

NATIONAL COUNCIL – DRAFT MINUTES v.1 by Susie Venner,

ZOOM MEETING

MARCH 29, 2025

Attendees: Neil Hurford (Chair, National Council). Oxfordshire.

National Councillors or Deputy National Councillors:

Dave Adamson (Gloucestershire); John Andrews (Essex); Jonathan Bayliss (Derbyshire); Tony Catt (Sussex); Martin Clark (Worcestershire), Tony Dias (Middlesex); Dave Edwards (Herts); Clive Ellison (Avon); Margot Fraser (Surrey); Brian Freer (Cambridgeshire); Jonathan Hopson (Berkshire); Clive Hollingsbee (Kent); Steve Joel (Somerset); Harry Jutle (Herefordshire), James Kenny (South Yorkshire); Trevor Kerry (Nottinghamshire); Alex Murdoch (Bedfordshire); Shaun Parsley (Norfolk); Shirley Pickering (Leicestershire); Tom Purcell (Lancashire); Alan Ransome (Cleveland); Joshua Reynolds (Yorkshire); Karen Tonge (Cheshire); Jonathan Stubbs (Hamps); Brian Whitehead (Buckinghamshire); Gary Whyman (Cleveland); Estyn Williams (Warwickshire);

National Council Secretary and VETTS Representative: Susie Venner,

TTE Board members: Sally Lockyer (TTE CEO); Don Parker (TTE Acting Chair/Elected Director); Ritchie Venner (Elected Director); Jos Kelly (Elected Director); Paul Bishop (Co-opted Director)

Apologies from TTE Board Members: Jill Parker (President)

Guest: Richard Scruton (Table Tennis International Events) – part of meeting

Absence and apologies from National Councillors:

Dale Aitkenhead (Northumberland), Shaun Fitzpatrick (Avon), Tim Giles (Isle of Wight), Sue Hayes (Buckinghamshire), Ivor Jones (Northants); Neil Le Milliere (Kent), Reinhard Lindner (Dorset), Noel Sewell (Wiltshire).

The following members were represented by their Deputies:

- Neil Le Milliere (Kent - represented by Clive Hollingsbee)
- Shaun Fitzpatrick (Avon - represented by Clive Ellison)
- Sue Hayes (Bucks - represented by Brian Whitehead)

1. Introduction and Welcome by the Chair

The Chair of National Council Neil Hurford (NH) welcomed new National Councillor Trevor Kerry; newly co-opted Board Director and Chair of Finance and Audit Committee, Paul Bishop; and Richard Scruton who will be giving an update on the Worlds.

1a) Registration of Any New Business Interests

There were no new business interests to declare.

1b) Minute's Silence

A minute's silence in remembrance of our recently departed friends and colleagues was held, including:

- Betty Bird – England International and European & World Veterans Champion
- Geoff Gardiner – General Secretary English Schools
- John Cheadle - Worcestershire

Tributes can be found on TTE's website.

2. Approval of Previous Minutes

The minutes of the January 25, 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record proposed by Martin Clark and seconded Karen Tonge.

Minutes of the January 25, 2025 meeting are available here:

[National Council Draft Minutes of Meeting January 2025.pdf](#)

3. Matters Arising and Action List

The Action List from the January 2025 meeting was updated and reviewed. Copy available here:

[Action List March 2025.pdf](#)

4. Update on World Team Championships 2026 Richard Scruton

Richard Scruton (RS), a Director from TT International Events Ltd (TTIE) gave a verbal presentation as an update to the World Team Championships which will be held in London in 2026.

A copy of Richard's speaking notes has been sent to all National Councillors.

RS offered to return to give National Council a further update towards the end of the year. **ACTION**

In response to questions from National Councillors....

Tony Catt (TC) NC for Sussex asked about the current advertisement for a Director with a legal background and whether that requirement was a 'deal breaker'. RS said that although the current advertisement for a NED states legal skills are desired, he would wait until he'd received all the applications before stating if it was essential.

Alan Ransome (AER), NC for Cleveland, said a similar event in 1977 in England was a success in part due to wide-reaching television coverage with BBC2 taking 28 hours coverage. He asked about television arrangements, particularly with the free-to-air main broadcasters. He also asked about the number of tickets which would be available at both venues. RS said there were ongoing discussions with free-to-air broadcasters and that there would be 'thousands of tickets available each day'.

Martin Clark (MC), NC for Worcestershire expressed concerns about any potential financial risk, particularly with regard to ITTF/WTT's financial commitment and what contingency plans are in place. RS said that the ITTF/WTT underwrite was 'not infinite but significant' and that he had to have confidence in what the majority partner (ITTF/WTT) told him. He could not comment on any financial situation within ITTF.

Jon Bayliss, (JB) NC for Derbyshire, asked if spectators would be able to watch players training. RS noted the comment.

Tony Catt (TC) asked about how ecological commitment and sustainability of the venues. RS said that the OVO Arena at Wembley is a sustainable environment, but he didn't know about the Copper Box Arena. There was a sustainability group in event delivery, who are looking at these aspects.

Josh Reynolds (JR) NC for Yorkshire asked about finance commitment – how dependent is success on ticketing. RS –said he was not going into financial details but ticketing income is an important part of event.

5. TTE CEO Update, Sally Lockyer

A copy of the February CEO Update is available here:

[chief-executives-update-february-2025/](#)

Sally Lockyer (SL) presented an update, including outcomes of Action Points previously assigned to her, and took questions.

Actions points and Q&As:

AGM: Regarding voting for a weekday or weekend agm, 50 per cent preferred weekdays and 30 per cent Saturdays with a 51:49 divide on whether it would impact on attendance. Members of NC expressed dissatisfaction at the loss of an in-person networking opportunity. SL agreed to look at alternatives in the future.

Stake holder engagement: SL offered to share paper which is being prepared. It will map out key stake-holders. **ACTION.**

Good Standing: SL had had a positive meeting with Susie Venner (SV) (Chair of the VETTS). SV had submitted a draft Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations and SL would revert shortly. **ACTION**

New Chair: Announcement of the new Chair – Monday 31/3/25

MED elections: It was reinforced by NC that at last year's agm the then Chair gave several commitments as to how the election of MEDs would take place, but the paperwork relating to this year's seemed to contradict that. NC was reminded that the then Chair had assured the agm that every potential candidate who met the criteria would be on the ballot sheet and that people would only be removed in 'exceptional circumstances'. It was stressed that the agm gave up some membership rights on the strength of these promises and it was important that the membership have the choice of all legitimate nominations without prior veto or censorship by TTE.

SL confirmed that the NomCom would report to the Board, who would make the final decision, even though the paperwork indicated that would be NomComs, the decision was at Board level.

Concerns were also raised that experience and knowledge of table tennis had been 'down-graded' to a minor paragraph at the bottom of the application paperwork, and it was again felt that this sent the wrong message to the table tennis community about the value of people from within the sport. SL confirmed that table tennis experience would be a 'given' and that the skills matrix had been used to identify other skills which would be needed going forward.

Question Time: Several comments about how the TTE Question time session with members could be improved. SL prepared to re-examine the format to see if or how things could be done better.

At agm last year, some proposals re fifth ED and how the nom process works, looking for confirmation about how applicants received,

There were concerns about how the opportunity document looks, with experience and expertise in TT at the bottom – EDs need to be real TT people. First key point is that they have experience and expertise in TT.

WTC: It was pointed out that the WTC will clash with a major schools' event which could preclude some enthusiastic children from attending.

6 Introduction of New Co-opted Board Member, Paul Bishop

Paul Bishop (PB) has recently been co-opted on to the Board of TTE and as Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee following the resignation of Mark Boote.

PB introduced himself by way of a short insight into his professional and table tennis background. He has held a number of high-level positions in the field of accountancy, including technical and commercial accountancy, insurance and consultancy. He has considerable experience at a senior level in governance and its processes; and Audit Committees.

In table tennis, he was a top ten junior, having played many around the country and internationally, including the European Juniors. He played at University and in local leagues, but when he retired he became more involved in the sport again, particularly in his role as Chairman of Woodford Wells Table Tennis Club and as a qualified coach, working with juniors and adults.

PB said it was early days for him on the Board of TTE but saw the need for more transparency around financials at all levels, particularly about "where does the money come from" and "where and how are we spending it". He also saw this as part of a broader communications agenda running alongside the need to communicate more fully.

One first step would be to look at the 2025/26 Budget with Sally Lockyer, who was also aligned on doing things in a more transparent way.

This approach was welcomed by several National Councillors who also expressed great pleasure in having someone with such a high level of financial experience and expertise who also had an inside knowledge of table tennis and a passion for the sport.

PB said that he was still looking into details but that he would be happy to continue. He stressed that he saw this role for an appointed rather than an elected director, as its required certain professional skills and the table tennis side was helpful in his role.

7 Financial Information/Select Committee on Finance, Tony Catt

Tony Catt (NC for Sussex) (TC) presented the details on an earlier proposal for a Select Committee on Finance. The proposed Terms of Reference for the Select Committee on Finance are available here:

[SELECT FINANCE ToR March 2025.pdf](#)

There was some discussion, including Paul Bishop and Sally Lockyer, about the need for efficient communication with National Council.

The outcome was that Paul Bishop would do some further work about what was needed to deliver the required transparency and come back with proposals and a plan for discussion. **ACTION.**

8 Challenges Facing County Associations – Update, Neil Hurford & David Edwards

Neil Hurford (Chair) reported that a small group (himself, Estyn Williams, Tom Purcell, John Andrews, and Dave Edwards) met with TTE's Jo Keay Blyth (Head of Operations) (JKB) and Andy Wilesmith (AW) recently. Two points emerged:

1. AW said that the Development team is 'open for business to help counties.
2. A county handbook could be created which sets out the role of counties and enables them to share good practise. **ACTION**

A discussion took place about the need for clarity on the status of affiliation whether for individuals and clubs and whether they affiliate directly or via counties.

9. National Council – New Ideas/How to Fit In, Tony Catt, Sussex (TC)

Tony Catt presented a discussion document:

[National Council - how to fit in 170225.pdf](#)

TC felt that National Council ran aground with previous the CEO and TC's paper was trying to work out how NC could integrate and be worthwhile for TTE. It considered building structures to mirror T1 Coms. Also expanding NC to include Deputy National Councillors and representatives of clubs and leagues. This could harness more talent and allow a better format to share knowledge and expertise. It also considered a rebranding of NC as a Membership Forum and find a way to widen its membership to accommodate the skills that could be available in the community.

Neil Hurford (NH) confirmed that deputies could be invited and suggested that National Councillors could also invite a guest to attend, eg from a Club or League or member of the county committee. He advised that either himself or Susie Venner should be notified in advance for admin purposes. **ACTION.**

Several National Councillors, including Estyn Williams and Alan Ransome explained that many of the previous issues had come about because of the relationship with the previous CEO who did not value the contribution NC would make. As a result, NC had become defensive of the sport and its own position. It was recognised that there was a need for change and better transparency.

Clive Ellison (Avon) had on-going concerns that the overall communications were not good and cited examples of late papers. NH confirmed that papers could be put on the NC website as and when they were received. NH confirmed that this would be done in future. CE offered to help updating the website. **ACTION**

The Select Committee papers were a welcome addition, and it was asked if consideration could be given to using them for consultation.

10. Memorandum of Understanding/Finalising Standing Orders, Neil Hurford

Neil Hurford said that NC now has a better and more independent way of working so a formal MoU might not be required. But it was accepted that the Standing Orders needed updating and tidying-up

ACTION: NH, SV, EW and JR to take Standing Orders through to conclusion. TC happy to be involved.

11. Select Committee Reports

a) Constitution

Alan Ransome (AER) presented a report from the Select Committee on the Constitution.

Full report available here:

[Select Committee on the Constitution Report to National Council 2029.3.25.pdf](#)

The main points were:

- **Regulation changes:** Concerned that regulations were being changed without same consultation and scrutiny as previously. Now spending a lot of money on lawyers rather than using the experienced volunteer resources.
- **Memorandum of Understanding:** Welcomed the progress that had been made and the potential for a better working arrangement with the new CEO. Requested that the supply of information from TTE to NC returned to its previous good levels. **ACTION**
- **Appointment of Chair:** Noted appointment would shortly be announced. Reiterated previous position of the importance of a table tennis knowledge and involvement, and the significance of someone with long-standing connections to the Association.

- ***In Good Standing*** – Welcomed the report from the CEO that there were on-going discussions and stressed the importance for TTE to reconnect with these bodies. There is growing evidence that the sport is continuing to fragment particularly with competition and rankings and this is causing increased concern. **ACTION:** Update.
- ***Team GB*** – It was understood that the previous proposals to have a GB Team rather than an England team were no longer viable as it had been learnt that not all Home Nations would support this. Sally Lockyer explained that it was important that there was collaboration across Home Nations eg efficiencies, economies of scale, etc which is a requirement as part of our UK Sport funding. Director, Don Parker clarified that there are two areas i) collaboration and ii) representation and that England will stay as England as a representative team except for the Olympics, where traditionally the squad is GB.

b. Competitions

Alan Ransome (AER) presented the Select Committee Report on Competitions. This continued the ongoing concerns from previous reports about the damage to the competition structure at many levels, due to the increasing fragmentation of the competition programme.

Ritchie Venner, (RV) Board Director and Chair of Tier 1 Competitions Committee responded to the paper.

Full report available here:

[Select Committee on Competitions Report 29.3.25.pdf](#)

The main points and discussion of the Select Committee Report on Competitions were:

- ***Junior and Girls Performance:*** Concern has been expressed that there are competition regulations and ranking procedures which are detrimental to cadet and junior girls progressing to the highest level. Jon Bayliss also spoke about the disadvantages for girls playing, particularly the complex ranking position for girls v. boys. (See link to paper below) Director Ritchie Venner said that concerns had been noted and suggested a 'Task & Finish' Group to look into this area. This suggestion was welcomed.
- ***Loss of Control.*** Reiterated the concerns over the fragmentation of table tennis competition in England, as TTE and some organisations and tournament organisers grew further apart. Call for return to status quo of previous 100 years.
- ***Changes to Competition Regulations:*** Previous system of reviewing regulations with a Conference was a better one than currently exists with regulations being changed without due consideration of the reality of the situation or the needs of clubs and players. The British League Conference was cancelled because of travel difficulties but now easier to do via Zoom.

Request that the Teir 1 Committee on Competition consider the reintroduction of this process. Ritchie Venner said that the reintroduction of the BL Conference was importance step forward and that it was important we listen to clubs. RV will take it to Competition Committee. It was hoped that the BL Conference has due influence and 'teeth'. **ACTION**

- **National Series.** There was a general welcome for the National Series but it was flagged up that there were lessons to be learnt which could improve it for next season. It was hoped that it becomes a top series for juniors and should be opened for development area also. RV reported that the Series will be reviewed with a view to improve it and the points raised by the Select Committee would be considered. **ACTION.**

Appendix A - Analysis of a girl playing in the NCL by Jon Bayliss

[Appendix A -Analysis of a girl playing in the NCL by Jon Bayliss.pdf](#)

12 Articles & Regulations. Neil Hurford/Clive Ellison

Clive Ellison (Avon) (CE) led the discussion on Articles & Regulations. He made general points surrounding the lack of clear information or processes relating to changes of regulations. This made it difficult to follow changes or keep abreast of new regulations. There were also a number of incidents where the information on the website was contradictory and/or confusing. It was felt that the onus is on TTE to provide clear guidance and information to its members.

Concerns were supported by several national Councillors at two levels:

- i) The processes did not allow proper scrutiny or communication;
- ii) The detail was often wrong and caused unintended consequences and difficulties for players, clubs, leagues and others involved in playing and administering the sport.

There were several strands to the discussion and paperwork relating to these issues:

(a) Index Summary

Index of Articles and Regs summary board of governance - December 24

[Index Articles and Regs summary board of governance December 2024.pdf](#)

(b) Revised Approach to approving changes to Regulations – flowchart

[Regulation Approval Process.pdf](#)

TTE has submitted a flow chart (link above). But CE pointed out it was still unclear where this flowchart belongs in the overall process. He was also concerned about the lack of clarity over where there is any consultation with the people affected by

Regulations changes, eg shouldn't National Council be consulted on this. **ACTION:** NH to query with TTE.

(c) Changes to Affiliation Regulations

Current Version: J Affiliation-and-Registration (Current) - Feb 2025

[J-Affiliation-and-Registration \(Current\) Feb 2025.pdf](#)

Previous Version: J-Affiliation-and-Registration (Previous) - Jan 2024

[J-Affiliation-and-Registration \(Previous\) Jan 2024.pdf](#)

There was discussion about changes to Regs J relating to Affiliation and Registration processes which was an example of this. There had been changes to the way and dates affiliation fees were collected which had placed a difficult burden on members, but this had not been thoroughly considered or communicated to clubs and leagues. Failure to comply would attract penalties.

Estyn Williams (EW) and Neil Hurford (NH) who are on the Rules Committee confirmed that they had not been given the chance to input into this in a manner they preferred. EW explained that this had been produced by TTE and lawyers before the Committee could input, and that it was therefore difficult to identify the changes or the impact of them. It was felt this was not a satisfactory process and that the members of the Rules Committee should have had an opportunity to input at an earlier part of the process

Although TTE said that a message had gone out to Clubs and Leagues, several National Councillors had checked with their Leagues who were unaware of many of the recent changes. There were concerns that they would fall foul of these changes as they would be unaware.

There were also concerns about the cost of using lawyers when the decades of experience within the membership including people like Estyn Williams were being overlooked.

ACTION: NH to query process with TTE

(d) New requirements for Associate Clubs

This was another area which had caused confusion for Clubs, as Associate Clubs now needed to have a written and approved constitution and a welfare officer who had attended an online safeguarding course, in order to retain that standard.

However, it was clear from research that many Clubs and Leagues were unaware of this change to definition. As a result, the Clubs could have lost their PL insurance but be unaware of it. This could have serious consequences for Clubs who were hiring premises and had, in all good faith, claimed to have PL cover.

It was again felt that this had not been given full consideration and that the communications were poor.

It was also pointed out that there were errors where the information on the website was in direct conflict with the information in the Regulations. It was assumed that the website which implies the Clubs would have PL cover, had not been updated as the definitions of types of Clubs was wrong.

ACTION: NH to raise with Jo Keay Blyth (TTE) to correct errors.

(e) Insurance arrangements for Clubs

Given the confusion and errors relating to some of the changes in Regulations (as outlined above), it was felt that it was understandable that members would be unaware what cover they may have through TTE insurance. There were concerns that members acting in good faith could be misled or under the misapprehension they were insured for aspects of the sport when they were not.

CE also reported that it had been difficult to find this information on the website.

In summary, it was suggested that CE and others with an involvement and interest in this, (such as Tom Purcell, who had encountered similar problems with information and communications in the North West) compile a paper of their concerns which would be shared with NC and raised with TTE.

ACTION: Compile concerns. (NH, CE, TP, EW, SV and others)

13 National Councillor/Invited Representatives Only

No items raised under this agenda item

14 Dates of Next Meetings in 2025 & 2026

It was discussed whether meetings could also be held on Sundays – rather than just Saturdays. The preference was for Saturdays, but Sundays could be considered if this reduced the chances of clashing with other events.

The next meeting was confirmed for Saturday 28 June 2025 at 9.30am.

Dates for future meetings provisionally set for Saturday 27 September 2025 and Saturday 24 January 2026. But both dates would be confirmed ahead of the proceeding meeting. No decision was made regarding a National Council meeting in March/April 2026. This would be looked at again once a more complete TTE calendar had been produced for the 2025/26 season.

ACTION: NH/SV to revert with future dates

15 Any Other Business

- **Election of Chair for National Council:** SV to contact David Hockney to ask if he will be Returning Officer – and oversee process. **ACTION:**
- **Expert volunteers:** Alan Ransome felt that there was a need to tap into the expert resources of some of our members, like Clive Ellison and Jonathan Hobson, particularly on issues like regulations and governance.

16 Meeting Closed 14.00

ACTION LIST

Action	Owner	Time	Outcome
Return to update NC on World team Championships 2026	NH to invite Richard Scruton	End of Year	
Share stake-holder engagement document after review	SL		
Respond to VETTS MoU re In Good Standing	SL	Asap	
Revert to NC with proposals on making the finances more transparent	PB	Ongoing	
County Handbook	NH/Estyn Williams	Ongoing	
Update Standing Orders	Led by NH	By next meeting	
National Councillors can invite their Deputies and/or guests but should inform NH/SV	NC	Ongoing	
Publish papers earlier. Request for better flow of information.	NH/SV	Ongoing	
Report on outcome of talks re In Good Standing	SL/SV	Next meeting	
Examine proposal for a Task and Finish group on girls' competitions and rankings	RV/Andy Wilesmith	Next meeting	
Ask Tier 1 Comp Com to reconsider role of Conferences, eg County & BL, re regulation changes.	RV>Tier 1 Com	Next meeting	

'Lessons Learnt' for National Series going forward	RV>Tier 1 Com	Next meeting	
Query with JKB the role, position and function of flow chart for changes to regulations.	NH	Next meeting	
Query with JKB lack of consultation re Reg changes	NH	Next meeting	
Inform JKB of errors on website	NH	Next meeting	
Compile concerns relating to process and detail of reg changes	CE and others	On-going	
Progress election for National Council Chair	SV	Report at next NC	
Dates for future meetings	NH/SV	Report at next meeting	