
Bowling in Wales

Strategy 2026–2030

August 2026

A word from our Chief Executive

I came to BowlsWales at a moment of change. The sport I found was one with deep roots, real challenges, and enormous untapped potential.

Welsh bowling has a story worth telling, woven into the fabric of this country, in the valleys, on the coast, played and loved for generations. But stories need tending. And this one needed renewal.

This strategy is the result of months of honest conversation with our board and member governing bodies, people who care deeply about Welsh bowling and want to see it thrive. What emerged was honest, ambitious and shared. A genuine agreement about where we need to go and what it will take to get there.

Renewed. Rooted. Relevant. Three words that capture what Welsh bowling can be by 2030 and our collective commitment to making it happen.

Joanna Owen

Chief Executive, BowlsWales

Who we are

BowlsWales / BowlsCymru is the National Coordinating Body for bowling in Wales. We exist to coordinate, support and advocate for the six member organisations of bowling across the country.

Our six member organisations are: WIB (Welsh Indoor Bowls), WCGBA (Welsh Crown Green Bowling Association), WBCA (Welsh Bowls Coaching Association), WLB (Welsh Lawn Bowls), WBUA (Welsh Bowls Umpires Association) and WSMBA (Welsh Short Mat Bowls Association). Four govern the codes of the sport; two represent our coaching and umpiring communities. Together, they represent thousands of players, volunteers and clubs in communities across Wales. Together, we are Welsh bowling.

Our role

BowlsWales does not deliver bowling directly. We work in partnership with our member organisations to create the conditions in which Welsh bowling can grow. That means:

- Coordinating across codes on shared challenges and opportunities
- Managing the relationship with Sport Wales and Welsh Government on behalf of the sport
- Distributing funding to support NGB development
- Building the governance, safeguarding and infrastructure that modern sport requires
- Championing Welsh bowling's profile at major events like the Commonwealth Games and World Championships, in support of the NGBs who represent Wales through their respective international federations

Where we are now

Bowling in Wales has real strengths. It is embedded in communities across the country. It has dedicated volunteers who give their time and passion year after year. It has athletes representing Wales on the world stage. And it has a governing structure that, with investment and commitment, can provide the platform the sport needs.

It also faces real challenges. Participation has been under pressure for years. Clubs have closed. Younger people are not finding their way to the sport in the numbers we need. And BowlsWales itself is a small organisation with significant responsibilities.

This strategy is our response to both the strengths and the challenges. It is grounded in an honest assessment of where we are, and a clear shared view of where we want to be.

Our strategic framework

Everything BowlsWales does — and everything we seek to do together with our member organisations — is in service of one purpose:

More people bowling in Wales. Stronger clubs. A sport that lasts.

Around that purpose, we have agreed three strategic outcomes and three strategic enablers. Together, they form the framework for everything we will do between 2026 and 2030. This is the first phase of a longer-term ambition for Welsh bowling — building the platform now for the decade ahead.

Three strategic outcomes

Growing

More people bowling across Wales, with a clear pathway for those who want to reach the highest level. Grassroots and performance are not in competition — one sustains and inspires the other.

Inclusive

Welcoming everyone to start, stay and succeed — regardless of age, background, ability or code. A sport that reflects the full diversity of Wales.

Relevant

A sport that speaks to people who haven't found it yet. New audiences, new communities, new generations — with bowling as a genuine option for more people across Wales.

Three strategic enablers

Three enablers make our outcomes possible. They are the foundations without which the strategy cannot succeed.

Understanding

Knowing our sport — who is playing, where growth is happening, and where we need to do better. Evidence that informs decisions and demonstrates impact.

Sustainability

Secure, diversified funding and an organisation built to last — financially resilient, environmentally responsible, and fit for the long term.

Trust

Clear roles, shared standards and open relationships across BowlsWales and the member organisations — built on honesty, transparency and delivery.

OUTCOME ONE

Growing

More people bowling across Wales — that is the measure of success. Not just in numbers, but in the quality and sustainability of the experience. Players who start and stay. Clubs that grow and thrive. A sport with a clear pathway from first bowl to international competition.

What this means in practice

- Working with member organisations to understand participation trends and identify where growth is possible
- Supporting NGBs to help their clubs recruit, retain and develop players across all ages and abilities
- Reviewing the performance pathway with NGBs to build a clearer, stronger route from grassroots to international level
- Using the profile of major competitions to inspire participation across every code
- Addressing the factors that cause players and clubs to leave the sport

What success looks like by 2030

Participation in bowling across Wales is stable and growing. We have a clear picture of who is playing and where. Welsh bowlers are competing and succeeding at major events. Clubs feel supported and confident about their future, backed by their NGBs and BowlsWales.

Inclusive

Bowling in Wales should be for everyone. That is not an aspiration — it is a requirement. The sport has a proud tradition of community and belonging. Our task is to make sure that extends to people who have not yet found their place in it.

What this means in practice

- Embedding inclusion as a condition of member organisation funding and governance
- Supporting member organisations to develop club welfare officers and safeguarding infrastructure
- Actively increasing participation among under-represented groups — including younger people, women, disabled people and those from diverse backgrounds
- Making sure para bowls has the profile, support and pathway it deserves
- Reviewing our communications and platforms to ensure they reach and welcome everyone

What success looks like by 2030

Welsh bowling reflects the communities it serves. Safeguarding is embedded at every level. New players from a wider range of backgrounds are finding the sport. And BowlsWales is recognised as an organisation that takes inclusion seriously.

Relevant

Bowling has an image. In some quarters, it is not the image we want. Our task is not to abandon what makes the sport special — its community, its precision, its accessibility across generations — but to make sure more people know about it, and that what they find when they arrive reflects the sport at its best.

What this means in practice

- Developing a communications strategy that reaches beyond existing members
- Using major events to raise the profile of Welsh bowling nationally, across all codes
- Building partnerships with schools, leisure centres and community organisations
- Making it easier for people to find and join a club — through JustGo and other platforms
- Telling the stories of Welsh bowling in a way that resonates with people who haven't yet discovered it

What success looks like by 2030

Welsh bowling is visible, welcoming and easy to find. New players are joining clubs through digital platforms. The sport has a communications presence that reflects its ambitions. And people who have never considered bowling are beginning to see it differently.

How we will work

This strategy is not a document that BowlsWales will deliver alone. Everything in it depends on the partnership between BowlsWales and the six member organisations. We will succeed together or not at all.

The role of BowlsWales

BowlsWales will lead on the things that require coordination across codes — the relationship with Sport Wales, the distribution of funding, the governance infrastructure and the communications platform — and will champion Welsh bowling's international profile, working alongside the NGBs who represent Wales through their own international federations. We will be a body that NGBs trust, rely on and want to work with.

The role of the NGBs

Our member organisations will lead on delivery within their remits. The four code-governing organisations will lead on delivery within their codes — the clubs, the competitions, the players and the volunteers who make the sport happen. The coaching and umpiring associations will lead on supporting those communities. BowlsWales will support all member organisations with funding, frameworks, guidance and a shared platform. We will ask more of member organisations than before, and invest more in them in return.

The 2026 delivery plan, developed together with each NGB, will set out what this strategy means in practice at county, league, club and individual level — so there is a clear thread from national ambition to what it asks of everyone playing and volunteering in the sport.

Timeline

2026

Strategy launched. Delivery plan agreed with member organisations.

2027–2028

Delivery in full. Annual reviews. Mid-point review in 2028 to assess progress and refresh priorities.

2029–2030

Final phase. Evaluation. Lessons learned. Preparation for the next strategy cycle.