

31 October 2025

Balcomb Trophy & Walker Cup 2026

The Balcomb Trophy and Walker Cup are our premier inter-county events and form an integral part of our wider performance programme and changes were introduced for the 2025 season.

Following consideration of feedback from players, team managers, performance team and host clubs we developed plans for a revised format and programme for 2026. This was shared with counties in August for input. We thank all those who did share their feedback, the majority of whom were in favour of the planned changes.

A report was presented to the Board and we are pleased to confirm the revised arrangements for 2026 as shown below:

DATES OF PLAY

Preliminary Round:

- Sunday 17 May 2026 11:30am (or other time by mutual agreement)

Regional Qualifiers:

- Balcomb Trophy – Saturday 30 May 2026
- Walker Cup - Sunday 31 May 2026

Format of Play

- Teams to consist of 9 players in any single session (no limit on number of reserves)
- Format to be Pairs (3-bowl; 18 ends), Triples (2-bowl; 18 ends) and Fours (2-bowl; 15 ends)

Preliminary Round

- Introduce a knock-out preliminary round for 'groups of 5' in order that Regional Qualifier can be completed in one day
 - Five-year rota
 - Each team only plays twice in a preliminary in five-year period
 - Performance Team to attend prelims so all players viewed each season
 - The rotation for both events has been developed so that no County will have a preliminary round in both events in the same year
 - Winner to be determine by 'Match Aggregate' score



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Regional Qualifiers

- Regional qualifiers to be held on single day – reduces time commitment, travel and accommodation costs for all participating counties
- Balcomb & Walker regional qualifiers to be played on different days to better accommodate those with family commitments
- Regional qualifiers will see 4 teams each playing 3 matches at 9.30am, 1pm & 4pm – six rinks fully utilised during each session
- Simplified scoring system at regional events (Total points per match = 8)
 - Each Discipline – 2 pts for win; 1 pt for draw
 - Match aggregate – 2 pts for win; 1 pt for draw
- The county that tops the group at the conclusion of the group stages on will qualify for the National Bowls Finals
 - This will be determined by (in order):
 - Overall points
 - Overall shots difference
 - Overall shots scored
 - Matches at National Finals to be determine by 'Match Aggregate' score

VENUES

Preliminary Round

- Preliminary Round matches shall be played either in an adjoining county or on an affiliated green located approximately midway between the two county centres involved in the tie.
- The two counties participating in the preliminary round can mutually agree to play on any affiliated green within one of their counties.
- Participating counties to arrange umpire for preliminary round and share all costs

Regional Qualifiers

- Host County to select and arrange venue taking into consideration their fellow counties regarding location, club facilities, car parking and distance from furthest county attending
- Host County to run the event including competition management at the venue on the day – Bowls England to provide training and on-call support
- Bowls England to provide all event support ie marketing, branding and competition management material in advance and on call support on the day of the event

NOTE:

In arranging the rotation for 2026 onwards, based on feedback we have sought to avoid counties that hosted the Balcomb Trophy or Walker Cup in 2025 from being the host in 2026.



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Balcomb Trophy - 5 Year Schedule (Groups of 5)

Every County within group to host by rotation across period – SEE BELOW FOR GROUPS

		NORTH		
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Cumbria	Northumberland	Durham	Lancashire	Yorkshire
Northumberland	Durham	Lancashire	Yorkshire	Cumbria
Durham	Lancashire	Yorkshire	Cumbria	Northumberland
Lancashire	Yorkshire	Cumbria	Northumberland	Durham
Yorkshire	Cumbria	Northumberland	Durham	Lancashire

		MIDLANDS		
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Leicestershire	Lincolnshire	Nottinghamshire	Northamptonshire	Derbyshire
Lincolnshire	Nottinghamshire	Northamptonshire	Derbyshire	Leicestershire
Nottinghamshire	Northamptonshire	Derbyshire	Leicestershire	Lincolnshire
Northamptonshire	Derbyshire	Leicestershire	Lincolnshire	Nottinghamshire
Derbyshire	Leicestershire	Lincolnshire	Nottinghamshire	Northamptonshire

		WEST		
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Gloucestershire	Herefordshire	Warwickshire	Wiltshire	Worcestershire
Herefordshire	Warwickshire	Wiltshire	Worcestershire	Gloucestershire
Warwickshire	Wiltshire	Worcestershire	Gloucestershire	Herefordshire
Wiltshire	Worcestershire	Gloucestershire	Herefordshire	Warwickshire
Worcestershire	Gloucestershire	Herefordshire	Wiltshire	

Key:

- Counties listed first in green are responsible for coordinating all match arrangements and managing the event throughout the day.
- Those counties shown in grey will play each other in the preliminary round (Sunday 17 May 2026), first team showing are the challengers.

Balcomb Trophy - 5 Year Schedule (Groups of 4)

Every County within group to host by rotation across period – SEE BELOW FOR GROUPS

		EAST		
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Norfolk	Huntingdonshire	Suffolk	Cambridgeshire	Norfolk
Suffolk	Norfolk	Cambridgeshire	Huntingdonshire	Suffolk
Cambridgeshire	Suffolk	Huntingdonshire	Norfolk	Cambridgeshire
Huntingdonshire	Cambridgeshire	Norfolk	Suffolk	Huntingdonshire

		CENTRAL		
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Buckinghamshire	Oxfordshire	Bedfordshire	Berkshire	Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire	Bedfordshire	Berkshire	Buckinghamshire	Oxfordshire
Bedfordshire	Berkshire	Buckinghamshire	Oxfordshire	Bedfordshire
Berkshire	Buckinghamshire	Oxfordshire	Bedfordshire	Berkshire

		SOUTH		
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Surrey	Hampshire	Sussex	Isle of Wight	Surrey
Sussex	Isle of Wight	Hampshire	Surrey	Sussex
Hampshire	Surrey	Isle of Wight	Sussex	Hampshire
Isle of Wight	Sussex	Surrey	Hampshire	Isle of Wight

		SOUTH-EAST		
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Hertfordshire	Kent	Middlesex	Essex	Hertfordshire
Kent	Middlesex	Essex	Hertfordshire	Kent
Middlesex	Essex	Hertfordshire	Kent	Middlesex
Essex	Hertfordshire	Kent	Middlesex	Essex

		SOUTH-WEST		
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Cornwall	Devon	Dorset	Somerset	Cornwall
Devon	Dorset	Somerset	Cornwall	Devon
Dorset	Somerset	Cornwall	Devon	Dorset
Somerset	Cornwall	Devon	Dorset	Somerset

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Walker Cup – 5 Year Schedule (Groups of 5)

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		NORTH		
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Durham	Lancashire	Yorkshire	Cumbria	Northumberland
Lancashire	Yorkshire	Cumbria	Northumberland	Durham
Yorkshire	Cumbria	Northumberland	Durham	Lancashire
Cumbria	Northumberland	Durham	Lancashire	Yorkshire
Northumberland	Durham	Lancashire	Yorkshire	Cumbria

		MIDLANDS		
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Northamptonshire	Nottinghamshire	Derbyshire	Leicestershire	Lincolnshire
Nottinghamshire	Derbyshire	Leicestershire	Lincolnshire	Northamptonshire
Derbyshire	Leicestershire	Lincolnshire	Northamptonshire	Nottinghamshire
Leicestershire	Lincolnshire	Northamptonshire	Nottinghamshire	Derbyshire
Lincolnshire	Northamptonshire	Nottinghamshire	Derbyshire	Leicestershire

		WEST		
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Wiltshire	Worcestershire	Warwickshire	Herefordshire	Gloucestershire
Worcestershire	Warwickshire	Herefordshire	Gloucestershire	Wiltshire
Warwickshire	Herefordshire	Gloucestershire	Wiltshire	Worcestershire
Herefordshire	Gloucestershire	Wiltshire	Worcestershire	Warwickshire
Gloucestershire	Wiltshire	Worcestershire	Warwickshire	Herefordshire

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Walker Cup – 5 Year Schedule (Groups of 4)

Every County within group to host by rotation across period – SEE BELOW FOR GROUPS

		EAST		
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Suffolk	Cambridgeshire	Norfolk	Huntingdonshire	Suffolk
Cambridgeshire	Huntingdonshire	Suffolk	Norfolk	Cambridgeshire
Huntingdonshire	Norfolk	Cambridgeshire	Suffolk	Huntingdonshire
Norfolk	Suffolk	Huntingdonshire	Cambridgeshire	Norfolk

		CENTRAL		
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Bedfordshire	Berkshire	Buckinghamshire	Oxfordshire	Bedfordshire
Berkshire	Buckinghamshire	Oxfordshire	Bedfordshire	Berkshire
Buckinghamshire	Oxfordshire	Bedfordshire	Berkshire	Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire	Bedfordshire	Berkshire	Buckinghamshire	Oxfordshire

		SOUTH		
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Sussex	Isle of Wight	Surrey	Hampshire	Sussex
Hampshire	Surrey	Sussex	Isle of Wight	Hampshire
Isle of Wight	Sussex	Hampshire	Surrey	Isle of Wight
Surrey	Hampshire	Isle of Wight	Sussex	Surrey

		SOUTH-EAST		
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Middlesex	Essex	Hertfordshire	Kent	Middlesex
Essex	Hertfordshire	Kent	Middlesex	Essex
Hertfordshire	Kent	Middlesex	Essex	Hertfordshire
Kent	Middlesex	Essex	Hertfordshire	Kent

		SOUTH-WEST		
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Dorset	Somerset	Cornwall	Devon	Dorset
Somerset	Cornwall	Devon	Dorset	Somerset
Cornwall	Devon	Dorset	Somerset	Cornwall
Devon	Dorset	Somerset	Cornwall	Devon

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