



BCGBA

Development Report

December 2025



BCGBA CEO Foreword

Dan Newton

Since taking up the role of Chief Executive in October, I have had the opportunity to better understand both the strengths of crown green bowls and the significant development work already taking place across the country. This report provides a clear snapshot of that activity and highlights the commitment shown by clubs, counties, volunteers and partners in supporting the sport's future.

The first year of the National Development Strategy has been an important period of transition and progress. Development activity has expanded across junior and youth participation, community delivery, coaching and inclusion, creating stronger foundations for long-term growth. The introduction of the £1 Player Development Fee has been a key enabler of this work, allowing investment in development at a level not previously achievable. I am grateful to counties and clubs for their cooperation and support in implementing this change.

As we move into the next phase of the strategy, the focus must now shift to consolidation, clarity and sustainability. Strong governance, effective partnerships and a clear understanding of where development investment has the greatest impact will be essential. Listening carefully to clubs and counties, supporting volunteers and aligning development activity with long-term priorities will remain central to our approach.

I would like to thank everyone involved in delivering the work outlined in this report, particularly the National Development Officer and the network of County Development Officers and volunteers across the country. Their efforts are shaping a more inclusive, resilient and future-focused sport, and I look forward to continuing this journey together.

Dan Newton

BCGBA Board Foreword

Steve Clamp (Region One)

The first year of the British Crown Green Bowling Association's National Development Strategy has been really positive. As with any period of change, 2025 brought its fair share of adjustments, not least as Counties and bowlers embraced the introduction of the new £1 Player Fee.

Despite the inevitable teething moments, the response from across the sport has been overwhelmingly positive. Our sincere thanks go to every County for their hard work in collecting and processing the fee, as these efforts have directly supported the delivery of development work on a scale our sport has never seen before.

As promised within the National Development Strategy, at the start of the season Counties were equipped with an extensive suite of development resources. This equipment has already begun opening doors, engaging new bowlers and showcasing the sport within local communities, and the second batch of development equipment will be available to Counties ahead of the 2026 season, enabling even more projects, events and opportunities to take shape.

None of this progress would have been possible without the tireless work of Jayne McKay, National Development Officer, and the dedicated network of County Development Officers. Their collective energy, creativity and commitment are evident throughout this report, which highlights just a small percentage of the inspirational work happening on greens, in Clubs and across communities nationwide.

From the Board's perspective, the year has also been pivotal in strengthening partnerships. Renewed collaboration with the Bowls Development Alliance and ongoing dialogue with fellow governing bodies have created a more unified and coordinated approach to developing the sport. A standout achievement of this shared ambition is involvement with the Youth Sport Trust, through which bowls is now recognised as a school sport within the national curriculum.

Although Year One has laid a strong foundation, this is only the beginning. With ringfenced development funds secured, 2026 promises further growth as new projects and initiatives are rolled out across the country. Thank you to everyone who has supported, contributed to and believed in the National Development Strategy. Together, we are shaping a brighter, more sustainable future for crown green bowls.

National Development Overview

Jayne Mckay - National Development Officer

Year One of BCGBA's National Development Strategy has focused on listening, learning and delivery. It began with the National Club Development Survey, ensuring development activity was evidence-led and shaped by the real experiences of Clubs and Counties. The findings informed early priorities, including governance support, safeguarding signposting and the creation of practical resources such as the standard club constitution, giving Clubs clearer foundations for future development and funding. This foundation was built upon through national initiatives such as Bowls Big Weekend and Bowls for Health, where Development Strategy equipment flowed between Counties and Clubs to support taster sessions, junior activity, wellbeing programmes and inclusive delivery. Together, these initiatives demonstrated the impact of coordinated national planning combined with strong local delivery, and showed how shared resources can be used flexibly to reach different audiences, support physical and mental wellbeing, and strengthen community engagement through bowls.

From mid-season onwards, increasing emphasis has been placed on PPOSS (Player, Pitch and Outside Sport Strategy) to ensure Crown Green Bowls is properly recognised within wider facilities and participation planning. Completion of consultancy and facilities surveys remains essential, as these formally record the existence of Clubs, the standard and availability of greens, and where provision is oversubscribed or under pressure, helping to protect facilities and support future investment. A significant strand of work during the year has been delivered in partnership with the Youth Sport Trust. Through this collaboration, over 40 School Games Organisers were trained in Coventry, raising awareness of bowls and its role within school sport. All bowls codes are now working together to design a shared pathway that enables Clubs to engage more effectively with schools, with representatives from Crown Green Bowls actively contributing to ensure the format, facilities and culture of the game are properly reflected.

Alongside school engagement, partnership working has extended into community youth provision. Collaboration with Derbyshire and the Scout movement to establish a route to a Bowls Badge has complemented school-based activity, linking education and uniformed youth organisations and creating additional, realistic entry points into junior bowls. At the centre of all delivery are the County Development Officers. Their commitment, adaptability and local knowledge have translated national strategy into meaningful local action across club development, youth and junior bowls, coaching support, inclusion and community engagement. Often working alongside full-time employment and voluntary roles, CDOs have been instrumental in building trust with Clubs and ensuring development activity reflects local need. My sincere thanks go to the County Development Officers, Club volunteers, partner organisations and the Board for their continued support and collaboration. Together, we have established strong foundations for Year Two, with clearer pathways, stronger partnerships and growing confidence in how bowls can develop sustainably.

Year One has established strong foundations for delivery, collaboration and sustainable growth.

Role in Crown Green Bowls Development

The Bowls Development Alliance (BDA) brings the bowls community together, working across England to support clubs, volunteers and National Governing Bodies. Their focus is on helping bowls grow in a way that is supportive, inclusive and sustainable. From guiding clubs through development planning and strengthening governance, to improving inclusion and ensuring people feel welcome when they step onto a green, the BDA plays a key role in supporting clubs at every stage of their journey.

At the heart of the BDA's work is a commitment to sustaining, growing and developing the sport in partnership with the bowls family. For many crown green clubs, this begins with practical tools such as the Club Health Checker, which helps clubs understand what is working well and where targeted support could make a difference. This approach is rooted in real-world experience and focuses on achievable, club-led improvement.

The impact of this support can already be seen within crown green bowls. The Helsby Bowls Club case study is a strong example, where a simple "come and try it" session developed into regular weekly activity, attracting around 40 participants and creating a welcoming, thriving club environment. Many of these players now take part in summer and winter leagues, supported by committed volunteers and clear club organisation.

The BDA's work is delivered through close collaboration with counties and clubs, supported by its lead officers, who help share learning from case studies and ongoing projects, including recent work in NL&F. Alongside this, the BDA offers accessible programmes such as Bowls Big Weekend, Bowls for Health, Weeks of Learning and the Community Club Hub programme, as well as partnerships with organisations including the Youth Sport Trust. Together, these initiatives give clubs the confidence to grow, welcome new participants and strengthen their role within the community.



Safeguarding policies, Club Health Checker and development resources are available via the Bowls Development Alliance website.

Role in Crown Green Bowls Coaching and Workforce Development

Coach Bowls, working in partnership with BCGBA, has continued to deliver its national coaching programme throughout the year. The priority remains ensuring that Clubs have access to appropriately qualified people who can deliver safe, consistent and enjoyable sessions. As part of this ongoing commitment, 151 coaches renewed their membership during the year, helping to maintain the standards required for active coaches within the sport.

The minimum requirements for coaching remain unchanged and continue to underpin safe delivery across Clubs. These include holding a recognised Coach Bowls qualification, insurance through annual membership, an Enhanced DBS certificate and up-to-date safeguarding training. Together, these requirements provide Clubs, Counties and participants with confidence in the quality and consistency of coaching provision.

Between October 2024 and October 2025, 11 Level 1 courses were delivered, with 73 coaches achieving competency. Level 2 coaches who were already partway through their qualification also completed the final elements required. A Level 1 course is currently running in Blackpool and is due to finish in February, with further Level 1 courses planned in Crewe, Warrington, Rossendale and Preston. Additional dates are already being scheduled for 2026 to ensure ongoing access to training.

Coach Bowls has also highlighted the importance of Continuing Professional Development as part of long-term workforce support. Although CPD Days did not take place in 2025, planning is underway for 2026 to provide opportunities for coaches to update and refresh their practice.

To support future course planning, Coach Bowls has launched a short national survey. This survey collects postcodes only and is not a declaration of interest in coaching or a sign-up for a course. The data will be used to identify geographical clusters and ensure future Level 1 and Level 2 courses are delivered in areas where they are most needed. Coaches, Clubs and Counties are encouraged to contribute via the QR code below.



Coach Bowls workforce planning survey

Coaching qualifications, safeguarding requirements and workforce development information are available via Coach Bowls.



National Partner - ESMBA

Role in Supporting Indoor and Year-Round Bowls Activity

Short mat bowling continues to grow, and the ESMBA wants every club—including Crown Green clubs that run short mat indoors—to feel supported, valued and connected to a friendly national community. Registering with the ESMBA offers reassurance, guidance and recognition, helping clubs focus on providing enjoyable sessions throughout the year.

For Crown Green clubs, short mat can be a practical way to keep activity going over the winter months when outdoor greens close. It allows clubs to make the most of indoor spaces and gives members, beginners and families a simple, friendly introduction to bowls. Many clubs also find that short mat helps retain players who prefer indoor play or those who want a more accessible format.

Short mat also works well for taster sessions, wellbeing activity and community groups, helping clubs reach new audiences in a simple, friendly way and supporting clubs to grow their indoor offer. The ESMBA provides practical governance support, including constitution templates, guidance on club roles and help with policies that keep clubs running smoothly. Safeguarding advice is also available to help clubs create safe and inclusive environments for everyone who takes part.

The ESMBA works closely with Crown Green Bowls and the Bowls Development Alliance to strengthen the School Games Offer and link school-based activity to local clubs. Crown Green clubs offering short mat are included within these pathways, giving them visibility with juniors and families looking for winter opportunities.

For clubs wishing to develop or formalise their indoor activity, the ESMBA can also provide advice, setup guidance and support with registration.



Governance guidance, safeguarding support and registration advice are available via the English Short Mat Bowls Association.



County Development Overview 2024–25

Following feedback from the National Development Survey, youth development became a key focus area for Cumbria this season, leading to a strong first year of structured junior activity. Clubs across the county opened their greens to local schools and uniformed groups, creating multiple entry points for young people and their families to experience Crown Green Bowls.

Salhouse BC delivered weekly sessions for Year 4 and 5 pupils from four primary schools, while King Alfred BC ran an eight-week programme for Year 6 pupils from South Walney Juniors. North Scale BC welcomed cubs, scouts, guides and brownies, and Windermere BC and Abbot Hall in Kendal hosted school and youth-group taster sessions supported by Cumbria's County Coaches. Levens BC has also been actively involved, introducing juniors to their first league matches and creating opportunities for families to experience the sport together.

Young players took part in local open doubles competitions using the coloured bowls provided through the Bowls Buddies kit, giving them suitable equipment and confidence as they learned the game. These experiences have encouraged family involvement and provided a supportive, enjoyable route into the sport for new young bowlers.

This has also been Cumbria's first year receiving development equipment, including eight sets of Taylor's Junior Bowls and the full Bowls Buddies resource package. This investment has enabled clubs to offer more accessible and engaging junior sessions. County Coach Ian Collier delivered regular coaching at Endmoor and Arnside, supporting both newer and more experienced bowlers to develop the skills needed to progress, with some moving into senior league teams for the first time. The combination of new equipment, committed coaching and enthusiastic clubs has created a strong foundation for sustainable junior development in the years ahead.





County Development Overview 2024–25

Governance has progressed well across Cheshire, with clubs adopting the new BCGBA constitution template and the Bowls Development Alliance safeguarding policies. Four clubs have already applied for development funding, with Winnington Park set to improve its disabled facilities. The County Secretary and Development Officer have attended league and association meetings across the region, supporting clubs to understand how to access equipment, funding and wider development support. As the new development policy begins its first year, this early progress provides a strong base for continued improvement.

Cheshire Junior Bowls has shown real momentum this year, with rising participation, new faces and excellent support from coaches, parents and local clubs. A major highlight was the launch of the Hartford Primary Schools Competition, which began with weekly indoor and outdoor sessions using Bowls Buddies, followed by a successful finals day on Hartford's green using the Taylor's Junior Bowls.

Juniors also took part in a full programme of activity, including the six-a-side at Grange Sports, the Cheshire Junior Merit, the Mid Cheshire Merit / Stan Frith Trophy and a friendly fixture against Greater Manchester. With increasing numbers of young players engaging, and strong backing from clubs such as Cuddington, Owley Wood and Castle Sports, the junior pathway is building a promising foundation for future development.

Coaching development has also moved forward positively, supported by a growing network of volunteers working with players of all ages. A key milestone was the county's first new cohort of 12 coaches, who qualified at Owley Wood and added much-needed capacity across clubs in the area. The county continues to promote Coach Bowls qualifications, uphold strong safeguarding standards and provide practical guidance to clubs as they develop their coaching offer. Through continued investment in new coaches and collaboration between clubs, Cheshire is establishing a solid platform for long-term coaching growth.



County Development Officer: Jayne McKay

County Development Overview 2024–25

Derbyshire held its first ever series of Roadshow Forums this year, giving Club Secretaries the opportunity to meet face-to-face with county officers and discuss their development needs. Sessions were held in Darley Dale for the North and at Derby Leisure Pavilion for the South, with 44 clubs represented by 71 delegates. Discussions highlighted shared priorities across the county, including funding advice, recruitment support, coaching needs and the desire for clearer communication.

County officers presented findings from recent Club Surveys, introduced the new Development Plan template and outlined the support available through the County Development Fund and BCGBA. The open, two-way conversations were extremely valuable, helping to identify common barriers faced by clubs and highlighting the significant number of social bowlers not currently captured within county statistics. As Derbyshire moves into 2026, there is a strong commitment to ensure that "deeds match words" as clubs begin to take their next steps in development planning.

Alongside the Roadshows and the ongoing High Peak project, the county has explored how cluster clubs can share coaching support and equipment to strengthen local delivery. In the Derbyshire High Peak area, a new Section Development Officer was appointed at the start of 2025 to strengthen links between local clubs and county support. Working across the Buxton, Longdendale and North Derbyshire sections, he brought together five clubs to deliver a rolling programme of two-hour taster sessions between April and June, supported by shared equipment, clear structures and local promotion.

The sessions were well attended and positively received by both volunteers and participants, leading to increased membership and strong feedback from clubs. The cluster approach between neighbouring clubs proved particularly effective, enabling shared equipment, joint coaching and stronger collaboration. This model is seen as a key area for further development in 2026, alongside continued work to better recognise and represent social bowlers within county development planning.



County Development Officers: (North) Graham Rudd & (South) Neil Brown



County Development Overview 2024–25

It has been a very busy and positive year across Greater Manchester, with development activity taking place in every borough. More than 130 events were supported, including junior sessions, club open days, community festivals and league activities. Events such as Swinton Sounds, VE Day celebrations, beer festivals and park days introduced over 500 people to bowls, helping engage families and adults under the age of fifty.

Across the county, eleven clubs delivered regular weekly sessions, with groups including Scouts, schools and U3A taking part. The Scouts programme alone involved more than 236 young people and culminated in a follow-up World Cup of Bowls. Throughout the year, clubs received practical support including coaching guidance, action planning, community links and funding advice. In total, more than 26 clubs and leagues were supported, with a strong focus on junior development and increasing participation.

Several clubs ran “have-a-go” days, charity events and novice competitions, contributing to an increase of more than 250 members during 2025. Further growth is anticipated in 2026 as activity continues to expand. Work also continued with diverse community groups across the county. Some areas, including Rochdale, require additional support around green access and club sustainability, and this remains a priority for the year ahead.

Planning for 2026 is already well underway, with junior training, school sessions, open days, festivals and community events scheduled across all boroughs. Key activities include Easter fun days, parks sessions, Scouts programmes, Age UK dates, corporate events and Bowls Big Weekend activity. Junior programmes will run in Hyde, Rochdale and Ashton, alongside Junior County, Junior Federation, North Lancs fixtures and a programme of open competitions. With clubs working collaboratively and community festivals such as Sounds Festival, Princess Park and Irlam open days continuing to raise the sport's profile, 2026 is shaping up to be another strong year for Greater Manchester development.



County Development Officer: Josh Pendlebury



Country Development Overview 2024–25

The Manx Youth Games once again demonstrated why Crown Green Bowls continues to thrive on the island. Children choose their sport in January and train weekly from March for just £1 per session. The young bowlers were a pleasure to watch, and the commitment and encouragement shown by families plays a vital role in supporting their participation.

Sessions are delivered using fun, activity-based games such as Target Bowls, Bowls Golf and Obstacle Bowls, helping children build confidence while learning core skills. Many clubs continue junior sessions beyond the Games, with the Junior League offering further opportunities to stay involved. Participation has grown steadily, reflecting the strength of the junior pathway now in place.

The Games rely heavily on the commitment of the coaching team, who give their time each week to deliver safe, enjoyable and motivating sessions. Trained coaches are central to the success of the Manx Youth Games, creating positive experiences that keep children engaged and ensure the programme can continue to operate to a high standard.

The Isle of Man Development Plan focuses on building a sustainable coaching workforce, expanding junior sessions, supporting clubs to deliver taster opportunities and providing clear pathways into league and higher-level play. Although the island has a relatively small coaching base, the qualification of five new Level 1 coaches and one new Level 2 coach represents a significant step forward. Coaching remains a key priority, with the aim for every club to have at least one qualified coach and for additional Level 2 coaches to support larger programmes.

By increasing the number of qualified coaches and strengthening junior provision, the island is now in a stronger position than ever, with more sessions, increased participation and a positive outlook for the future of Crown Green Bowls.



Youth Games Video



Country Development Officer: Tracy Moore



County Development Overview 2024–25

Lancashire delivered a strong year of development activity in 2025, including hosting a Crown Green Coaching Course at Ormskirk, delivered through Coach Bowls and certified by First4Sport. These courses provide participants with the skills and structure needed to coach bowls safely and confidently, supporting clubs with recruitment and new member engagement. To help reduce barriers to entry, Lancashire CCGBA introduced a bursary covering one quarter of the course fee, in addition to the 50% bursary already provided by BCGBA.

The county has continued to strengthen its online development offer, with updated webpages covering club development and funding opportunities. A dedicated Funding Guide has been created and published on the Lancashire website, providing clubs with clear, practical information on a range of funding sources and how to approach them. This resource has already supported several clubs seeking assistance with local projects.

Lancashire also worked closely with schools and community partners throughout the year. This included supporting the South Ribble Sports Partnership with its primary school competitions using Bowls Buddies equipment. Bowls Big Weekend was again promoted through the County website, with a number of Lancashire clubs choosing to take part in 2025 as a way of raising awareness and welcoming new participants onto their greens.

Health and wellbeing activity continued to develop, with the Bowls for Health / Bowls for Fun programme running again at Ormskirk BC. Six planned sessions attracted 39 registered participants, with an average weekly attendance of around 25. The £3 per-session model proved sustainable and contributed directly to new club memberships, demonstrating strong potential for future roll-out to other clubs. During the year, several clubs contacted the County for development advice, including a visit to Horwich RMI to support plans to attract new bowlers. Lancashire also contributed to multiple Playing Pitch Strategies across the county, including Sefton, Wigan, West Lancashire and Central Lancashire, helping to ensure Crown Green Bowls is recognised within wider sports and facilities planning.



County Development Officer: Ian Gill



County Development Overview 2024–25

It has been a busy and rewarding year for Merseyside Crown Green Bowls, with strong progress across coaching, health and community engagement. A major highlight has been supporting six bowlers to qualify as Level 1 coaches, representing a significant step forward for the long-term sustainability of the sport in the county. An increased coaching workforce enables more safe, welcoming sessions in clubs and parks and provides a stronger foundation for projects such as health programmes, open days and community outreach.

A key development this year has been the delivery of Bowls for Health activity at Walton Hall Park. Working in partnership with Urban Health CIC, Active Liverpool, Liverpool City Council and local residents, funding was secured to run three consecutive courses on a council green. Each programme ran over six weeks and included gentle coaching alongside a short talk and health check delivered by a healthcare professional. The sessions were designed to support people living with depression, offering a welcoming space, positive activity and an opportunity to reconnect with others, including those transitioning out of psychiatric care.

Following the success at Walton Hall Park, additional Bowls for Health courses have been delivered at other Merseyside clubs, with further growth expected as more qualified coaches become available. Funding applications have also been submitted to extend the scheme into new areas of the county, supporting wider access to health and wellbeing activity through bowls. The Development Officer has also worked closely with Wirral Borough Council's Active Wirral and Collabor8 teams, promoting Crown Green Bowls at community events across the borough. This partnership is now leading to the production of new promotional pamphlets and banners, developed by the council's print team, to position bowls clearly as a "Sport for Everyone" across Merseyside.

Alongside this positive development work, the county demonstrated strong resilience and community spirit following serious vandalism at a local clubhouse. A crowdfunding appeal raised several thousand pounds, enabling repairs and a successful reopening event attended by council representatives and local press. Overall, the year has been marked by strong partnerships, community impact and a positive platform for further growth in 2026.



County Development Officer: Bill Dow



County Development Overview 2024–25

The Fun at Bowls (FAB) Community Group, delivered by the Philip Wright Crown Green Bowling Academy in Colne, has demonstrated the positive impact of inclusive Crown Green Bowls. Responding to a lack of opportunities for disabled people, the Academy secured over £30,000 in funding from Active Lancashire, Sport England, the National Lottery, local councillors and businesses. This funding enabled the purchase of adaptive equipment, including specialist wheelchairs, bowling arms, walking frames and lifters, supporting inclusive participation.

Weekly FAB sessions now attract between 30 and 40 participants and are delivered by qualified coaches and volunteers. Sessions are designed to be flexible and participant-led, offering choice, social interaction and a welcoming environment. Feedback has highlighted improved wellbeing, increased physical activity and strong social benefits. In its first year, FAB engaged more than 50 people with disabilities and gained national recognition, inspiring other clubs, including the Blackpool & Wyre Academy, to develop similar programmes.

Junior development has also been a key focus. The Pendle Primary Schools Bowls Project engages children across 14 schools, using Bowls Buddies kits and a “train-the-teacher” approach to deliver bowls in classrooms, halls and playgrounds. Inclusive competitions and festivals, supported by the School Games Organiser, have involved over 500 children, including SEND pupils. Weekly activity helps build confidence, teamwork and physical literacy, creating a sustainable pathway into bowls. Similar projects at Fox Lane and Longton BC have further strengthened junior participation locally.

Grassroots bowls across North Lancashire & Fylde has continued to grow through the Burnley Bowls Partnership and Burnley FC's Extra Time Active programme. This collaboration has enabled people of all ages and abilities to enjoy bowls in a relaxed, supportive setting with qualified coaching. The programme supports improvements in balance, coordination, mobility, confidence and social connection, providing an accessible introduction to the sport and promoting year-round, inclusive participation across the Burnley area.



County Development Officer: Steve Clamp

County Development Overview 2024–25

Development activity across North Midlands and Potteries and District during the year has focused on supporting junior and introductory bowls through the distribution of National Development Strategy equipment. Bowls Buddies resources and Thomas Taylor junior bowls, funded through the £1 Player / Club Development Levy, have been made available to support clubs in delivering accessible, engaging activity for young people and new players. This equipment can be borrowed free of charge by clubs via their County or District Association, providing a practical foundation for junior development.

Within the Potteries, clubs and volunteers have been supported to introduce junior bowls activity using the development kits, with junior players and members able to engage directly with the new equipment. The focus has been on encouraging early participation, building confidence and supporting clubs to explore how junior activity can be developed locally. In North Midlands, junior players and volunteers have similarly been introduced to the development equipment, with clubs using the opportunity to consider how the resources can support future junior sessions and wider engagement. The introduction of junior bowls has helped raise awareness of development opportunities and provided a positive starting point for building junior pathways within the area.

Alongside local club activity, Paul Tonks from North Midlands has played a key role in wider youth engagement work, supporting the training of 40 School Games Organisers in Coventry. This work used the new Youth Sport Trust Games cards and was delivered through cross-code collaboration with the Bowls Development Alliance and the English Short Mat Bowling Association, helping to raise awareness of bowls and strengthen links between schools and clubs.

Across both North Midlands and Potteries and District, this activity has demonstrated the enthusiasm of junior players, volunteers and county representatives, alongside the potential impact of development equipment when it is embedded locally. Looking ahead, both areas would benefit from the appointment of a County Development Officer to support clubs in maximising the use of development resources, coordinating junior activity and strengthening pathways for sustained participation.



County Development Officers: North Midlands- Paul Tonks, Potteries - Vacant



County Development Overview 2024–25

This year has been one of energy and community effort, with junior activity expanding across clubs and new opportunities emerging at every level. A number of clubs have run Summer clubs & at Bridgnorth, three qualified coaches supported every Summer Club session, creating consistency and offering families a welcoming experience. This collaborative approach continues to support the county's growing junior base. The development work at Bridgnorth supported the club's first in-house junior shield for nearly twenty years and laid the groundwork for entering a juniors-only team into the local league in 2026.

Years of investment in coaching have played a crucial role in strengthening Shropshire's junior pathway, with clubs working to build clear and supportive structures for new bowlers. Coaches and volunteers have delivered age-appropriate skills work, award-scheme activities and regular practice sessions, helping young players develop confidence in a friendly environment.

A significant increase in competitions for juniors has brought many young players together for the first time, with age-group categories encouraging participation across all ages and ability levels. County-wide, the rise in juniors-only competitions has brought many new bowlers into view and supported the continued growth of the youth squad.

A Shropshire league has also had its first juniors-only team competing in a league, well supported by parents.

Shropshire has continued to emphasise youth participation this year, with clubs creating friendly and welcoming opportunities for younger players. This focus on consistency, coaching and youth-first opportunities provides a strong foundation for Shropshire's junior development moving into 2026.



County Development Officer: Pauline Wilson



County Development Overview 2024–25

2025 has been an active year for South Yorkshire, beginning with the launch of the BCGBA National Development Strategy and the introduction of the £1 Development Fee. The county received both a Club Development Kit and a Junior and School Development Kit, which have been loaned to several clubs to support open days, taster sessions and school activity, including Thorncliffe, Tickhill, Denby Dale, Darton, Worsbrough Dale and Royston Bowling Clubs.

Coaching development has progressed positively, with an early-season Coach Bowls Level 1 course seeing nine new coaches achieve their qualification. Ecclesfield Park Bowling Club hosted the practical and assessment days, and the County Development Officer also achieved his Level 2 coaching award during the year. Clubs have been encouraged to ensure Coach Bowls membership, insurance and DBS checks are up to date in preparation for 2026.

Schools bowls activity continues to grow across Sheffield and Barnsley. During the year, Ecclesfield Park, Meersbrook Park and Hollinsend Parks Bowling Clubs hosted Sheffield Schools Bowls Festivals, while additional events took place in Barnsley at Penistone and District, Darton, Worsbrough Dale, Central Bowling Club and Royston. Planning meetings have already taken place for further festivals next season, with provisional dates in June at Meersbrook Park, Hollinsend Park and Ecclesfield Park, alongside a possible inter-school teams event.

Meersbrook Park Bowling Club continues to demonstrate the impact of sustained community engagement. Following significant restoration work, crowdfunding and a "full community approach," membership has grown from 13 to over 80. The club has welcomed visits from schools, day centres, mental health projects, Parkinson's UK and a Special School, embedding the club firmly within the local community. Looking ahead to 2026, further development activity is planned, including additional school festivals at Meersbrook Park, Hollinsend Park and Ecclesfield Park, support for clubs at Royston and Thurgoland, and continued work with School Games Organisers to expand bowls opportunities across Barnsley.



County Development Officer: Steve Hawksworth



County Development Overview 2024–25

Beacon Academy in Walsall is the first school in England to have its own Crown Green Bowling Green, creating a new club at the heart of a school community. Since the green was built in 2023, more than 500 children have taken part in PE lessons and after-school bowls sessions, embedding bowls into everyday school life.

The club was founded with the aim of bringing people together through bowling and making the sport accessible to pupils, teachers and the wider community. Beacon Bowling Club will enter a league for the first time in 2026, with affiliation to Staffordshire confirmed. Jay Holcroft, who began bowling at the age of eight and has taught at Beacon Academy for 12 years, first approached the Headteacher in 2023 with the idea of building a school bowling green. Working within a budget of £8,000, Jay rebuilt the ditches and fencing, purchased junior bowls, Bowls Buddies and additional equipment, and began developing a sustainable school-based club.

Now a full-time PE teacher working across nine schools, Jay delivers bowls taster sessions and actively promotes the sport. His two aims were clear: to get children on the green during PE lessons and to create a team capable of entering a league. Both ambitions are now being realised. The 2026 team will include teachers, pupils, family members and volunteers, reflecting the inclusive nature of the club. As Jay notes, some of the children least expected to excel at sport have thrived, highlighting the accessibility and inclusivity of bowls.

As the club moves into the next phase of development, Beacon Bowling Club continues to grow. More than 1,000 children are expected to use the green during 2026 through PE lessons, after-school clubs and inter-school activity. The club is currently fundraising to improve the green surface, enhance facilities and support ongoing running costs, with the aim of expanding opportunities for pupils, families and local residents.



Beacon BC



County Development Overview 2024–25

Warwick & Worcestershire continued key development work throughout 2025, with strong attendance at Victoria Park sessions in Tipton. Participation regularly exceeded the available equipment, with examples including 12 participants attending on 4 November. The programme is recognised within the Sandwell Playing Pitch Strategy, and passers-by, including walkers and cyclists, have regularly joined in "give-it-a-go" sessions, helping to broaden engagement within the local community.

Interest has grown steadily, with participants now asking about forming a club and joining leagues, alongside renewed interest from former players. Improvements in pavilion access have widened opportunities for community use, supporting the longer-term sustainability of activity. Victoria Park sessions began following meetings with Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and support from WWCBA, who loaned equipment to enable delivery. The restored green hosted its first session in July with 12 participants, followed by weekly groups of between 5 and 15, with the aim of the group becoming self-sustaining in 2026.

Looking ahead, plans include extending this delivery model to additional greens in partnership with the Active Wellbeing Society, and supporting the Hydes Road Project. This forms part of a £1.65m redevelopment that will reinstate crown green bowls and help rebuild community activity. WWCBA priorities also include subsidised safeguarding training, coaching support for new-player events, junior engagement and wider community participation linked to the Sandwell Playing Pitch Strategy. Coaches have supported open days and Bowls' Big Weekend activity across the area.

A funding request has been submitted to support the purchase of additional equipment, including bowls bags, measures, footers, jack cases and adult bowls, with flexibility built in to reduce costs if required. Feedback from participants demonstrates strong outcomes, with 70% reporting increased confidence to try new things and 50% learning something new. All participants reported improvements in mental wellbeing, reduced isolation and increased physical activity, with many feeling more confident using local green spaces and encouraging others to join. Participants consistently describe the sessions as relaxed and sociable, suitable for both beginners and returning bowlers, reinforcing the value of bowls as an accessible and inclusive community activity.



County Development Officer: Phil Ellett



Country Development Overview 2024–25

Clubs across Wales are seeing the benefits of working together to look after their greens and manage costs more effectively. Regular green-maintenance days have made a real difference, with volunteers giving their time to keep playing surfaces in good condition. This hands-on approach has strengthened pride within clubs while reducing the cost of maintaining greens.

The WCGBA has also supported clubs to secure discounts from local suppliers, enabling the purchase of essential materials and equipment at reduced prices. This combination of volunteer effort and practical cost-saving has developed into a sustainable model for clubs across Wales. Green-maintenance seminars and shared learning opportunities continue to grow, giving clubs greater confidence in caring for their facilities. These sessions help volunteers understand green care, identify issues early and plan improvements throughout the season.

This work aligns closely with the WCGBA's wider development priorities set out in the 2026–2030 Development Plan. The plan focuses on improving governance, strengthening youth engagement, supporting affordable volunteer-led maintenance and increasing visibility within local communities. Clubs are encouraged to work collaboratively, share equipment where possible and pool knowledge to support long-term sustainability.

The Development Plan aims to deliver steady, realistic progress by helping clubs grow membership, reduce costs and provide a welcoming experience for both new and existing bowlers. During the year, Wales also used its development fund to design and print promotional leaflets to help clubs advertise their sessions locally and attract new participants. This practical support has helped raise the profile of bowls in community spaces and reach people who may not have previously engaged with the sport.

Combined with volunteer-led maintenance and shared support, these initiatives are helping clubs across Wales build confidence and continue to grow the game in a sustainable way.



Country Development Officer: Simon Walker



County Development Overview 2024–25

Silsden P.F. continues to shine as a true community club. During the school holidays, the club introduced bowls to children through sessions linked to Silsden Primary School PTA, supported by Skipton Building Society, who funded Bowls Buddies equipment. The sessions were extremely well received, and the club has been welcomed back to deliver further activity. Alongside this, Silsden P.F. runs regular "open to all" sessions, encouraging families and new bowlers to try the sport in a relaxed environment with no equipment required. A further donation of Bowls Buddies from Skipton Building Society is helping even more young people get involved, reinforcing the club's welcoming and inclusive approach.

Harehills Park Bowling Club in Leeds is another strong example of community engagement. The club is highly active online, using Facebook, Instagram and TikTok to promote bowls and community activity throughout the year. As a designated Leeds Warm Space, Harehills Park offers a friendly and inclusive environment for everyone, whether visiting socially or taking part in bowling activity. Their posts highlight how the club brings people together, from winter bowling sessions to community events such as Hello Hip Hop and Spot Park Jam. Students from The King's Trust Programme have also supported activity at the club, helping around the greens and taking part in bowls sessions themselves. This further demonstrates the club's open-door approach and its ability to engage people of all ages and backgrounds.

Looking ahead, Yorkshire is seeking to appoint three County Development Leads to support clubs across the county. These roles will focus on helping clubs grow through practical, hands-on support, including Bowls for Health delivery, social media guidance, funding advice, green maintenance support and the development of welcoming, inclusive sessions. All officers will be supported by the Yorkshire County Team and the National Development Officer, ensuring clubs have access to guidance, advice and fresh ideas when needed.

Clubs interested in these roles, or with development projects they would like support with, are encouraged to make contact via Steve, ceo@yccgba.org.uk. This is an opportunity to turn a passion for bowls into meaningful support that benefits clubs, leagues and the wider county.



Country Development Officer: Vacant

Development Overview 2024–25

British Parks continues to focus on the growth of junior and youth bowling, with increasing numbers of young players taking part each season. The development pathway now includes Junior and 18–25 Merits, alongside competitive 5-a-side and 10-a-side team events. These opportunities allow players to build confidence, gain experience and feel part of a wider bowling community, marking a key area of progress for the organisation.

In 2025, British Parks welcomed several new counties, including Warwick & Worcester CBA, North Midlands CCGBA, Wales and the Isle of Man. This expansion has strengthened competition and widened opportunities for young players to compete, develop and progress through the pathway. The year also marked the 10th anniversary of the Women's Merit, and county teams have now moved to gender- and age-neutral selections, reinforcing fairness and inclusivity across all competitions.

Players across all counties benefit from a structured programme of activity, with events taking place every third Sunday throughout the season, alongside club competitions and veteran team fixtures. This consistent calendar provides regular opportunities for bowlers of all ages and abilities to stay engaged and competitive.

British Parks has also appointed a new Development Officer, Darren Clutton (North Staffordshire Parks), who will lead junior-focused growth. His plans align with the BCGBA National Development Strategy for 2026–2027, supporting clear and accessible pathways for young players entering the sport. The 2026 season is set to be one of the busiest to date, beginning on 19 April with the Juniors in North Shropshire and concluding on 4 October with the Open Pairs in the East Midlands. Between these dates, a full programme of competitive and development opportunities will take place across the country.

British Parks continues to champion talent, widen participation and support all those who play, from juniors and new bowlers through to experienced county players and veterans.



Country Development Officer: Darren Clutton
General Enquiries: ceobpcgba@outlook.com

Federation of Crown Green Bowls

Development Overview 2024–25



In 2025, the Federation of Crown Green Bowls delivered a full and varied programme of national events designed to support bowlers at every level of the sport. These included the National League, Team Knockout, Individual Merit, Over-55s Merit, Ladies' Merit, the Fox Lane Friday League and the annual Federation v Civil Service match.

This calendar reflects the Federation's commitment to meaningful, enjoyable and accessible competition, while promoting fair play, respect and strong community values across the game. The continued strength of these established events demonstrates how the Federation successfully balances long-standing tradition with opportunities that welcome new and returning players into the sport.

Youth and junior development remain key priorities for the Federation, and the 2025 season showed clear progress. Junior and Youth team competitions, each consisting of eight players, remain free to enter, open to all genders and structured around simple age pathways. Participation increased from 82 players in 2024 to 102 in 2025. Juniors are defined as 16 or under on 1 January, while Youth players can compete up to the age of 24. Fixtures are traditionally held on the first Sundays of May and July in the Leyland area.

The season also saw newly fielded teams, including Manchester & Salford, who entered both a Junior and a Youth team for the first time. This represents an encouraging sign of growing confidence and engagement across counties. The Federation will continue to strengthen opportunities for young bowlers in 2026, with competition dates again set for the first Sundays of May and July. Junior fixtures will be hosted at Bretherton Bowling Club and the Eagle & Child Bowling Club, while Youth fixtures will take place at Tarleton Bowling Club. Counties are strongly encouraged to enter teams for the coming year.

The Federation is encouraging even more associations to enter teams next season. Growing youth participation is essential to the long-term health of the sport, and the Federation remains fully committed to supporting counties, volunteers and young players as development continues.



Country Development Officer: Ken Howarth
Competition Enquiries: howarth356@gmail.com

Looking Ahead

The first year of the BCGBA National Development Strategy has demonstrated what can be achieved when clubs, counties, volunteers and national partners work together with a shared purpose.

Across the country, development funding has supported junior and youth activity, disability inclusion, coaching, community engagement and club sustainability. From schools, parks and community spaces to traditional greens, bowls continues to reach new audiences while remaining rooted in the values and volunteers that have always defined the sport.

Year One has also provided valuable learning. It has highlighted where development support is already making a clear difference, where capacity can be strengthened, and where future focus will deliver the greatest impact. These insights will guide delivery as the Strategy moves into its next phase.

The Board would like to thank all County Officers, Development Officers, volunteers, coaches, clubs and partners who have contributed to the work outlined in this report. Particular thanks go to those who have embraced change, shared good practice and supported new opportunities within their communities.

With ringfenced development funding in place and a growing network of committed people across the sport, strong foundations are now set for continued progress in 2026 and beyond. Together, we will continue to support clubs, grow participation and secure a positive, sustainable future for crown green bowls.