EIBA / Bowls England Amalgamation Webinars

Overview of the seven webinar sessions, 10–12 November 2026

A programme of seven webinars was arranged to give members of the indoor bowls community an opportunity to hear more about the proposed amalgamation, explore how the arrangements might work in practice, and raise questions and concerns. The same core presentation was used throughout, providing a consistent basis for discussion.

This overview captures the main questions, themes and feedback arising from the webinar discussions. It is not a definitive statement of the final proposals, which will be set out separately in the prospectus.

Engagement across the webinars

The webinars generated approximately **40 attendances**, representing at least **27 individual club and county representatives**. Discussions were active and constructive, with participants drawing on experience from a range of indoor clubs and county associations. Questions ranged from immediate practical matters about affiliation, voting, county arrangements and the proposed Regional Delivery Hubs through to longer-term issues around participation, competitions, volunteer capacity and the future development of the sport.

Similar questions and comments from different sessions have been grouped together below to give a concise picture of the issues that generated most discussion.

Participants were broadly positive about the direction of travel once the proposal was explained, while consistently seeking greater clarity about what amalgamation would mean in practice for bowlers, clubs and counties.

What participants wanted to understand

Across all seven sessions, participants consistently wanted to understand:

- what the proposal would mean for ordinary and social bowlers, as well as competitive participants;
- what clubs and counties could expect from the new organisation and how different types of club would be supported;
- how implementation would be phased, resourced and held to account;
- how affiliation, fees, competitions and county arrangements might develop over time; and
- how firm commitments would be distinguished from matters requiring further consultation.

Regional Delivery Hubs

The Regional Delivery Hub concept attracted considerable interest and was generally seen as offering a practical bridge between the national organisation, counties and clubs. Participants welcomed the possibility of support being easier to reach and better coordinated, provided the Hubs remain focused on delivery and do not become another layer of governance, administration or cost.

Potential priorities identified by participants

- funding and grant identification, including help to find less obvious sources and strengthen applications;
- locally relevant recruitment, junior development and support to reach social participants and adults returning to or looking for a new sport;
- coach, umpire and official development delivered closer to clubs;
- safeguarding, governance, compliance, policy templates and practical help;
- leadership, succession and volunteer development for future club and county officers;
- sharing successful practice and connecting clubs to specialist expertise, schools, Active Partnerships and local networks;

- collective purchasing and navigation of services such as insurance, utilities and waste management; and
- support responsive to different club types and levels of capacity.

Design and delivery points discussed

- An indicative figure of around eight Hubs was discussed, but neither the number nor the boundaries were presented as fixed.
- The geography should be driven by delivery and accessibility, and kept distinct from county, competition and governance boundaries.
- The model should start proportionately, coordinating existing people and specialist resources before expanding as evidence and investment allow.
- Volunteer roles should be practical connector or facilitator roles, not another set of committee positions.
- No immediate major increase in affiliation fees was proposed to fund a fully staffed regional infrastructure.
- The initial offer should focus on visible priorities and demonstrate useful impact within the first 12–18 months.

The strongest message was that Regional Delivery Hubs should make support easier to access and reduce duplication. They should be judged by practical outcomes for clubs and counties, not by the creation of additional structures.

Articles, voting and legal arrangements

As at the Bowls England County Conference, participants wanted a clear explanation of what members are being asked to approve, how the formal voting process works, what the proposed Articles would establish, and which detailed operating arrangements would be developed after the vote. They wanted confidence that the legal framework and the future operating model were connected but distinct.

What participants asked

- Who is entitled to vote and what majority is required at each stage?
- How would the proposed voting chambers work and how would votes from the different chambers combine?
- What exactly would be approved through the resolutions and Articles?
- Which matters would be determined later by the Board and executive?
- How would clubs, counties and members retain influence and hold the new organisation to account?
- Who would determine affiliation fees and what safeguards would apply before significant changes?
- Would national amalgamation compel indoor and outdoor county organisations to amalgamate?
- How could members be confident that future development would follow the direction explained before the vote?

What was explained during the webinars

Area	Position explained
Day one	Existing affiliation processes, competitions and county structures would continue initially. Changes would be developed and phased over time, and the proposal does not include Federation bowls.
Voting process	Existing entitlements and the formal thresholds applying at each stage were explained. Participants requested a plain-English account and worked examples in the final material.
Articles and future decisions	The Articles would establish the constitutional framework. Some detailed operating arrangements would be developed by the future organisation through consultation and phased implementation.

Area	Position explained
Accountability	Accountability was described through the Board, executive leadership, AGM, member resolutions and powers contained in the Articles.
Affiliation fees	The proposed Articles would give the Board formal authority to set fees. Participants expected transparency and consultation before material change; no immediate fee shock was proposed.
County structures	National amalgamation would not require indoor and outdoor county organisations to amalgamate from day one. Any later alignment would reflect local circumstances and decisions.
Implementation	The final material should give enough detail on direction, safeguards and timescales, without implying that every future operational decision has already been taken.

Participants wanted a plain-English account of what the vote would approve, what would be decided later, and how clubs, counties and members would retain influence over the new organisation.

Other questions and issues raised

Alongside the detailed discussions on Regional Delivery Hubs and the Articles, participants raised a wide range of practical questions, summarised below.

Area	Questions raised
Implementation	What changes on day one; what remains unchanged initially; what is developed later; delivery timescales; the headquarters; and confidence that the intended benefits can be delivered.
Clubs and bowlers	Practical benefits for different club types; relevance to ordinary and social bowlers; volunteer workload; leadership succession; and access to practical support.
Affiliation and data	Duplicate payments; multi-club and indoor/outdoor membership; future fee levels; digital alternatives; data protection; and better participant insight.
Counties	County autonomy; representation; the relationship between indoor and outdoor structures; and locally chosen alignment.
Competitions	Continuity of existing provision; rules and eligibility; entry systems; calendar congestion; travel; rationalisation and coordination.
Growth and investment	Recruitment; juniors and adults in their 30s, 40s and 50s; the profile of bowls; grants; public and commercial investment; and social impact.

Main reservations

Alongside broad support, a number of reservations were raised in more than one session. These centred on:

- whether practical benefits would reach grassroots and social bowlers and self-sufficient clubs, with some feeling the proposition was still weighted towards the upper tiers of the sport;
- confidence that plans would be delivered, given that earlier ambitions, including a previous attempt at amalgamation, had not always been realised;
- the Board's proposed authority to set affiliation fees, with a major increase seen by some as a potential deal-breaker;
- pressure on scarce volunteers, with some county associations already struggling to fill roles;
- whether the Hubs and wider ambitions would be adequately funded and resourced;
- keeping a non-digital route for members who cannot or prefer not to register and pay online; and
- the pace of the timetable, given uneven awareness among members.

Communications and awareness

A recurring theme was the importance of continuing to communicate the proposals beyond those who attended the webinars. Participants noted that awareness varies within clubs and counties, reinforcing the need for accessible information and further opportunities to ask questions as the process continues. Attendees are encouraged to share the slide deck and this overview with their clubs and committees.

Temperature check on the direction of travel

The closing temperature checks were generally positive, with most responses between 3 and 5 on a five-point scale. Where individual scores were recorded, they were mostly 4s and 5s. Participants typically supported the direction of travel while attaching caveats about communications, practical implementation, affordability, adequate resourcing and the need for a clearer member-facing value proposition. Some participants moved from initial scepticism to greater confidence after hearing the proposals; others remained supportive but cautious about whether the planned benefits could be delivered at the intended pace.

Broad support for the direction of travel, with confidence dependent on practical detail, a credible phased roadmap and clear explanations of what the change means for bowlers, clubs and counties.

Next steps

The slide deck and this overview are being circulated to all invitees, not only those who attended. The prospectus is expected to be issued before Christmas and will provide the next substantive opportunity for clubs, counties and members to consider the proposal in more detail.

Key dates: Prospectus before Christmas · Briefings and Q&A in January · Decision in February

Following publication of the prospectus, clubs and counties will have further opportunities during January to consider the proposals and raise questions ahead of the formal decision-making process in February. Any club or county that would welcome a further briefing or Q&A session after the prospectus is published is encouraged to contact Peter Thompson, Chief Executive, EIBA Ltd, at peterthompson@eiba.co.uk to discuss arrangements.