



# *English Carpet Bowls Association*

## **ENGLISH CARPET BOWLS ASSOCIATION**

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the English Carpet Bowls Association held on 7th February 2025

Present: Representatives from Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Durham, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Northumberland, Suffolk and Sunderland

Neil Jolly (Chairman), Pete Cook (Vice Chairman), Pauline Charleton (Secretary), Paul Daniels (Treasurer), Mick Watkins (National Referee)

### **1. Apologies for absence**

None

### **2. Minutes of last meeting**

The minutes were read and agreed as a true record, proposed by Cambridgeshire, seconded by Sunderland.

### **3. Matters Arising from previous minutes**

None

### **4. Correspondence**

None

### **5. Chairman's Report**

Thank you for all attending this online meeting today.

Since our last meeting in September, we've had the National County Championship at Potters, which again ran smoothly. Thank you to Paul for all of his work both before and during the event, and to all of the bowlers for their participation and the spirit in which the games were played. Thanks also to Sunderland for their efforts in running a successful raffle over the weekend.

The event started on the Friday night, with the Inter-County Championship between Durham and Suffolk. This was very much a game of two halves, with Durham leading many of the six games almost all of the way through. However, Suffolk fought back on the final ends for an unlikely 10-2 win.

During the main event on Saturday and Sunday, it was Suffolk and Hertfordshire who made the best starts, but they were quickly pegged back by Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Sunderland. By the end of day one, Suffolk had a three point lead over Hertfordshire, but Sunderland, Norfolk and now Essex were close behind. As Sunday played out, it quickly became a three horse race, between Suffolk, Hertfordshire and Sunderland, but it was Suffolk who were just about able to maintain an advantage and in doing so, retained the title.

Today we can look ahead to our 2025 events and discuss some other matters ahead of our April meeting and AGM.

### **6. Secretary's Report**

Nothing to report.

### **7. Treasurer's Report**

We are currently showing a surplus for the year of £1900, which is about £900 better off than we were at the same time last year.

And with just the insurance left to pay out, we should show a healthy profit, which all comes from increased income from both the Festival and the Nationals.

It's always difficult to compare year-to-year because of the way the income from the Festival straddles two financial years, but for the 2024 Festival we made £2350, compared with £1600 in 2023, and £1700 in 2022, while the Nationals cost us £1300, which was down from £1900 in 2023, and £2400 in 2022.

### **Insurance**

Our policies are due for renewal at the end of the month.

We're still waiting for the renewal quotes from Howden (formerly Endsleigh), but in the meantime we have been recommended to make enquiries with another company (Abbeystone), by both Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire, who were both able to get cheaper quotes.

As a follow-up, Essex asked about the surplus on the accounts and why we need to do anything more than break even.

After several years when we reported losses, we have now reversed that, which was important to do because we need to subsidise the cost of travel to the Nationals, most particularly the Northern counties, and we need to have the ability to increase those subsidies to keep in line with rising costs.

Pete Cook said that we should be looking to use some of that money to help grow awareness of the game, which we are currently trying to do in Suffolk, Hertfordshire, and at ECBA events, by either live-streaming, or posting videos on YouTube, and there is an opportunity to invest in that area.

This led to a wider discussion about trying to grow the game after getting knocked back thanks to the pandemic. Essex had approached their Sports Development Officer, but found it difficult to co-ordinate venues. They also suggested approaching local GP surgeries, with the idea of promoting the game as a way of getting people out and about.

Northumberland advised that they were now starting to get people returning to the game, with new clubs starting up, and increased entries to their competitions.

Bedfordshire suggested approaching U3A.

## **8. Referee's Report**

Nothing specific to report, but we continue to receive enquiries, including one from Wales only this week.

One of the clubs in Bedfordshire closed down recently, but their equipment was quickly snapped up by someone setting up a club in Baumer, Lincolnshire. We have made contact with them.

Bedfordshire asked where carpet bowls was played around the country. Apart from the ECBA member counties, we are aware of non-affiliated teams in West Sussex, Berkshire, Derbyshire, Devon, Kent, Lancashire, Nottinghamshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and Yorkshire.

It was also mentioned that last year Michael Laydon arranged a demonstration in Lincoln at their indoor bowls club, which will be followed-up in March with another event.

## **9. Child Protection Officer's Report**

Nothing to report.

## **10. Competitions**

- a) ECBA Rinks - to be hosted by Norfolk at Littleport Leisure Centre on Sunday 27th April. Entry forms have recently been sent out to the counties and the entries have started to come in.
- b) Festival of Bowls - 28th April to 2nd May at Potters. We have been in touch with Potters for an update on the entries, and are waiting to hear back.

We have received a call from Norway confirming that they will be sending a contingent again this year, numbers have yet to be confirmed, but they expect it will be around the same as last year, about 20.

Looking ahead to next year's Festival event, Potters have already offered us a date, week commencing Monday 27 April, which we will be accepting.

- c) Champion of Champions - 7th & 8th June at Stanley Indoor Bowls Club. Bedfordshire were asked if they would like to send a team or take part in just some of the events, they thought it was unlikely, but will make enquiries.
- d) ECBA Triples - Durham hosting at Coxhoe Village Hall on 14th September.
- e) Nationals - 24th-27th October at Potters. Bedfordshire were asked if they were still interested, they reported that they had 20 players who were definitely interested. We will now contact Potters to advise that we have all nine counties wishing to attend. Potters can then send out their accommodation paperwork to the county contacts.

## **11. Any Other Business**

- a) Durham submitted a proposal to change the rules around playing short at the Nationals, which has been circulated to all the counties and will be discussed in full at the AGM.

However, since that proposal was for a minimum of 22 players, and Bedfordshire have only 20 players at the moment, and will need to commit to the event before the AGM, Pete Cook said that there needed to be some discussion on the subject before the next meeting.

There was a long discussion on the merits of penalties, and the perceived possible advantage some teams have gained in the past by playing short. However as an example, when Sunderlands 2024 scores were looked at, the points scored by their rinks were greater than the points scored by their triples (playing one player short).

The possibility of having a pool of players from those at Potters just there to support, from which to call upon, was raised, as has been the case in previous years. And while there is some merit to that idea, whether or not a team has sufficient players to compete, is something that needs to be established in advance, rather than leaving it to the day, only to find no one is available.

The Chairman expressed the opinion that we need to balance having a level playing field with the need to ensure and encourage as many counties to enter as possible, and that if we see a drop in numbers, the feasibility of running the event at Potters will be called into question.

Ultimately, any decision on rule changes would have to wait for the AGM, but the discussion should have given everyone food for thought.

- b) The Chairman referred to the questionnaire which each county had been asked to complete, and said that he believed all the responses were now in. He would review the responses and compile a document that would be circulated. This will give everyone a better picture of carpet bowls in England and enable counties to see what each other do, to potentially use in their own county scene.
- c) A revised Health and Safety policy, which had been reviewed by Sam Runnacles, has been circulated to everyone, and would be discussed at the AGM.
- d) The ECBA and Suffolk have obtained, and shared the cost of a set of coloured woods, which will help improve the coverage of matches when filmed for YouTube.
- e) The ECBA were contacted by a sports centre who had a large amount of equipment, including several carpets, which was going to be dumped if they couldn't find someone to take it. We therefore arranged to pick it up, and it's currently being stored, although we haven't yet had a chance to look at the carpets to

see what condition they are in, although from a quick glance they certainly seem to be in a usable state.

**12. Date of Next Meeting/AGM**

Saturday 12th April 2025 at The Brentwood Hotel, Rotherham (Meeting at midday, followed by AGM), subject to availability. The Secretary to make enquiries with the Hotel and make the booking.

The meeting closed at 12.25pm.