

Council Bowls Clubs - Future Plans

From: Durham County Council Culture and Sport, Outdoor Sport and Leisure, Northumbria House, Aykley Heads, Durham DH1 5TS (dated 19 May 2014)

Durham County Council bowls facilities consultation

In order to reach financial targets we are currently reviewing the provision of bowls sites across the county as we are unable to sustain financial support of this non statutory service. The target is to achieve a saving of £146,605 from grounds and maintenance costs of both greens and pavilions.

Durham County Council currently manages 30 sites across the county, which equates to approximately 50% of the provision. The remaining facilities are either privately operated by clubs or maintained by Town and Parish Councils. The Council is therefore seeking to consult with interested parties with a view to transferring bowls facilities as an alternative to closure.

During the first phase of this consultation we will invite clubs who use DCC facilities to attend one of two presentation events. This will provide more detail into the background of the proposal as well as the process required to achieve a transfer. It will also give clubs the opportunity to raise issues as well as any initial expression of interest. Clubs or other interested parties that formally express an interest will be invited to further consultation in order to discuss detail affecting the facility they use.

Consultation will take place during 2014 playing season with all expression of interest to be submitted by the end of June 2014 with a view to having the new arrangements in place for the 2015 playing season. It is anticipated that 'in principle' decisions will have been reached with clubs by the end of August 2014. This will allow clubs to reach decisions ahead of any commitments for the 2015 season.

DCC appreciate the clubs will face difficulty in taking responsibility for their own facilities and that initial costs for purchasing equipment etc. may be a significant barrier, there is the opportunity of a start-up grant for those clubs who would seek to take over the maintenance of the facility. This will be discussed at the consultation meetings below.

We would therefore like to invite you to a consultation meeting on one of the following dates: County Hall, Durham on Thursday 5 June at 6.30pm or Thursday 12 June at 6.30pm.

Each meeting will cover the following issues:

- More details about the background and the context of this consultation, including an explanation of timescales
- The process of transfer and what does it mean to clubs.
- Information regarding the offer of grant.
- To ask for initial expressions of interest from clubs in the future management of sites
- To be offered the opportunity for a more in-depth one-to-one meeting, including any support and advice during the transition period and beyond.

There will also be an opportunity to ask questions and raise any issues to be considered as part of the proposed new arrangements, with a member of Durham County Council's Outdoor sports and leisure team.

If you wish to attend one of the above meetings (maximum of two representatives per organisation) please confirm your place(s) by email at ns_outdoorsl@durham.gov.uk or call 03000 264 578 by Friday 30th May 2014.

Yours faithfully, Nigel Dodds, Strategic Manager – Culture and Sport

Main Points from Consultative Meeting with Durham County Council on Thurs 5th June at County Hall

Subject: Future of DCC financed bowling clubs (The Meeting was chaired by Nigel Dodds, Strategic Manager, Culture & Sport).

- Culture & Sport budget has to be reduced by £147,000 at April 2015.
- Each individual bowler in the 30 clubs financed by DCC costs £203.
- The cost for each Green is £3,750
- DCC will not decide which bowling green to close. The members of each club will have to choose. They are faced with the withdrawal of the current service at the end of 2014 season.
- DCC preferred option is to issue each club with a 35 year lease, and for members to take over full maintenance.
- Each club willing to take on a Lease will be offered up to £5,000 to purchase equipment. (DCC will offer its bulk purchasing power to secure such equipment at a lower cost than would be available to individual clubs).
- From 1 July DCC will have a 1 to 1 meeting with each club to discuss its individual circumstances and concerns. Each club should list any issues and bring it to the meeting.
- DCC said there may be additional funding available from other DCC budgets to tackle some of these issues.
- At the end of July 2014 DCC will know which clubs are interested, what remedial work needs to be considered and the costs involved.
- At the end of August DCC will have agreed what action it will take. It will advise clubs of its final decision in good time. This will enable them and league organisers to plan for the 2015 season.