



## Succeeding against all odds – the story of a bowls club.

*Theme: Individual wellbeing / Community Development*

**“I wanted to thank Brimfield & Little Hereford Bowling Club for a wonderful year. I have thoroughly enjoyed getting involved, making new friends and even improving with the Bowls! It’s a great club and you should be very proud.”**

**Philip Watts, new bowler and club member.**”

### Location, location, location...

Brimfield & Little Hereford Bowling Club (B&LHBC) is twice unfortunate because of its geographical location. Based in one of the most sparsely populated areas in the country, between the borders of Herefordshire and Shropshire, the club is naturally struggling to attract new recruits each year. In addition, the county divide also happens to be the boundary between where people play the flat green and the crown green versions of the sport, making the club the northernmost flat green club in the entire region. These two factors combined create a unique challenge to the otherwise very competitive club, and have caused their membership to decline by 20% over the past few years.

### A club at a crossroads

B&LHBC is known to be an elite club, having been represented in the National Championships by several of its members almost every year. However, due to their gradual decline, the club committee is aware that such competitive success cannot be maintained and, if the club is losing its core membership, the overall future of the club is at risk.

### Time for a change

The club committee was determined to turn things around and did not hesitate to approach the Bowls Development Alliance and enrol into their Club Development Programme. After lengthy discussions with their designated BDA officer, a robust development plan was co-created to address the club’s challenges and reverse the trend. The aim of the plan was to offset the club’s limitations with its strengths, namely – to tap into the club committee’s potential and its membership’s support to better co-ordinate its marketing and promotion.



## Learning & Successes

Determined to successfully complete their development plan, the committee had to ensure the full membership were on board. After delivering clear messages, backed up with a series of surveys, the committee was able to influence and involve most of the club in the work. What followed was the creation of a marketing strategy, with the help of the BDA, which led to the club reaching a bigger audience than ever before when advertising for their open day. Additionally, the club built a brand-new club website and developed social media profiles, with engaging content and imagery, well-suited to encourage beginners. A comprehensive New Member Welcome Pack was developed that included all the information a new starter needed. The club also became fully inclusive and accessible to disabled people, obtaining a Bowls Disability Mark accreditation. Two new Coach Bowls Level 1 coaches were trained, along with 1 new safeguarding officer and 27 club helpers.

At the end, the committee's hard work paid off. A year later, B&LHBC were able to recruit and integrate 16 new members, causing the membership to increase by over 20%, back to the levels of 2016. Some of its bowlers also reached National Championship finals, capping off a great year for the club. Now, B&LHBC has all the tools to continue its progress and position itself at the heart of its rural community.



## The Club Development Programme

Created in 2017 as part of Bowls Development Alliance (BDA)'s four-year Sport England-funded Delivery Plan, the Club Development Programme offers bowls clubs across the country a unique support programme to develop and better sustain their membership numbers.

Every club involved in the programme receives direct support from the BDA to create a Club Development Plan that will help the club to not only provide the best experience for its present members but support new recruitment initiatives to increase their current membership.

There are now over 100 clubs that have been part of the programme since April 2017. It has so far contributed to the recruitment and integration of over 1000 new bowlers, 100 new coaches, 100 new volunteers and 650 new club helpers.



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***“We are very thankful to the BDA who have been such a great help to our development. They have given us wonderful support and useful ideas that led to the increase in our membership.”***

***Jennie Cole, chairperson, Brimfield & Little Hereford BC***

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### Further information

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