

Challenges Faced by County Associations – Affiliation & Membership

Background

At our meetings earlier this year, we discussed the challenges faced by County Associations. This was prompted by a paper from Dave Edwards of Hertfordshire who described a worrying situation in which Local Leagues in Hertfordshire were either considering disaffiliating from Table Tennis England – or had actually done so.

Such disaffiliations have a detrimental effect on the income received by the County Association, making it difficult for it to undertake its activities. In the discussion of Dave's paper, a number of counties said they recognised the issues raised by Dave. This was not a problem limited to a single county. It was one shared by many counties to a greater or lesser extent.

It seemed sensible for National Council to address this issue.

Questionnaire

In order to understand how widespread these challenges are, Dave prepared a questionnaire that was sent to all National Councillors. The questionnaire covered the specific issues of whether Local Leagues in their counties were considering disaffiliation or had already done so. It also sought information about the sources of income and expenditure for the county and in particular how county teams were funded.

Details of the questionnaire and the responses received are in the attached Appendix.

Eleven counties responded to the questionnaire, with five of those confirming that it was not a problem limited to Hertfordshire. Two counties reported that leagues in their county had disaffiliated in the last five years.

There were a wide range of approaches to the funding of county teams. Some counties met a high proportion of the costs incurred. Others only paid for the entry fees and expected the players to meet all other expenses (at least for senior and veteran teams). This resulted in a wide range of affiliation fees that Local Leagues paid to the county association. This varied from about £3 per team in the league to around £30 per team in the league.

Just to emphasise that there is no reason for there to be a "standard" county affiliation fee. County Associations should charge what they view as reasonable to support their activities and in consultation with their affiliated leagues. But it is useful to be aware of the range in the affiliation fee structure.

Next Steps

At the heart of this issue is the simple fact that when a Local League disaffiliates from Table Tennis England, it is the County Association that suffers the most as they lose a significant amount of income. The Local League no longer has the direct benefits of being affiliated to Table Tennis England, but it still benefits from the wider role of Table Tennis England in developing and promoting our sport.

In order to address this issue, it would be useful to discuss with Table Tennis England how it can be more pro-active in making the case for Local Leagues to be affiliated and to discourage them from disaffiliating, thereby avoiding the negative impacts on County Associations.

It is understood that when leagues have been considering disaffiliating, Table Tennis England have provided senior members of staff to discuss with the league the wider benefits of affiliation. This has often been successful. Such support should continue and be encouraged. But we may be able to explore other more proactive measures that might encourage leagues to retain their affiliation status.

Neil Hurford
Dave Edwards

September 2024

APPENDIX

Discussion paper for National Council regarding affiliation and membership

Below is a copy of the paper that Hertfordshire produced last year for discussion at National Council last year followed by the 11 responses from Counties

Background:

Hertfordshire Table Tennis Association (HTTA) is a relatively large association within Table Tennis England and until recently has had 7 affiliated leagues within the County. For 2023/24 season HTTA have entered 7 teams in the County Championships (1 junior, 1 senior, 3 O40 and 2 O60).

Team and player numbers fluctuate over time but typical numbers from the Season before Covid19 are shown below

League name	Player numbers	Team numbers
Barnet	234	47
Cheshunt	82	13
Hemel Hempstead	126	24
Hertford	88	17
North Herts.	255	48
Shaw	299	48
Watford	119	29
Total	1203	226

Historically, players within these leagues have paid a Table Tennis England affiliation/membership fee and additionally each **league** within Hertfordshire has paid a **£14 per** team fee to Herts County which has funded coaching development, junior training, County Championship entry fees and travel expenses for the principal County Teams.

There appears to be some growing resistance to paying the £14 team fees. Barnet have de-affiliated completely, not only from Hertfordshire Table Tennis Association but also from Table Tennis England affiliation. Hemel Hempstead are considering doing the same and are in the process of changing their constitution to enable changes to their affiliation. We have recently lost Watford and Cheshunt through the gradual contraction of league table tennis so assuming Hemel Hempstead go ahead and de-affiliate from the County and TTE

we are left with only 3 out of 7 former leagues and are faced with a corresponding reduction in income.

Questions for the National Council are as follows :-

- Is this just a Hertfordshire problem?
 - How many leagues within your County association have folded in the last 5 years?
 - How many leagues within your association have de-affiliated in the last 5 years? How is funding raised within Counties?
 - Are there any other income streams other than team fees?
 - How are County Teams funded?
 - Do you charge an "individual affiliation" fee for any players playing for your County who is not playing in a local league and therefore doesn't otherwise pay a County Affiliation Fee (either directly or indirectly through their team or league).
- **Does your County pay expenses of any kind to players?**
- **How does your County set charges for the leagues within your County Association?**
- **What benefits do your leagues receive from being affiliated within your County Association? Anything HCTTA not thought of?!**

1. Is this just a Hertfordshire problem?

5 answered No = 45%
3 did not answer question = 27%
2 answered they had a least one league disaffiliate from the County =18%

2. How many leagues within your County have folded in the last 5 years?

1 answered 2 leagues have disaffiliated but are still playing league table tennis =9%
7 answered no leagues have folded = 63%
2 did not answer the question = 18%
1 said one league had folded = 9%

3. How many leagues within your association have disaffiliated in the last 5 years.

3 did not answer the question = 27%
6 answered that no leagues have disaffiliated = 54%
2 said that at least one league had disaffiliated = 18%

4. How is funding raised within the County

1 did not answer the question =9%

10 answered through league affiliations ranging from £3.30 to £20 per team =90%

5. Are there any other income streams other than the team fees?

6 answered Closed tournaments =54%
2 did not answer the question = 18%
1 answered nothing substantial =9%
1 said bank interest =9%
1 said no other income streams = 9%

6. How are County teams funded?

2 did not answer the question =18%
1 said first teams paid mileage and accommodation and all are paid entry fees = 9%
1 said all entry fees are paid but teams are self- funding for mileage and accommodation = 9%
2 said from affiliations and surplus from bank account = 18%
1 said entry fees are paid and teams make contribution to their costs = 9%
1 said from bank account = 9%
1 said from entry fees but Vets are self-funded except for the first team = 9%
1 said from entry fees but County shirts are provided = 9%
1 said from entry fees and venue costs are also paid = 9%

7. How does County set charges for leagues within the Association?

8 said they set their fees at the AGM = 72%
3 did not answer the question = 27%

8. What benefits do Leagues receive from being affiliated with your County Association?

2 answered Schools table tennis and coaching = 18%
1 said nothing substantial = 9%
1 said Entry fees, County kit, Interleague, County Closed, and trophies = 9%
1 said £100 coaching grant.
1 did not answer the question = 9%
1 said League and County closed tournament = 9%
1 said want to run an Interleague competition but nobody wants to organise = 9%.
1 said they want to affiliate directly to Table Tennis England = 9%
1 said so that they can be eligible to play for the County. = 9%
1 said full and personal insurance, Coaching, Closed tournament, Pooled expenses, Travel, and County kits provided = 9%

Thank you to all the Counties who replied to the survey. Hertfordshire have

some difficult decisions to make as we have lost 3 out of our 7 leagues, which equates to 43% of our income.

David Edwards
National Councillor
Hertfordshire.