



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

To all Local Authority Leaders  
Cc: Local Authority Chief Executives

**Nick Boles MP**

*Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Planning)*

**Stephen Williams MP**

*Minister for Communities*

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[www.gov.uk/dclg](http://www.gov.uk/dclg)

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Dear Leaders,

We write to seek your assistance as council leaders about an opportunity which will be of interest to people in your communities who have a particular interest in lawn bowls.

In response to a debate at Westminster Hall on 30 April on the protection of bowling greens, I gave a commitment that my Department would write to bowling clubs in England to inform them how they can safeguard their important amenities.

Government has been working to help communities to save local buildings and facilities, which further their social wellbeing – including bowling greens. The Community Right to Bid has been introduced to enable people to apply to their local authority to have land or buildings listed as Assets of Community Value. Once this is done, the community can invoke a moratorium on a sale of six months to give them the opportunity to raise money and carry out business planning to buy the asset themselves.

The Community Right to Bid cannot force an owner to sell their property however it strikes the correct balance between delaying an owner's ability to sell a listed asset of community value (because it delivers a justifiable community benefit) and giving communities a reasonable period of time to prepare a bid.

We can offer the community advice and support as to the best course of action through our Community Ownership and Management of Assets programme. More information can be found at [mycommunityrights.org.uk](http://mycommunityrights.org.uk).

The planning system provides safeguards for existing open space, including bowling greens. The National Planning Policy Framework, published in 2012, recognises that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. It makes clear that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land should not be built on unless an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown them to be surplus to requirements, or that the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location.

In addition, the Framework includes provision for Local Green Space designation. This enables communities to identify green areas or open space of particular importance to them for special protection during the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans. By designating land as Local Green Space in local and neighbourhood plans, communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances.

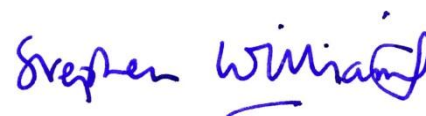
The Framework's policies on open space, sports and recreational facilities, and on Local Green Space designation, can be read in full at <http://tinyurl.com/nse4kbu>. Our new planning guidance, issued in March, supports these policies and is available at <http://tinyurl.com/mgo2bbc>.

As we approach the listing of 1,000 Assets of Community Value in England including bowling facilities in Bexhill-on-Sea and Camden, the Government is determined to build on this momentum to ensure that more groups who enjoy and participate in bowls are aware of the protections introduced by the Government to help them safeguard what they value using their community rights and planning protections.

Stephen and I would be grateful if you could use your local knowledge and networks to share this letter with all of the bowling clubs in your council area so that communities that have not already done so, take advantage of the initiatives introduced.



**NICK BOLES MP**



**STEPHEN WILLIAMS MP**