

National Council Report for Annual Review – July 2025

The 2024/25 season has seen the implementation of a new relationship for National Council with Table Tennis England that I outlined in my report last year. This has involved National Council becoming more autonomous and taking full control of how it operates. The most notable changes are that we have now appointed our own General Secretary and created our own website for sharing documents ahead of meetings.

The new General Secretary of National Council is Susie Venner who was elected unanimously at our first meeting in September 2024. Susie has made an immediate impact on the running of National Council. In addition to welcoming Susie to this new role, I express my appreciation for the members of TTE staff who have undertaken the role of National Council Secretary over many years. And I am particularly grateful to the support provided by Jo Keay-Blyth and Sue Wressell over the last 18 months.

National Council now has its own website: <https://national-council-tte.co.uk/>. Currently, this is primarily being used as a way of distributing the documentation for meetings. However, the website provides wider opportunities for engaging with members, clubs, leagues and counties that we have not yet explored.

These changes strengthen the role of National Council as a source of independent advice to the Table Tennis England Board. We are taking advantage of our greater autonomy by allowing National Councillors to invite an additional person from their county to attend National Council meetings. This will provide wider perspectives to the discussions at National Council meetings and also help with succession planning for National Councillors.

There were four meetings of National Council in 2024/25. These were all on-line meetings. At the January meeting we welcomed our new Chief Executive Sally Lockyer to table tennis. Sally shared her ambitions for table tennis with us and shared her view from other sports that counties play an important role in governance and development of sport. At our forthcoming June meeting, we will likewise be welcoming the new Table Tennis England Chair, Clare Briegal, and look forward to hearing her ambitions for our sport.

At the March meeting, Richard Scruton updated us on the plans for the World Team Championships in London in April/May 2026. Richard explained that it is essential that 2026 World Team Championship is a magnificent celebration of table tennis. In this way, the event will establish England as a home for world class table tennis, inspire new and existing audiences and leave a lasting legacy. National Councillors confirmed that they and their colleagues at county level would do all they could to help meet these objectives.

At all the meetings, we have had very much on our minds the need to help County Associations with the challenges they face. Many counties are facing the challenges of declining membership and in some cases leagues closing. Declining income has made it increasingly difficult to fund county teams, which are a key part of county activities. The discussions have quickly indicated that the problems that have been raised are shared by many counties.

We have set up a small Working Group to provide guidance on how counties can deal with these challenges. This guidance will be contained in "County Administrators Handbook" which will play a similar role to the "League Managers Handbook" which has proved to be very useful. The Handbook will provide advice on governance issues and also how the County Association can engage

proactively with its members, clubs and leagues. The Handbook should be published before the start of the new season.

National Council's two Select Committees on the Constitution and on Competitions continue to do valuable work in examining specific issues in detail. The reports from the Select Committees are published on the National Council website.

The Select Committee on the Constitution has expressed concern about the changes to "Good Standing" in the Affiliation & Registration regulations. The Select Committee has encouraged the Board to be pro-active in formalising the relationships with organisations that previously had "In Good Standing" status. In this way, the strong and mutually beneficial links with these organisations can be maintained.

The Select Committee on Competitions has monitored the implementation of the Competition Review and has made suggestions on how some aspects such as the new National Series can be improved for next season. It is understood that most of the proposed changes will be adopted for the 2025/26 National Series.

Neil Hurford
Chair
National Council

June 2025