



National Development Strategy

Case Study - Club Development Plan

‘Full Community Approach’ Project Meersbrook Park, South Yorkshire

At the start of the 2023 season, Meersbrook Park Bowling Club faced an uncertain future. The 116-year-old club had fallen into significant disrepair and membership had dropped to just 13 players. However, the arrival of several new bowlers sparked a determination to rebuild the club and secure its long-term future.

The group began by launching a membership drive alongside a successful crowdfunding campaign to improve facilities and attract new participants. As momentum grew, new committee members introduced what they called a “Full Community Approach”, focusing on four key development strands: Community, Heritage, Bowling and Environment.

At the heart of the project was a commitment to opening the club to the wider community and making the parkland facilities accessible to people who might otherwise face barriers to participation.



During 2024 the club secured over £20,000 in grants and fundraising, allowing the club to begin delivering its ambitions. The green hosted 11 community group visits, including primary schools, day centres, mental health projects, Parkinson’s UK and a local special school. The project has transformed the club.

Membership has grown from 13 to over 80 bowlers, facilities have improved and the club has developed stronger links with its local community. Support from South Yorkshire County Crown Green Bowling Association, particularly development officer Steve Hawksworth, played an important role in the club’s progress by providing tuition, advice, contacts and equipment.

The club's experience highlights that successful club development requires a range of volunteer skills including fundraising, community engagement, governance, communication and leadership. Sharing responsibilities across the committee has been essential to sustaining the club's progress.

While challenges remain, particularly working within local authority restrictions, Meersbrook Park BC has demonstrated how community engagement and strong volunteer leadership can transform the future of a traditional bowling club.

Pull quote suggestion:

"We realised the club had to become part of the wider community, not just a place to play bowls."



The transformation at Meersbrook Park Bowling Club shows how fresh ideas, strong volunteer commitment and a willingness to open the club to the wider community can secure the future of traditional bowling clubs.

By focusing on inclusion, partnership working and sharing responsibilities among volunteers, the club has created a sustainable model that continues to attract new members and strengthen its place at the heart of the local community.

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