



A Growing Community Bowls Club in the Heart of Wiltshire – Calne BC

Theme: Individual Well-being / Community Development

“The committee was enthusiastic but had no real experience in recruiting. The officer support from the BDA and the development plan gave us direction, and we have increased our membership by 30%, even getting people joining as late as August.”

Barry Wicks, chairman, Calne Bowling Club

A club in transition

Calne Bowling Club was formed in March 1914 and, as well as many enjoyable years of bowling, it has seen many changes over this time. The small outdoor club in Wiltshire went through a transition period recently when they changed their entire committee. The club was having difficulty in retaining members, as well as recruiting new ones. There was a need for change, and a revitalized committee was determined to reverse the club's decline. This led them to apply to join the BDA's Club Development Programme.

A fresh start

The new committee were determined not to let their problems overwhelm them, and they realised that to progress they would need:

- the backing of their local authority;
- to build a new club website to increase their online presence;
- to improve the state of the club green;
- to train their members to be able to run and support successful open days.
- recruit and integrate enough new members to reverse the decline.

The committee pro-actively followed the club development plan which was agreed by the club and the BDA Officer. They are now working in close partnership with the town council to help develop the club as an inclusive community facility. The club committee knew it was a priority for the state of the green to be improved and maintained and therefore encouraged new members to become involved in greenkeeping. A new website has been developed which could rival any sports clubs in design and content, showcasing bowls as an inclusive sport for all, and therefore attracting a much broader audience from its modernised and easily accessible online presence.



Learning & Successes

- Calne BC was faced with urgent challenges that needed to be addressed to prevent the club going into further decline. The result of re-focusing the committee and pro-actively taking on the actions set out in their development plan was that they welcomed 34 open day visitors, of which 17 joined as new members.
- The committee understands that being able to offer social and participation opportunities all year round is integral to the future of the club. That is why a regular short mat bowls session was introduced at the Beversbrook Sports Facility in the off-season to allow members to keep bowling together. This has now turned into a year-round club and has encouraged members of the public to begin bowling, both indoors and outdoors.
- The general ethos at the club has changed for the better and the club's success story is a perfect example of what can be achieved when everyone is working towards the same goal, creating a friendly environment to retain and recruit new members.



The Club Development Programme

Through the BDA's four-year Sport England-funded strategy, 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.



“The support given from the Club Development Programme is invaluable and I would recommend clubs in a similar situation to us to apply to this programme.”

Barry Wicks, chairman, Calne Bowling Club

Further information

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