

MAG Project on Club Development

“TT Clubs in England – 2021 and beyond”

Feedback to participants in engagement sessions

December 2020

Rationale and Aim of the Project

- Clubs are key drivers of development – bringing new players into the sport, supporting local and national competitions and producing players who can compete at elite level
- The aim of this project is to find out what help clubs need in this key role
- We did this by engaging with a number of leading clubs and seeking their views

Clubs Meetings July- Dec 2020 – Key Questions

Under the theme of “TT Clubs in England – 2021” we asked leading clubs to participate in discussion sessions in which they were asked to address the following key questions:

- **What are the key challenges for your club over the next 2-5 years? What does “success” look like for your club over the next 5 years?**
- **What needs to be done to achieve this success? What are the barriers preventing you from achieving this success?**
- **How do we bring about change?**

Four engagement sessions with a total of 38 clubs took place over the period July to December. The subsequent slides summarise the key challenges identified across all four sessions. A summary of the discussion in each session is provided in the Appendix.

This is a feedback report to the participants. A full report is being prepared which will explore the changes in more details and make recommendations to the Board.

Participating Clubs

- Ackworth Club
- Ackworth Academy
- Ashford
- BATTs
- Birmingham Academy
- Bishop Auckland
- Blackpool
- Bristol Civil Service
- Chorleywood
- Cippenham
- Colebridge
- Corby Smash
- Darlington
- Draycott
- Ellenborough
- Falmouth
- Graham Spicer
- Greenhouse
- Goodwin
- Halton
- Hampstead
- Horsham Spinners
- Joola Plymouth
- Kingfisher
- Knighton Park
- Leeds Judean
- Mossford
- Norwich
- Nottingham Sycamore
- Ormesby
- Portishead
- Portsmouth
- South Croydon
- St Neots
- Swerve
- Torbay Academy
- Woodfield
- Woodford Wells

Key Issues for Clubs

- Maintain and improve facilities & venues
- Develop competitive structures that support club development
- Recruitment & retention of players & volunteers
- Giving clubs a stronger voice
- Coaching
- Re-building after Covid-19

Key Actions

Maintain and Improve Facilities & Venues

1. Develop commercial models for club operations (“franchising” approach)
2. Restore facility grants from Sport England
3. Get 24/7 venues in each major city
4. Build links with other sports for use of facilities (eg Premier League Football Clubs)

Develop Competitive Structures That Are More Supportive of Club Development

1. British League to focus more on “real” clubs
2. Extend NCL/NJL model to U-21 and senior age groups
3. Improve incentives for clubs to develop their own players
4. Simplify competitive structures, particularly for juniors
5. More flexible competitions - clubs to be able to organise their own competitions, eg “ladder” competitions

Giving Clubs a Stronger Voice

1. Build on the success of the “Ready to Return” webinars which were highly valued by clubs
2. Pro-actively engage with clubs on issues that directly affect their members
3. Hold on-line meetings with clubs based around new account manager structure
4. Change the voting structure to reflect the current structure of the sport
5. Role/ethos of TTE needs to be clearer – what is expected of clubs, where do they fit in?

Key Actions (cont'd)

Recruitment & Retention of Players and Volunteers

1. Stronger links between mass participation programmes and clubs
2. One ranking list for all TTE members
3. Improve the image of the sport to help with recruitment & retention
4. Keep money in the game to support clubs - rather than spending it outside the sport at Sports Centres or similar venues
5. Broadening the base to increase the height of the pyramid
6. Succession planning for volunteers is essential for all clubs - more guidance required

Coaching

1. More support for coaches – they are the key resource for club development
2. Stronger links between national performance team and clubs

Re-building after Covid-19.

1. Re-activating venues
2. Major push to bring back players to social and competitive table tennis
3. Use as an opportunity to bring about new ways of doing things
4. Local Leagues are very important for all clubs. So a strong local league helps with club development. It will be important in the post-Covid world to rebuild local leagues

Next Steps

1. Seek comments from participants on feedback report
2. Develop report for Board with recommendations

Appendix A – Details of Individual Sessions

Format of the Engagement Sessions

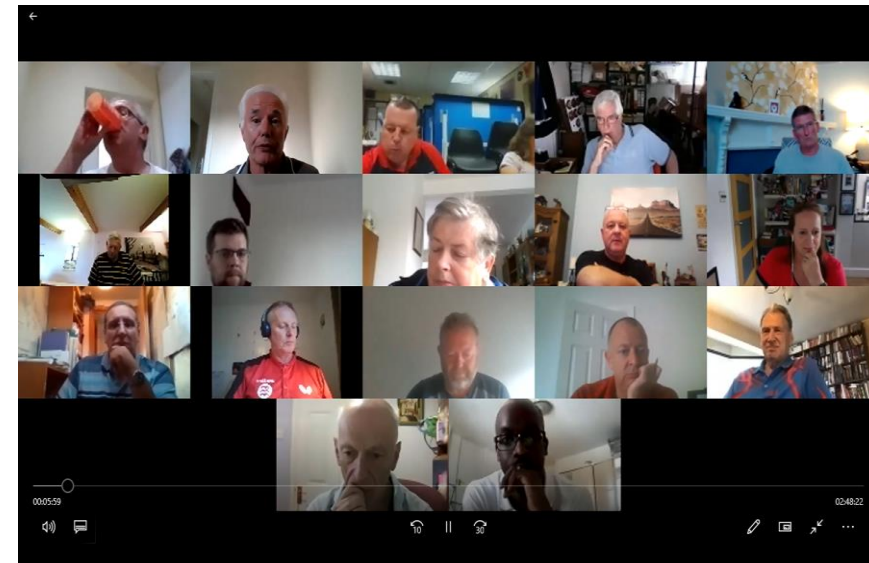
- Participation in the first three sessions was by individual invitation
- Participation in the fourth session was by open invitation via TTE website and social media supplemented by individual invitation. This provided the opportunity for a wide range of clubs to participate.
- The four sessions followed a common format.
- At the start of each session, each club was asked to outline the issues that really mattered to the development of their club and what success looked like for their club.
- These issues were captured, and areas of commonality were discussed in more detail in terms of what needed to be done and how change could be achieved.
- These actions were shared with the group at the end of the session.

Clubs 1 – Participants

29 July 2020

Members'
Advisory
Group

- Archway Gareth Herbert
- BATTs Neil Brierley & Graham Frankel
- Bishop Auckland Matt Porter
- Chorleywood Roger Close
- Corby Smash Colin Wilson
- Darlington David Godbold
- Draycott Jon Bayliss & Jo Green
- Goodwin Dave Randerson
- Halton Karen Tonge
- Joola Plymouth Kevin Buddell
- Mossford Tony Cantale & Phil Ashleigh
- St Neots Mark Mitchell
- MAG Members: Neil Hurford, Kevin Buddell, Jo Green, Phil Ashleigh, Sandy Nash, Steve Pratt.



Clubs 1 - Key Challenges

1. **Place / Premises** - Security of tenure, opening hours.
2. **People** –
 - i. Coaches. Finances to pay. Valued.
 - ii. Members – retention, inclusive player pathway from grass roots to International.
3. **Financial** – self sufficient, affordable for the community.
4. **Competitions & Club Structure** - Teams of own players. Use of club venues to keep funds in TT. Spectators. Genuine ‘Premier Club’ / Centre for Excellence – funding /competitions within clubs for those deserving. Momentum for schemes should be built over a longer time-frame (e.g. TDCs).
5. **Social** – creating a friendly and social element. Competitions for lower level players.
6. **Community** - recognition and identity.
7. **TTE**
 - i. Ethos - needs to be clearer.
 - ii. Structure, over-bureaucracy, National Council value? Voting structure – clubs should have a voice.

Clubs 1 – Actions

1. National Clubs League. New clubs culture.
2. A voice for clubs – member voting rights? Clubs to be included in conversations, especially those affecting clubs and their coaches. Possible 'Clubs Professional Body'.
3. Financial considerations – funding and use of clubs for competitions for those deserving.
4. Premier Football Clubs link. Foundation.
5. Build up clubs in communities / funding support for only one club per area. Would encourage spectators and sponsorship.
6. Close connection with Local Leagues is important for clubs and grounds them in their community
7. TTE clear ethos.

Clubs 2 – Participants

2nd September 2020

Members'
Advisory
Group

- Ackworth Club/ MAG Dan Simms
- Ackworth Academy Eli Baraty
- Birmingham Academy Edward Lynn
- Corby Smash Colin Wilson
- Ellenborough Gordon Izatt
- Graham Spicer Jane Barella
- Greenhouse Daniel Basterfield & Jason Sugrue
- Kingfisher Peter Charters & Raj Patel
- Ormesby Alan Ransome
- Portishead Joe Ratajczak
- Swerve Paul Warters & Steve Brunskill
- MAG Members: Neil Hurford, Kevin Buddell, Jo Green, Liam McTiernan, Steve Pratt, Dan Simms



Clubs 2 - Key Challenges

1. **Place / Premises** - Security of Tenure. Rent. Suitable facilities (like Europe).
2. **People** –
 - i. Coaches. Balance between volunteer and professional coaches – undervalued for the service.
 - ii. Attract new and younger members.
 - iii. Reduce member dropout rate.
3. **Financial** - Severe downward pressure on prices and costs, adversely impacts investment. Need to become self sufficient via sponsorship and structure.
4. **Competitions & Club Structure** – lack of structure. Pyramid system needed.
5. **Image** –
 - i. Non-professional image of the sport impacting membership.
 - ii. Lack of role models at the top for kids to develop.
6. **TTE Relationship** - Large complexity in the relationship between Clubs and TTE. Not fit for purpose for the players/ coaches etc, but currently fit for the people that organise events. Voting / lack of political power.

Clubs 2 – Actions

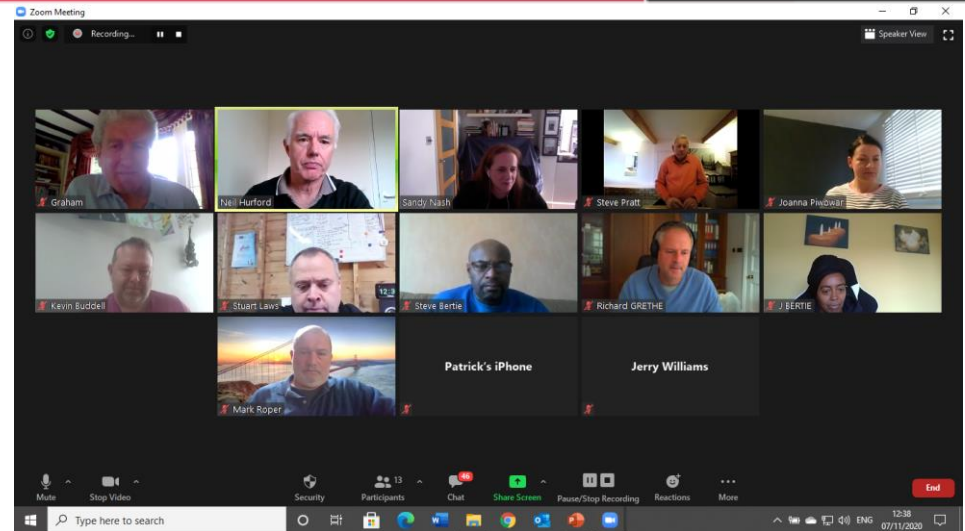
1. Support for creating stronger local clubs as a number 1 priority, not all clubs, prioritise (risk of dilution). Proactive approach from TTE.
2. TTE support to link schools to clubs.
3. It needs to be a huge priority to improve the image of the sport.
4. Connect local clubs to Ping Pong Parlours and Ping! And give out fliers and push recruitment.
5. Competition clear structure, including National Clubs League.
6. Social structure to integrate junior and senior members within a club.
7. Financial ideas to help clubs to be self sustainable. e.g. commercial activities.
8. Use of clubs as competitions venues to so money kept within table tennis.

Clubs 3 – Participants

7 November 2020

Members'
Advisory
Group

- Ashford Mark Roper
- Cippenham Graham Trimming
- Falmouth Jerry Williams
- Graham Spicer Patrick Caunt
- Hampstead TTC Richard Grethe
- Norwich Stuart Laws
- Torbay Academy Jo Piwowar



- MAG Members: Neil Hurford, Juliet Bertie, Stephen Bertie, Kevin Buddell, Sandy Nash, Steve Pratt

Clubs 3 - Key Challenges

1. **Lockdown / Covid-19** – Rebuilding.
2. **Place** - Premises /Location, Security of Tenure. Availability timing issues, utilise better, expansion or new venue.
3. **People** –
 - i. Volunteers with expertise.
 - ii. Player demographic – encourage new, younger players.
 - iii. Player retention, especially reduce drop out rate from approx 16+ to 35/40.
 - iv. Coaches. Being able to support good coaches.
4. **Financial** - Support for performance players at clubs a distance from TTE training venues. Support full player pathway.
5. **Competitions / Social** – getting balance right between community club v junior development. Inclusive atmosphere and competitions available for all levels.
6. **Perception / Image** - More TTE support, especially re TT image and attracting younger demographic.

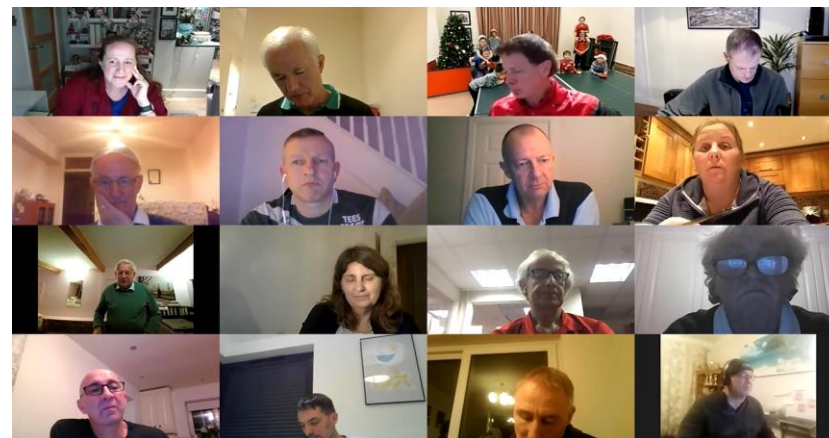
Clubs 3 – Actions

1. Lockdown opportunity – more flexible structure. Good time to introduce change.
2. National Clubs League. New clubs culture. Pyramid – aim is to widen the base so more local competitions at the lower level to encourage more participation.
3. Consider social players and lower level players in competition and league structure – possible Social Leagues, encourage companies, schools league. More flexible competitions. Build competition to meet needs.
4. Financial - TTE education scheme to help clubs help themselves to become financially sustainable. Basis for TTE funding – suggest regarding rewarding clubs bringing players through.
5. Link any new TTE projects introduced to local clubs, eg. Ping!, Ping Pong Parlours.
6. Improve TT image / perception of table tennis.
7. More activities aimed at 16+.
8. Volunteer investment program via NGB promotion. Apprentice scheme. D of E Scheme.
9. Communication - regular chance for clubs to have a voice. Keep communication channels open. Forum?

Clubs 4 – Participants

15 December 2020

- Bristol Civil Service Mike Kinlocke
 - Colebridge Kate Hughes
 - Horsham Spinners Rory Scott
 - Knighton Park Mike Smith
 - Leeds Judean Ivan Lewis
 - Nottingham Sycamore Jason Ramage
 - Portsmouth David Wiles
 - South Croydon Robin Faulkner
 - TTE/Blackpool TTC Martin Ireland
 - Woodfield Steve Horton
 - Woodford Wells Zoltan Hosszu
-
- MAG Members: Neil Hurford, Jo Green, Sandy Nash, Steve Pratt, Dave Randerson



Clubs 4 - Key Challenges

1. **Lockdown / Covid-19** – Rebuilding, getting people back to play (especially adults).
2. **Place / Premises** - Extension or relocation to new venue to enable expansion. Equipment costs and requirements (including more to meet Covid guidelines). Fix leaky roof! Need more sessions available and more participation at existing sessions.
3. **People** –
 - i. Volunteers. Need younger and new.
 - ii. Coaches. More.
 - iii. Members – more, especially for league commitment. All ages, although feel more adults lost as a result of Covid-19, and junior standard needs improving.
 - iv. Increase female membership. All ages.
 - v. Player retention.
4. **Financial** – Survive. Self sustainable to break even or make a profit.
5. **Competitions Structure** – Needs a cohesive, clear, and regional structured pathway for competitions. Cost prohibitive.
6. **Social** – need to keep new and social players engaged.
7. **Increase base of pyramid.**

Clubs 4 – Actions

1. Help rebuilding post- Covid-19. Local Leagues will be important for this
2. Club development. TTE to work more closely with key clubs looking to grow.
3. Educate clubs to become self-sustaining financially and to be aware of any funding available.
4. Pyramid-base building is key. Plan for social table tennis.
5. Identify potential new club sites / venues.
6. Simplify/rationalise the competitive structure. Re-examine costs of participation – funding for use of venues often insufficient.
7. TTE to enter into venue rental agreement with Sports Hall providers – could be used for regional competitions and schools coaching.
8. Stronger links to universities to deal with the drop-off in participation by players in 18-24 age-group. More competitions at U-21 and U-25 level.
9. More innovative/flexible competitions at club level to ease the transition from social to competitive play – eg ladder competitions, summer leagues for individuals.