

NATIONAL COUNCIL – DRAFT MINUTES by Susie Venner,

ZOOM MEETING

25 JANUARY 2025

Attendees: Neil Hurford (Chair, National Council);

National Councillors or Deputy National Councillors:

Reinhard Lindner (Dorset), Alan Ransome (Cleveland); Martin Clark (Worcestershire), Clive Ellison (Avon), Estyn Williams (Warwickshire), Brian Whitehead (Buckinghamshire), Tom Purcell (Lancashire), Clive Hollingsbee (Kent), Dale Aitkenhead (Northumberland), Joshua Reynolds (Yorks), Karen Tonge (Cheshire), Tony Catt (Sussex), Margot Fraser (Surrey); Shaun Parsley (Norfolk), Brian Freer (Cambridgeshire), John Andrews (Essex), Dave Edwards (Herts), Sandra Deaton, (Derbyshire), Dave Adamson (Gloucs), Ivor Jones (Northamptonshire), Jonathan Stubbs (Hamps), Jonathan Hopson (Berkshire).

National Council Secretary and VETTS Representative: Susie Venner,

TTE Board members: Sally Lockyer (CEO); Don Parker (TTE Deputy Chair/Elected Director); Ritchie Venner (Elected Director); Jos Kelly (Elected Director).

Apologies from TTE Board Members: Jill Parker (President)

Absence and apologies:

Steve Joel (Somerset), Alex Murdoch (Bedfordshire), Noel Sewell (Wiltshire), Jim Kenny (S. Yorks), Tim Giles (Isle of Wight). Tony Dias (Middx), [Harry Jutle \(Herefordshire\)](#) and Shirley Pickering (Leics), and the following members who 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)
- Jon Bayliss (Derbys – represented by Sandra Deaton)

1. Introduction and Welcome by the Chair

The Chair of National Council Neil Hurford (NH) welcomed new members and TTE's new CEO, Sally Lockyer.

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 for Harvey Webb, James Wilson, Sue Holt, Maurice Hammerton, Len Penfold, and Dave Wiles. Tributes can be found on TTE's website.

2. Approval of Previous Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 28 September 2024 were approved as a true and accurate record proposed by Reinhard Lindner (RH) and seconded by John Andrews (JA).

Minutes of the September 2024 meeting are available here:

[Minutes of Meeting - Sept 2024](#)

3. Introduction of New TTE CEO and Q&A session Sally Lockyer

National Council welcomed Sally Lockyer (SL) the recently appointed CEO to TTE.

SL shared her back-ground. Sport had played integral of her life. She had played table tennis at school. She had been involved professionally in several governing bodies including financial, marcoms, and events. She established a niche sports marketing business, which focused on major events, including Wimbledon, and had had experience in a number of sports related fields including working with rights holders, TV production company, leisure operators, triathlon, then football, with Surrey FA. Her previous position with Surrey had given her a strong county-focus and she understood the value of county network, working with partners, and generating diverse revenues. She wanted to bring this experience and skills to table tennis.

SL outlined some of the opportunities and challenges facing table tennis. She highlighted the major event, the Worlds in 2026, and said that she would be sharing more information with National Council about this opportunity.

SL also identified the importance of relationships and contractual obligations with key funders, including Sport England, and UK Sport. She also identified potential opportunities with Ping!. She wanted table tennis to deliver medals and acknowledged that it is currently a development sport rather than a podium sport.

SL said that she was in three months of 'key listening mode' and wanted to listen to clubs, leagues, counties, volunteers, people at the 'core' of table tennis.

She concluded by saying that she wanted to bring the sport together, would be open and transparent, wanted to build trust, collaborate and was committed to attending National Council meetings, where possible going forward.

A Q&A session followed with SL responding to specific points:

- a) Funding is in place for the Worlds, TTE is not exposed;
- b) Sees the relationship between the CEO and Chair as critical, needs mutual respect, understanding, what can learn from each other. Need to recruit the best candidate.
- c) Will look to attend county meetings as part of listening and getting to know people;
- d) Commits to equal opportunities, as evidenced by work and results in Surrey FA;

- e) SL agreed to open and transparent processes, wants to adopt a collaborative approach.
- f) SL intends to start embedding a 'lessons learnt' culture in TTE.
- g) There was criticism of the changes of 'In Good Standing' without consultation and the removal of organisations which would not affiliate. It was noted that this had led to the fragmentation of the competition programme. SL offered to discuss

Clive Ellison (CE) also queried the lack of communication and stake-holder involvement. He reiterated that TTE's SLT is isolated from the membership and information about engagement with stake-holders in line with the Board's strategy does not exist.

SL said that she is reviewing the stake-holder management document and would share it with National Council after it had been reviewed. **ACTION** – SL will share stake holder management document with NC after reviewed.

ACTION: SL to revert with:

- a) timing for election of 5th Elected Director;
- b) outcome of ballot on date for agm;
- c) share information re Worlds 2026;
- d) share the stake-holder engagement document after review;
- e) attend NC meetings where possible;
- f) arrange a meeting with Susie Venner (SV) in her role as Chairman of the VETTS.

4 Recruitment of New Chair of Table Tennis England, led by Don Parker, TTE Deputy Chair.

Don Parker (DP) outlined the process and time-scale to recruit a new Chair following the resignation of Nick Donald. He explained that the Nominations Committee (himself, the Senior Independent Director, Richard Ayers, and TTE Director Kath Curran) would sift and interview supported by a recruitment organisation and a non-voting representative from Sport England. They would then make a recommendation to the TTE Board.

It was hoped that an appointment would be made by mid-March, when the current Chair would leave, but stressed the process would not be 'rushed'.

It was confirmed that a meeting with the National Council Select Committee (Alan Ransome and Susie Venner) and Nom Coms (Don Parker, Richard Ayers and Kath Curran) had taken place, where input relating to realistic time-scale (as opposed to the advertised 2/3 days a month) and importance of having a passion for and involvement in table tennis were raised.

The following points were made by National Councillors:

- a) The advertised time commitment of 'at least 2/3 days a month' is unrealistic and misleading;
- b) Knowledge of and passion for table tennis should be seen as an asset not a liability;
- c) A table tennis person was more important given the new CEO was not from a TT background. This would prove complementary to her skill set and provide additional knowledge and experience;
- d) Consider an interim Chair, eg Don Parker and/or the Senior Independent Director
- e) There was some discussion as to whether table tennis knowledge should be 'desirable' or 'essential'. It was generally concluded that it could be an asset but it was more important to have 'the right person' and it was agreed that a connection to table tennis would be beneficial, provided other criteria were also met;
- f) Consider sharing the duties of Chair, eg 'ceremonial' presentations of medals, overseas travel, by using TTE 'Ambassadors', similar role to our President.

5. Select Committee Reports

a) Constitution

Alan Ransome (AER) presented a report from the Select Committee on the Constitution. The main points were:

- **Memorandum of Understanding** – proposed to have a MoU between National Council and the Board. Despite early progress, there had been no developments since June, due to the resignations of two key figures, the TTE CEO, Adrian Christy, and the TTE Chair, Nick Donald. It is expected that it will be resumed with the new CEO, Sally Lockyer, and the new Chair.
- **Appointment of Chair** – Select Com already held a positive meeting with the Nomination Committee raising the points previously discussed in the earlier agenda item.
- **In Good Standing** – On-going concern about the fragmentation of the sport in general and the competition landscape in particular as a result of removing the 'In Good Standing' arrangement with some large table tennis bodies. The Select Committee proposed that the TTE Board *"reconsider the previous good standing arrangement and look to reunite the sport with the large bodies which had an association with Table Tennis England under the former agreement."* Proposed by AER, Seconded Reinhard Lindner. Unanimously in favour. **ACTION.**
- **Team GB** – Concern was expressed that TTE was considering abolishing the England team in favour of a Team GB for the World Championships. It was understood that Scotland – and possibly other Home Nations – opposed this. In the light of Scotland's opposition, this now seemed to be off the agenda. (Don Parker, Director, said that there were areas where the Home Nations could share resources but thought a combined GB team for the Worlds was a non-starter. Ritchie Venner, Director, supported this view)

- **World Team Championships 2026** – The Select Committee reflected concerns that there was little relevant information coming from the ‘Event’ group or the ‘Delivery Group’ which seemed to be operating outside the control of TTE. Sandra Deaton (Deputy Councillor for Notts) said that she was on the group, TTIE, which was a partnership with TTE and ITTF, with ITTF having a majority share. Also TTE had been represented by the CEO and Chair of TTE. She said no-one should have any concerns. Sally Lockyer promised more information would be available in due course.
- **Disaffiliation** – The Select Committee expressed concerns that at least one county and several leagues were considering disaffiliating from TTE as they were unhappy with the disconnect between TTE staff and grass roots members. National Council saw the long-term damage to the sport in this approach and urged the Board to give this serious consideration. Sally Lockyer shared concerns and wanted to pick this up and understand the reasons.

Full report available here: [Report of Select Committee on the Constitution](#)

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.

Full report available here:

[Report of Select Committee on Competitions](#)

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

- ***In Good Standing.*** The Competitions Select Committee expressed their on-going concerns about knock-on effect of removing In Good Standing and supported the proposals from the Select Committee on the Constitution to call on the Board to reconsider this move.
- ***Loss of Control over Competition Play in England.*** Reiterated the concerns over the fragmentation of table tennis competition in England, as TTE and some organisers grew further apart. Call for return to status quo of previous 100 years.
- ***Grand Prix and Senior 4* Tournaments.*** Concerns about TTE’s abolition of the Grand Prix and the lack of Senior 4* Tournaments, as TTE’s regulations and controls were too stringent to encourage organisers. A group led by Board Director, Ritchie Venner, had been looking into making the environment less stringent in order to encourage more organisers to put on TTE events.
- ***National Junior Series.*** The first time this tournament series has been held. There were many lessons to be learnt.
- ***National Cadet and National Junior League.*** Recommendation to Competition Department to simplify entry process going forward.

- **Junior British Club League.** Proposal to encourage more girls to participate.
- **National qualifiers.** Proposal to improve entry and event.
- **County Championships.** Support for U/13s
- **Senior National League.** Welcome for consultation on new schedule.

Ritchie Venner, Board Director and Chair of Tier 1 Competitions Committee responded to the paper. He said that he would take their views to the Tier 1Comp Com. He added that he understood there would be some 4*s coming up. On the National Series, there were some things which worked well, but they would be looking at doing things better going forward, eg playing in a central venue over three weekends.

There had been much discussion about the National Championships and the qualifiers being a separate event. There was a need to look at how TTE could save money and staging qualifiers on a Friday was a possibility, which would also improve the atmosphere and attendance at the event. There was a 'Task & Finish' group looking at this and other aspects.

There was a general feeling that the National Championships could be done better as it lacked atmosphere and spectators. It was also referenced that the National Qualifier doesn't work well for women players for a number of reasons.

Neil Hurford confirmed that the County Championship consultation on adding U-11 and/or U-13 competitions to the County Championships has now closed. The County Championships Committee are considering the responses and will report to the Annual Conference.

c) Disability Select Committee

No report was presented.

6 TTE Board Minutes

A copy of the final redacted Board Minutes from the Board meeting of November 2024 is available here:

[FINAL-Redacted-Board-Minutes-November-24.pdf](#)

Comments included:

1. Query over lack of information from Board on stake-holder engagement;
2. Noted and welcomed that there was a revised process to review changes to the regulations with better controls. Offer of help from experienced National Councillors. **ACTION:** Flow chart for process to be produced.
3. Criticism over lack of information in a timely manner.
4. Query over where the £200k for youngsters' performance programme had come from. It was reported that it was from deferred recruitment and head count changes

7. Review of Action List

The Action List from the September 2024 meeting was updated and reviewed. Copy available here:

[Action List January 202025.pdf](#)

Comments from NC included:

1. Ongoing concerns about the lack of transparency from TTE. It was hoped that Sally Lockyer would introduce a culture of more openness. Tier 1 Committees are not producing reports, even though the Sport England Code of Governance says it's good practice. Directors Ritchie Venner and Don Parker were unaware they were not being made available and had no objections – both happy to share their Tier 1 reports. (See Action 15 - Lack of transparency of Reports/Minutes of Board Advisory Committees).
2. There were ongoing concerns about lack of effective change management and problem solving, particularly relating to sharing information about associate clubs needing welfare officers, clubs dropping off Club Finder, and clubs and leagues understanding the need to submit Annual Returns.
ACTION; NH to investigate with TTE.

8 Challenges Facing County Associations – Membership & Affiliation Neil Hurford & David Edwards

NH reported that TTE staff members, Jo Keay Blyth and Andy Wilesmith, had offered a meeting to see what TTE could do to support the counties.

NH proposed putting together a group of 5/6 counties for meeting. Offers to be involved from Tom Purcell, Estyn Williams, Dave Edwards.

ACTION: Other NCs who want to be involved. NH to progress meeting

9 Towards A More Autonomous National Council - Update Neil Hurford & Susie Venner

Update on practicality side. Main project on hold pending changes in CEO and Chair. Welcome that Sally Lockyer wanted to engage with NC.

Comments included:

1. Identify clearly role of NC and what it wants;
2. Make NC more relevant;
3. Select Committees work well – look to expand

ACTION: NH & SV to address with SL clarifying how we move forward on MoU and other issues.

10 Financial Information/Select Committee on Finance

ACTION: Tony Catt to progress

11 Articles & Regulations Index Summary (update) Neil Hurford

Nothing produced for this NC meeting. Understand that there is a new regulatory process, which would ensure that new regulations go to Board via the Tier 1 Committees to ensure there is a more robust process.

ACTION: NH to seek sight of new regulatory process

12 National Councillor/Invited Representatives Only

No issues were raised.

13 Dates of Next Meetings

A provisional date was set for March 29. Future dates to be submitted later.

ACTION: NH/SV give feedback on possible future dates.

14 Any Other Business

Concerns that the TTE agm would take place on Wednesday rather than Saturday. In past, would have come as a discussion point to NC. Although there had been a vote, the results had not been made known. It was also reiterated that the attendees at the agm should not be 'blacked out' as they were previously.

ACTION; Results of consultation/vote on moving agm

ACTION LIST

Action	Owner	Time	Outcome
Share information about timing for 5 th Elected Director	SL	Asap	
Share information about result of survey on agm date change	SL	Asap	
Share updates re Worlds 2026	SL	Ongoing	
Share stake-holder engagement document after review	SL	When available	
Arrange meeting re In Good Standing	SL/SV	Asap	
Unanimous proposal to ask Board to reconsider re-introducing 'In Good Standing'. Inform Board	NH/AER	Asap	
Reinstate discussions re MoU between NC and Board	NC/Board	Liaise with SL	
Produce NC job/role descriptions	NH/SV	Tie into finalising MoU	Ongoing
Report NC issues back to Tier 1 Comp Com	RV	Next meeting	
Regulation approval flow chart to be made available to NC	TTE	Asap	
TTE Tier 1 Committee Minutes to be made available	TTE	Asap	
Clubs missing from Club Finder/need to submit returns	NH	Asap	
Counties – any NC want to be involved in the counties group for meeting. (See pt 8 of minutes)	NC to inform NH	Asap	
NH to arrange counties meeting with TTE (see pt 8 of minutes)	NH	Before next NC meeting	
Progress 'a more autonomous NC' and its enhanced relevance going forward	NH/SV	Report at next NC	
Progress Select Committee on Finance	Tony Catt	Report at next NC	
Dates for future meetings	NH/SV	Make suggestions ahead of next NC meeting	