included on that, there is a clip from the recent interview with Tony Allcock, the retiring Chief Executive of our governing body, which it is worth people listening to, as he makes several points about why the Register is needed. I myself would make a number of crucial points :

* Bowling is the largest participant sport in England that does not have a Membership Register. No other sport with remotely as many as the 100,000+ outdoor lawn bowlers in the country fails to meet the Sport England request for such a scheme.
* When we put this in place, I am advised that we will immediately go to about the 60th largest membership organisation in England. [See FAQs]
* Without this Register, there are constantly questions about who our members are, and answers cannot be provided. We only have a number per county and a gender breakdown, and that is all that Bowls England currently requires. In Gloucestershire, we also ask for U-18 bowlers, so that we can give them a concession on the affiliation fee, and we ask that a telephone number be provided, but these do not go to Bowls England.
* Because other information is not currently requested, such as age, we have little idea of the precise age breakdown of our sport, which is vital in tailoring the services that can be offered by Bowls England to our members, in designing the competition structure, and more. [See FAQs]
* Just as vital is not being able to determine an overall age structure for the sport or the simple number of, for example, women players in the Under 25 age bracket or the number of all players over retirement age. Neither the governing body nor the county association can access the complete range of financial support that is available from the government through Sport England in particular, nor from other sources. We can ‘fall at the first hurdle’ just through not being able to accurately describe our membership.
* Early suggestions re the administration of a bowls membership register, several years ago, might have kept it in-house, but this Register will be organised and run by ‘GoMembership’, which will ensure that it is both professionally done and also fully GDPR-compliant and confidential.
* It needs to be understood that, within this, the original data will be input by the club and it will remain the property of the individual and the club. Only the club, plus Bowls England and the GBA, will be permitted access (through their unique passwords) to the details held in the database, for and only for legitimate and defined purposes for each organisation.
* I know that some of our members will be concerned about other organisations gaining access to the data and confidential details, but the GDPR-compliant nature and the controls on entry will not permit this. In truth, a large proportion of us all give our personal (and often financial) details to a multiplicity of retail and commercial organisations when we carry out dealings on the Internet, without any such stringent safeguards and then are maybe surprised when it is found that some other organisation or individual has paid for or stolen these crucial details; this cannot and will not happen through ‘GoMembership’.
* There is always an issue with membership details being held just on the laptop of a club secretary, not in any sense because we do not trust that individual, but if a different person comes into that role, the data does not then easily go to new encumbent, plus it may to some extent remain on the computer of the previous secretary. With ‘GoMembership‘, the data is held centrally, is entered directly into the database online and is accessed remotely only by the three bodies previously mentioned.
* The club is in control, because you are the organisation which enters the date. As membership changes, each year or during the season, these are entered at the time. So much less overall work is required of the club secretary, as only changes (gains or losses) need to be submitted. Updates of details like e-mail address or change of postal address, might occasionally be necessary, of course.

I am forwarding below, the original e-mail emanating from Jamie Chestney, together with the three important attachments. To make printing off copies of the paperwork on this first occasion easier, I have also attached this covering letter/e-mail as a document and Jamie’s covering letter/e-mail, also as document. Could I respectfully suggest that you forward all five attachments to each member of your club. Some will be very interested in the process, some less so. It is obviously yourself who -having received all the data from your members - will actually need to fill in the new club summary spreadsheet (with your new unique filename). Hopefully, all your members will have access to your e-mail, but – if not – the odd person might need hard copies

In order to reduce the workload – on the first occasion only - for club and county administrators, and make the process as smooth as possible, Bowls England will themselves import all of the clubs’ current members for this season, from your completed club Excel templates (see attached Excel spreadsheet and example too). You will personally already have a list of current club members available, as it is the same as you sent to the County Treasurer, Jane Hawkes, in November 2019 (give or take a few changes that might have occurred since then). So you only need to add the extra data - dates of birth, e-mail addresses, ethnicity and disability data, title, postal address, telephone numbers and ‘duty of care’ emergency contact details- many of which are easy, but some will possibly involve extra inquiries of your members.

The required data should please be submitted on the provided template Excel form [the filename just having your club name added to it]. The example ‘GoMembership’ Excel form is also provided with this message, which gives you further guidance on the information fields required.

You are respectfully asked to return your club’s Excel form to me (County Administrator) by Friday 1st May 2020, but – to save me having a glut of data to deal with at the same time, I’ll happily accept your form back at any time from now onwards. I understand that it will, in some cases, take you all four weeks to acquire the additional data.

Bowls England will then work to import the sets of club data for the first time. Club and county administrators will then have access to ‘GoMembership’ through their own unique logins, in order to update information and produce relevant reports (subject always to their ‘access level’).

As I said, we appreciate this is extra work. However, once this initial information has been imported your club administrator/secretary will in future (and in future years as well) only have to add/remove members as appropriate, as well as having the ability to fully manage the club membership details through ‘GoMembership’. In fact, to repeat, the data belongs first and foremost to your club, with Bowls England and the GBA just having access to it for certain defined processes, such as affiliation.

If you have any questions about filling in the form, please contact me straight away. I will try to help you personally, but the Frequently Asked Questions’ document from Bowls England will also be useful. This also makes clear - over and above my own summary - why the membership scheme, after many years of talking about it, is now being set up, plus some idea of the benefits to all of us.

Given that we have no bowls at the moment (and lots of us will be at home, self-isolating), I’m very much hoping that you will be able to devote a bit of time to putting together your club’s data, including e-mailing your club members to get some of the extra stuff that you might not already hold. Please help me with this large exercise.

Thank you very much indeed for your co-operation.

Best wishes,

Lindsay

Mrs Lindsay Collin

County Administrator