

National Council Competition Review Sub Committee Report

Following our meeting on Thursday 20th October, 2022, I made a presentation to the National Council which included several board members. The report in general was as follows.

The Committee were concerned that the overall thrust of the Competition Review would have a negative effect on the sport if implemented.

The view of the Committee is that The implementation of the present proposals would not be sustainable in their present format and would require significant additional finances and we put the question 'Who would pay this?'

This was explained in the meeting by Neil Rogers, and also to Alan in advance of the meeting during an Open session - there is no expectation that the proposals will entail additional finances from either entrants or organisers. This was a fundamental tenet of the review, and the further detail of this sits in Phase III.

Table Tennis England did not appear to have included this within their budgeting and in any case, so far as we are aware, do not have the large significant additional sums available. The clubs who participate in the British League are stretched, partly because of the heavy entry fees for the competitions and some clubs have been paying between £5,000 - £6,000 in total for entry fee for the coming season and would look unlikely to be able to find extra funding, which would be required for additional competitions.

It is not expected that costs for specific opportunities will increase. However, if a club enters more teams in more events or more frequently then there will likely be more entry fees to pay overall. The review will enhance and refine the 'menu' of events and available opportunities - players, teams and clubs will be able to choose and prioritise as they wish.

The senior players who compete in tournaments such as Grand Prix, are finding entry fees very high and the cost of competing restrictive therefore, there does not seem to be much prospect of extra finance for more competition from the sector.

Agreed; the competition review proposes an overhaul of the domestic tournament structure to help address this

There is a similar problem with the junior and cadet players and their parents where the current cost of participating in tournaments and competitions throughout the country is proving to be very expensive plus some overseas competitions to such a level that it is becoming prohibitive.

Agreed; the competition review proposes an overhaul of the domestic tournament structure to help address this

We expressed concern that in the board minutes of September, there was a line saying that the County Championships might be scrapped. The National Council Sub Committee are of the opinion that the County Championships is a very valuable competition for the members. It is relatively low cost and very popular.

Agreed; it is not proposed to 'scrap' the County Championships, and this will be reflected in proposals moving forward.

The cost to a County of entering a team in the County Championships is around £200 where the cost of entering a team in the Senior British League can be in excess of £500.

The comment from Neil Rogers at National Council suggested that the County Championships costings were not comparable with the Senior British League who use expensive sports centers. Neil's comment is not correct with the exception of the Premier and Championship division. The rest of the divisions do not use sports centers but in the main table tennis club facilities which is the same as many matches in the County Championships and, therefore, the comparison in our report is valid.

It was also noted that there was some comment in the Review about the value of the County Championships for the junior/cadet sections and it was felt by the Committee that these competitions were very valuable. They are providing an important ladder for the young players and was vital as an introduction to players into the middle and upper levels of the sport.

It was also a great honour for the youngsters to be selected for their county and it was in itself a motivation for the players, coaches, families and clubs. To interfere with the current arrangement would be damaging to the sport and it was also noted that the county championships was organised largely by volunteer committee and volunteer secretaries within the counties which help to keep it low cost.

It was also felt that the National Junior and Cadet Leagues for clubs were very valuable competitions. Mike Atkinson organises the whole program very well and it is extremely popular and like the County Championships should not be changed as a result of the Competition Review.

Agreed; there is no suggestion of material change to NCL/ NJL, only greater overall alignment – e.g. branding, TTE support and processes – in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness, and to provide an improved experience to hosts and entrants.

In a similar way, the English League Competitions including the Wilmott Cup and the JM Rose Bowl were longstanding competitions in England going back at least 70 years and provided an opportunity for league representative teams to participate, which was having little interference or problem with other competitions and, therefore, should be maintained.

Noted; the Board will be presented with this feedback, and the implications of retaining the ELCC event, when considering the wider proposals.

It is also part of the local league structure which is so valuable to the sport in England. There is also no cost to this committee as it was entirely volunteer managed.

It was also felt that the National Championships left a great deal to be desired at the present time and this had been picked up by the MAG report. In particular the level of prize money for the Senior National Championships was low to such an extent that it was not a great motivator for the top players to participate. This together with other aspects of the National Championships needs to be addressed.

This issue was also addressed in the meeting – there are developments already in progress regarding prize money, and moving forward this is detail that sits at Phase III of the review.

It was also felt that the removal of the U10 – 12 competitions in the National U13 Championships were a negative development as motivation needs to be given to youngsters at each age level in this sector and was another anti-motivator.

Agreed in terms of principle - the competition review is proposing instead that multiple additional opportunities are specifically created in this age-group. The age-groups with a specific National Championship event are still considered to provide the optimal approach at this time.

The committee appreciated that a lot of work had gone into the Competition Review in several aspects but it was going in the wrong direction and if it is accepted in its form it would inflict significant damage to the sport.

It was agreed by the Committee that improvement to the competition programme work does need to be done and implemented to the Competition Review, but the current direction should not move forward.

In the document presented by the CEO to Council 'Table Tennis United' it is proposed to create an Advisory Committee for the Board for competitions and this whole report, plus the MAG report should be referred to the new Committee to pick up this subject.

The CEO and Chair have advised National Council that the Steering Group and Board will continue to progress the Competition Review.

It was also felt that providing the information about the Competition Report in the week leading up to National Council was too late for Councillors to be able to discuss this with their committees and leagues and, therefore, Councillors should be given the time to be able to carry out this consultation and report back to the January meeting before any decisions are taken from the recommendations of the Competition Review.

**Alan Ransome
Chairman
National Council Competition Review Sub Committee**

1st November, 2022