

A Note on Policy for Lady Membership Applications at RLSBC

Following a preliminary discussion at the Management Committee meeting held on 4th August 2025, a more extensive discussion took place at the meeting on 8th September 2025 regarding the current strength and extent of the ladies playing membership levels at the club, the perceived likelihood of senior players from other local clubs wishing to leave their current club and join RLSBC, and the consequences this might have for both our club and the wider bowling community. Points raised included :-

- RLSBC is already the largest club in Warwickshire with currently ~60 registered lady playing members, covering all abilities from complete beginners to England Internationals. The vast majority of other Warwickshire clubs are believed to have active ladies' membership levels of typically 5-15.
- The club has a reputation of being a very friendly, welcoming and integrated club which works hard to balance the needs of the full spectrum of its members; beginners, novices, social club bowlers, competitive bowlers, County bowlers and international players and to assist the progression of individual members through that spectrum.
- Scheduled ladies' friendly fixtures during recent seasons have never needed to be reduced in size or cancelled because of player shortages at RLS, but have frequently been cancelled by the opposition because of a lack of available players.
- The playing strength in the Ladies' section is such that in 2025, the Ladies' County titles in the 4-Wood Singles, Pairs, Fours, Senior Fours, Benevolent Triples, Champion of Champions, Unbadged Singles and "Top Club" competitions were all won by RLS members (and six of the County competition runners-up were also RLS members).
- In the past two years, 8 lady members at the club have also been National Champions in the Ladies' Fours competition and the Ladies' Senior Fours competition.
- The club won the Ladies' National "Top Club" trophy this year.
- The 2025 Warwickshire squads for both the Johns Trophy and Walker Cup competitions featured large numbers of RLS players (for example, in the Walker Cup squad, no less than 8 of the 14 members were RLS players).
- Within the club, the route for individual lady members to progress from club bowler to County bowler is based on gaining "County Points", that are predominantly awarded for achievements in club competitions.

Based on the above, it was recognised that whilst an even greater concentration of international and/or senior county players as RLS club members would be likely to result in high levels of competitive success, which serves to enhance the reputation of the club, the risk is that this may be to the longer-term detriment of other, smaller clubs within the County and ultimately too, to RLSBC. In particular, with other clubs generally not having high membership levels anyway, if higher-standard members were to leave them for RLS, this is likely to deter those clubs from sending as many entries into competitions because of the perceived dominance by a single club, thereby devaluing County competitions. Clubs losing

senior players who might move to RLS would also result in a reduction in their ability to attract new bowlers and their ability to mentor and develop them, potentially leading to a decline in the health of the club to the extent that, with fewer members, this would impact the ability of those clubs to field teams to play in friendly matches against RLS. This would ultimately have an impact on the ordinary club bowlers at RLSBC who would have fewer friendly matches to play during the course of a season. In addition, instead of helping to achieve the long-term objective of seeing increased usage of the greens at Victoria Park, the net result of fewer club fixtures and fewer County competition entries would actually be to reduce greens usage.

Within RLSBC, current club bowlers with ambitions to develop their game to County standard, would find that any increase to the number of County and other established high-standard bowlers at the club would reduce their ability to collect "County Points" through successes in club competitions. This will not encourage them and as a consequence possible future champions and senior players at the club in years to come might never develop their full potential and/or might move to other smaller clubs. Any such loss of players would reduce the RLSBC pool of "club" players and it could become increasingly difficult to get teams to fulfil fixtures, thus causing further disillusionment amongst those members that remain at the club.

The conclusion therefore was that whilst it might be a logical desire of good standard lady bowlers at other local clubs to wish to join the largest and most successful club in the County, although this might be considered to be a short-term gain for the club, in the interests of the longer-term health of the game within Warwickshire, and for the long-term benefit of RLSBC as a club, it would not be appropriate to allow the ladies section of RLSBC to further increase its number of experienced senior players and, as a result, to become even more dominant within the area. It simply isn't healthy for the sport to have an increasingly large proportion of the best lady bowlers within the County playing at a single club. Having already won the premier ladies team competition in the country with the current pool of quality players at the club, there is also no obvious need to further increase this in order for the club to be successful, and to risk potential integration issues within the existing club membership.

It was therefore agreed by the Management Committee that, with immediate effect, the club would put a temporary hold on accepting membership applications from experienced lady bowlers who wished to transfer to the club from other Warwickshire clubs. Membership applications from brand new lady bowlers would continue to be accepted (subject to all existing club rules and procedures) since this is an essential requirement for the longer-term sustainability of the club. Membership applications from men will continue to be treated in line with existing club rules and procedures. The policy will be reviewed at regular intervals by the Management Committee at the club.

10th September, 2025