Proposal: Development Structure for the Welsh Ladies Short Mat Bowls International Squad

1. Introduction

The Ladies International Squad was established in 2023 ahead of the first British Isles Championships held that year in England. The squad has since hosted the Championships in 2024 and competed in the 2025 championships in Belfast (held in January 2026 following a change in scheduling). The Ladies British Isles series has now been confirmed as an ongoing event in January each year. Despite some initial reservations, all nations confirmed recently at a British Isles Council meeting that they see the Ladies squads as an important element in their national development programmes.

This proposal, therefore, sets out a modern, transparent, and development-focused structure for the Welsh Ladies Short Mat Bowls International Squad. The aim is to strengthen performance, widen opportunity, and create a clear pathway from grassroots to international level while maintaining the highest competitive standards.

The recommendations focus on:

- Clear separation of administrative and selection responsibilities
- A fair, balanced and structured approach to selection
- Open competitive routes into the squad
- Proactive and structured support for emerging players
- Developing long-term squad depth and sustainability

2. Appointment of a Single Team Manager

The Team Manager's role is to provide administrative leadership, ensuring the smooth running of all off-mat operations. The Team Manager should ideally be a non-playing individual.

Key Responsibilities

- Organising training sessions, practice days, and squad events
- Managing travel, accommodation, kit, and logistics for international fixtures
- Acting as the primary administrative contact with the WSMBA – particularly with the treasurer in relation to all financial commitments
- Ensuring compliance with policies, safeguarding, and player welfare processes
- Supporting communication between players, selectors, and counties
- Providing players with a consistent, impartial point of contact
- Professionalises the operational side of the squad

3. Appointment of a structured selection panel

In line with the main squad, selection will be undertaken by up to five selectors, each from a different county, ensuring balanced representation across Wales. From within this group, one

individual will be appointed as the Lead Selector, who provides coordination, structure, and strategic oversight.

Again, as with the main squad, selectors would be appointed at the Executive meeting following the Ladies British Isles Championships on a bi-annual basis.

Role of the Lead Selector

The Lead Selector acts as the first among equals, responsible for:

- Coordinating the work of the selection panel
- Leading discussions on squad balance, player development, and discipline
- Acting as the primary point of contact between the selectors and the Team Manager
- Presenting the final squad list to the Team Manager for administrative action

Responsibilities of the Selection Panel

All selectors, including the Lead Selector, will:

- Observe players at national events, county matches, and the four national qualifiers
- Identify emerging talent for development
- Contribute to discussions on squad composition and discipline
- Support the Lead Selector in forming the final squad

This structure ensures county balance and prevents regional bias, provides clear leadership within the selection process, and strengthens communication between selectors, the Team Manager and the WSMBA Executive.

4. Introduction of Four National Ladies Open Qualifiers

To strengthen the competitive pathway and ensure merit-based selection, this proposal recommends four annual national open qualifiers: Singles, Pairs, Triples and Rinks to be held annually towards the end of the playing season.

The winners of each discipline will have the opportunity to compete for the British Isles title in the relevant discipline later in that season. Should an individual be successful in more than one discipline, they would be offered the choice of which discipline they wish to compete in, with the selectors determining how the remining disciplines will be filled.

Benefits

- Transparent, performance-based entry into the international squad
- Encourages broad participation from all counties
- Provides opportunity for all to compete
- Ensures in-form players are rewarded
- Reduces any perceptions of favouritism

5. Allowing a limited number of experienced players to “Double-Up”

Despite the introduction of the ladies squad in 2023, there is still a lack of experienced 'back end' players. In order to support player development, we propose that a limited number of our experienced players may be permitted to "double-up" across more than one discipline. Their main focus would be to support and develop players to be our 'skips' in the future. For example, an experienced player may play as the third in a rink to offer support and guidance to a new skip who is thought be have the potential to be a future leader within the squad.

Why This Is Valuable

- Provides leadership and stability on the mat
- Supports less experienced players in high-pressure situations
- Maintains competitive strength while new talent develops

Safeguards

- Doubling-up limited to a small number of players
- Priority remains developing players, not over-reliance on experienced players to ensure whole squad development over time

6. Conclusion

The ladies squad remains in its infancy, however there are consistent signs of improvement and development. Implementing these proposals will:

- Further improve clarity and accountability in both administration and selection
- Strengthen the depth and quality of Welsh ladies' short mat bowls
- Encourage counties to actively develop and promote female talent
- Create a fair, transparent, and competitive pathway into the squad
- Build a sustainable model that supports both current and future generations

The WSMBA Executive is invited to support these proposals.

This proposal was prepared by the current ladies team managers/selectors – Deb Matthews, Nataile Evans and Kate Morgan, with support from Steve Williams (Head selector) and Richard Palmer (Secretary).