

ECBA Zoom Meeting

Saturday 25th July 2020 at 11.00am

Present: Neil Jolly Vice Chairman - Chairing meeting Suffolk
Pauline Charleton - Secretary
Paul Daniels - Treasurer / Tournament

Secretary

Jamie Smith - Delegate Cambridgeshire
Peter Wood - Delegate Durham
Clifford Richardson - Delegate Essex
Craig & Rebecca Hearn - Delegate Hertfordshire
Dean Clarke - Delegate Norfolk
Tony & Kay Cuthbert - Delegate Northumberland
Mick Watkins - Delegate ECBA Referee

Apologies - Colin Young - Chairman - Sunderland Proxy vote to Vice Chairman

Many thanks to Clifford Richardson for booking and invites to county delegates and committee members. Again many thanks to Neil Jolly, Jamie Smith and Paul Daniels acting as sub-committee and forming the ECBA Guidance Document which has been well received.

Neil opened the meeting, welcoming all present - he states that as all will have seen the emailed document which summarised the County's views, he would in alphabetical order, get the county delegate's views on the document.

Cambridgeshire: Jamie stated 28 bowlers were canvassed of which 6 were willing to go to the National Championship, 14 of the 28 were not willing. The uncertainty around the present situation, what is happening at Potters had a lot to do with their answers - the Potter's Facebook page showed eating in little bubbles, so how would that fare in November - seating arrangements, would it be the same? Looking at comments from other counties, they have similar concerns and some have more players willing to attend than others from Cambridgeshire's perspective. If the Championship was to go ahead - Cambridgeshire would not be sending a team.

Durham: Peter stated there are 17 people wanting to go - probably the main concern is the travel down and sitting 7 hours on a coach. 6 have been medically told they could not go down to Potters at any cost - so there is no way Durham would be sending a team.

Essex: Cliff said a similar situation that Cambridgeshire had stated - a lot of people worried about the social distancing aspect - there would not be a full team of people to go as the situation is at the moment. Many had said as things may get better, could the decision be delayed until a bit nearer the time, so that more up to date information to place their decisions upon.

Hertfordshire: Craig stated probably 12,13, or 14 people willing to go under any circumstances, which leaves a shortfall of 10. The situation at the moment, the longer we go on, the less likely it is going to

happen in the format people are meant to be, so the 12 people would be prepared to go and play in a different format.

Neil stated that is a different angle at it so far, and we could consider or talk about this option.

Norfolk: Dean had looked at all the comments and cannot really add anymore to this situation - he understands there are 18 people from Norfolk who were willing to go, but that can fluctuate as time goes on if things got worse, it could drop to zero. According to what everyone else is saying, it appears unlikely that it will be going ahead after all.

Northumberland: Tony stated they have about 20 and if it came about that they had to make a decision on their behalf, he would not feel comfortable saying yes, so they would not be attending, no matter what the format.

Suffolk: Neil stated Suffolk's perspective was very similar to what has been said so far - a mixture of responses - the consensus was Yes we would like to go but a lot of reservations about social distancing - what can Potters do for us, and already a lot of people who have said No now, full stop. So nothing different to what has been said before.

Sunderland: Colin's email their response was 50/50, no real difference, but same as Tony and Peter stated, coach travel was an issue and 7 hour journey.

Neil: Asked to be corrected if he was wrong, but could see no benefit in what had been said today that we would want to delay the decision for another month. Unless anyone thinks contrary, is anything going to change our collective views in a month towards a positive?

NO from Northumberland, same from Durham, same from Cambridgeshire.

Norfolk: Dean stated that they would have to say no as well - a lot of the people say although it's a bowls competition, out of the whole weekend, it's the atmosphere, the meeting up of old friends in other counties. If you brought with the social distancing, the heart of the whole weekend has gone away anyway - we are supposed to be playing bowls, but there is also a social side, and generally speaking, we would not have enough people if we waited a month who would be happy enough to go.

Mick: The way Potter's is set up at the moment is basically for Summer - their entertainment is outdoors etc - is it worth considering putting on a tournament for those wishing to go? Not knowing what the conditions are like in November, if you pay Potters and then cancel, you will lose your money, but there are some who would take the risk.

The Nationals is out of the question in the present scheme of things, but is it worth putting something together like a pairs tournament so that we can keep Potter's in line with us, we're still in the mind of Potters.

Paul: No, I don't think so - in terms of keeping Potter's on board with us we still have the Festival all lined up for next May - if we skipped November, that really would not make any difference, but a decision needs to be made sooner rather than later on this.

Pauline: There has been a mixture of response and they all seem to be pointing really to a negative - as for what Mick said re a tournament, possibly it could be for those who wanted to go, but don't actually think it should be done by the ECBA, but the National tournament should be kept as such and not have little factions going off. If there are players who want to go, they should book up themselves, which is an opinion only.

Cliff: Do we know what Potters have got in mind if we were all going along? They are not operating at full capacity, so it is possible we could be the only people there that weekend - at 50% capacity there wouldn't be a lot of room for anyone else, would there?

Neil: Craig raised the potential of an alternative competition first for the bowlers who were interested in going to Potters, subject to certain restrictions. Firstly we will do a straw poll raising the 1st question - Do we cancel Potters now? Then we will make the decision, although it does look pretty clear which way that

is going now. I will ask Colin to have a conversation with Potters around that weekend, and if there was sufficient interest (a big IF), what could they accommodate for bowlers?

Then subject to that response, we can consider when an alternative competition is feasible both for us as the Association and for Potters in the term of accommodating those who would like to go.

Show of hands for the straw poll Do we cancel the Nationals - yes or no? Strong show of hands which is pretty clear.

Neil will speak with Colin and inform him of the straw poll and the consensus that the Nationals cannot proceed, and ask him to converse with them about the November weekend and how Potters see their sights by then. A good conversation is needed around another competition good enough for a number of people to be interested to play. There appears to be bowlers who want to bowl and there could be issues that could change the decision between now and November.

Tony: The number of Northumberland bowlers that are saying yes, would not have transport other than the county coach, so it's unlikely even if that came up that they would be able to go.

Peter: Durham bowlers would probably be the same as a lot of them would not drive that distance themselves in their own cars and I don't see us putting a bus on for half a dozen or ten people going down.

Neil: So it looks as though it's being said that if there was to be another event, then it would be the vast majority from the East. Anything else anyone wants to throw into the mix?

Dean: What about the winter bug? Flu jabs, Covid-19 could piggy back on the flu's and colds - we are looking into the wet time, end of Autumn, and the Nationals in November- that could be a headache for some of us players.

Neil: It is one of many uncertainties, we can't crystal ball gaze into what the landscape might look like in three months. If we put another event on and the landscape changes, then all bets could be off again - this is something to bear in mind before we make the furtive decision to do something different.

Tony: The position the ECBA is in, we are not a governing body by any means, but people do look up to us, would it not be better just to set an example and say we are cancelling the Nationals and will not do anything this year. Let's see the winter out, and if nothing happens, great, but why risk putting something on and maybe something does happen down there and we are looking pretty stupid.

Pauline: I agree

Neil: I wouldn't disagree with that, this is something we really have to weigh up if we were to make an affirmative decision around doing anything different. Again my personal view is that for the moment and probably for the next 3-6 months the county's responsibilities are probably very much to their clubs and making sure and trying to help their clubs to get started and to see what it all looks like maybe until early next year before anything competitive happens. That is my personal view. Anyone wanting to add anything?

Peter: I totally agree with what you have said, we should be stopping altogether until early next year, until things clear up, hopefully.

Cliff: No

Paul:No

Pauline: No

Craig: It was more a sense of expectation to get to Potters, but bearing in mind what other people are saying, I'm not even sure that doing something at a reduced level at Potters is something that you want - when push comes to shove, you are actually asking people a definitive, there isn't one. The amount of stuff that is stacked against anything positive coming through in the next few months is so great. The decision we made today in terms of cancelling the Nationals seems to be the only possible step that we can take and as Tony said, to try and replace that with something else, although we all want to get back to bowling, there's too much stuff that's weighed against it. I've got to say, on behalf of Hertfordshire, the work that has been done so far has been very good, because the ECBA has an obligation really to be

making decisions for people, the guidance given out before was very helpful, so I'd like to thank you for that.

Neil: Thank you - I hope the other counties feel the same way.

Dean: Thank you for putting a good Guidance of Coronavirus play out, I think you did really well on that, but it's a big headache as our own village club cannot play in our village hall because of their legal rules - no play in our village clubs either.

Neil: There may be some parts that are going to be hamstrung by their own village halls not opening until some day in the future, so again there are going to be some things that are completely out of our control and that is one of them.

Jamie: No

Mick: No

Tony: No

Kay: Some of the Northumberland players wanted us to make the decision for them - if we thought it was okay to go to Potters, then they would follow suit - which is why there were twenty wanting to go. I cannot make that responsibility for some of the people that said yes, because of their age, where they've got not much else in their life other than bowls. Our bowls, as Dean was saying, I can't see our bowls clubs starting until January.

Peter: Same for Durham - we are not opening until after Christmas.

Neil: I think every county and every club and individuals are all going to be working at a different pace. There is no right response to this, it's what fits best for each individual club and county. I think probably all we can do, as the ECBA, is probably take stock at the beginning of 2021, see where counties are at, see where clubs are at, try to get a flavour of what is going on in the country and keep monitoring the situation. Meetings like this will probably be very useful in doing that, when you can come back and say well we've got x number of clubs and y number of clubs that have started up again. We just need to be monitoring that over the next six to nine months potentially, would suggest, and then see where we are probably at March of next year before any decisions can be made.

Tony: The Northern League committees agreed last week when we had a Zoom meeting, we will have one every month, keep check on each other and see how we are getting on. I imagine that the Southern end might be doing much the same.

Neil: I think that is wise, be it every month or every six weeks, I'll have a word with the other officers. I think they'd probably agree on an appropriate time frame, even a twenty minute catch-up, something like this, just to see what's going on in the country. It may well be that things that have been implemented in Cambridgeshire might be helpful for those in Hertfordshire - I think we could probably learn from each other, what is working, what isn't working and there'll come a point where as a group of counties we can start moving together at the same pace, but I think we are quite some time off that yet.

I just want to thank you all for your time this morning and for dialling in, it has been greatly appreciated and I think it has been really useful. We will need to make contact with Bedfordshire to find out what is going on there and I'll get Colin to get in contact with Potters and keep you in the loop in terms of how that conversation has gone and then we'll set a date for a future meeting, four weeks to six weeks time.

Zoom meeting ended at 11.23am