

## MAG Update Note for National Council – September 2020

This has been a period of high activity for MAG, particularly with regard to pro-active engagement with clubs, leagues and counties. We have also raised important issues with the TTE Board.

We continue to work closely with the Board so that where possible MAG activities align with Board priorities as set out in the Mission 2025 plan.

### MAG Meetings

Two main meetings of MAG have been held, one at the beginning of July and the other at the end of September. In addition, at the beginning of September, we held a meeting with the TTE Performance Team to discuss issues we had raised about how the Performance Team could engage more effectively with clubs, coaches and parents. These were all held as on-line meetings.

Topics discussed at the two main meetings included – Engagement with the TT Community, Projects Update, Issues Raised with the Board, and Formation of MAG Sub-Groups.

The next meeting will be held on the 21<sup>st</sup> November – again, on-line.

### MAG Recruitment

Following the recruitment process, seven new members of MAG have been recruited. Increasing the number of MAG members to sixteen was agreed by the Board and has added to the diversity MAG and widened its skill base. This has increased the robustness of MAG.

Details of the new MAG members are available at:

<https://tabletennisengland.co.uk/news/archived/a-mag-nificent-seven-bring-new-skills/>

### Engagement with the Wider Community

Engagement with the wider community had been identified as a priority for MAG by the Board. We have been able to make extensive use of on-line technology (Zoom) to facilitate this activity, particularly as so many people are now comfortable in participating in on-line meetings.

- **Counties & Leagues** – all 39 counties have been offered the opportunity to have an on-line discussion with MAG. This provided a chance for participants to hear about MAG's current activities as well as being able to shape our future work programme. Six counties have taken up the offer of an on-line discussion. The 6 meetings have proved productive with a consistent theme being that TTE and the Board need to improve communication and engagement. The Board has already taken up one of our ideas on how this can be improved (see below).

A report on the discussions has been drafted. This identifies those issues raised by counties which will be factored into the MAG forward work programme. This report will be published on the MAG pages of the TTE website. In the meantime, the offer for counties and their constituent leagues to have an on-line discussion with MAG remains open, if any further counties would like to do so.

- **Clubs** – we are engaging with leading clubs on how they can be assisted in their development role. Twenty-five clubs have already engaged in the process through two on-line discussion sessions. Plans for the third session are now underway. Subsequently, we hope to make participation in the sessions open to the full range of Premier clubs. Topics that have been highlighted in the discussions so far have included:
  - The development of commercially sustainable models for clubs
  - A revised competitive structure that provides greater support to clubs
  - A greater degree of interaction of the TTE performance team with clubs.
  - Stronger links between Mass Participation programmes and clubs
  - Improving player retention through promoting a better image of the sport
  - Restoring facility grants from Sport England
  - Giving clubs a stronger voice

No doubt other issues will emerge as the discussions with clubs continue.

Preparations for the third round of discussions with Clubs are in hand with a further 15 clubs invited to participate. Further rounds are planned, and we may open up the discussions to all Premier Clubs who wish to participate.

## Projects Update

- (a) **Volunteering** – the report had been finalised and submitted to the Board. The feedback from the Board has been positive and they are now addressing with TTE staff what will be involved in implementing our recommendations. The report will be published on the MAG pages of the TTE website.
- (b) **Ranking** – input into the ranking review and consultation is on-going
- (c) **Changing Perceptions** – three simple initial actions have been suggested to the Board Working Group.
- (d) **IT Systems** – a project brief had been agreed by the Board. However, the project has not got underway due to other commitments.
- (e) **Coaching** – two project briefs have been written. One addressing the “drop-out” rate for newly qualified coaches, and the other on how to increase the number of female coaches and coaches from minority ethnic backgrounds. Now that the new MAG members are in place, we should be able to form suitable project teams and get these projects underway.
- (f) **Reducing the Decline in Players in 17-24 Age Range** – we are formulating ideas for a project that will identify how to address the significant decline in membership that occurs between 17 and 24 years

## Issues Raised with the Board

We have raised the following issues with the Board.

- (a) **Performance** – MAG have suggested to the Board that the interaction of the Performance team with players, coaches and parents could be improved. We discussed this issue in detail

with the Performance Team (Simon Mills, Alan Cooke, Gavin Evans and Matt Stanforth) during a 2-hour meeting at the beginning of September.

This proved to be a productive discussion. The team recognised the need to improve communication and engagement and welcomed suggestions from MAG on how this can be achieved. We will be providing feedback to the Board which we also plan to publish on the MAG page on the TTE website.

- (b) **News Article on Changes to National Championships** – MAG expressed our view to the Board that the News Article on the TTE website which outlined a number of changes to the National Championships and the U-12 National Cup had not been well communicated. We recommended that the Article be withdrawn to allow further consideration of the issues and how best to communicate them. A new Article was produced which explained the rationale for the decision in more detail.
- (c) **On-Line Discussion with Members** – MAG suggested to the Board that they take advantage of the popularity of TT discussion programmes on Facebook/YouTube to hold their own discussion programme to respond to issues of concern to members. The Board fully embraced this suggestion resulting in the “Ask Us Anything” programme on Facebook on 6<sup>th</sup> September. A member of MAG helped structure the format of the programme, whilst another MAG member chaired the session. The discussion went well. The TTE participants directly addressed the issues raised by members. About 250 people joined the discussion live on Facebook and there have subsequently been over 5,000 views of the recording on the TTE Facebook page. Future discussions of this type are likely. This initiative has the potential to be a game-changer in the way in which TTE engages with the membership.

## Diversity & Inclusion

TTE are initiating a new project on Diversity & Inclusion. Diversity and inclusion will become an increasingly important aspect of the Sport England strategy, and TTE recognises that it needs to invest in this area. The aims of the project will be to:

- Review progress against the current Diversity Action Plan
- Create and recommend an updated Plan for the next 4-5 years
- Create an implementation plan for the sport.

The Board is currently assembling a project team to take forward this initiative. MAG has been asked by the Board to nominate two people to participate in this project. We have nominated Juliet Bertie and Stephen Bertie both of whom have special expertise in this area. Both nominations have been accepted and Juliet and Stephen will join the project team for this initiative.

## Future Activities - MAG Live!

This comprises a number of initiatives that will involve MAG engaging with the TT community both individually and collectively through Zoom, YouTube and social media. This will be rolled out over the coming months. The first activity has been to revitalise our MAG Facebook Group which we are using to provide immediate feedback on our activities (eg discussions with clubs). We've also provided an email address - [ttemembersadvisorygroup@gmail.com](mailto:ttemembersadvisorygroup@gmail.com) – so that members of the table tennis community can make contact to suggest issues that should form part of the MAG forward work programme.

The next initiative is to engage with a wide range of people from the table tennis community and from TTE's Advisory Network. This will provide us with the opportunity to explain who we are, what we do, what we've done - and our plans for the future. This will also enable participants to shape the future direction of the MAG work programme.

Neil Hurford  
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Members Advisory Group  
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