

## **NATIONAL COUNCIL – DRAFT MINUTES** by Susie Venner,

### **ZOOM MEETING**

**JUNE 28, 2025**

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

#### **National Councillors or Deputy National Councillors:**

Dale Aitkenhead (Northumberland); John Andrews (Essex); Jonathan Bayliss (Derbyshire); Tony Catt (Sussex); Pete Charters (Berks); Martin Clark (Worcestershire), Sandra Deaton (Derbyshire, Deputy) Tony Dias (Middlesex); Dave Edwards (Herts); Clive Ellison (Avon); Margot Fraser (Surrey); Brian Freer (Cambridgeshire); Tim Giles (IoW); Sue Hayes (Buckinghamshire), Steve Joel (Somerset); Ivor Jones (Northants); Harry Jutle (Herefordshire), James Kenny (South Yorkshire); Trevor Kerry (Nottinghamshire); Reinhard Lindner (Dorset); Alex Murdoch (Bedfordshire); Neil Le Milliere (Kent); Shaun Parsley (Norfolk); Tom Purcell (Lancashire); Alan Ransome (Cleveland); Joshua Reynolds (Yorks); Karen Tonge (Cheshire); Jordan Tweed (Leics); Jonathan Stubbs (Hamps); Estyn Williams (Warwickshire);

*National Council Secretary and VETTS Representative:* Susie Venner

*TTE Board members:* Clare Briegal (Chair); Sally Lockyer (TTE CEO); Don Parker (Deputy Chair/Elected Director); Ritchie Venner (Elected Director); Jos Kelly (Elected Director); Liam McTiernan (Elected Director); Paul Bishop (Co-opted Director)

*Apologies from TTE Board Members:* Jill Parker (President)

*Absence and apologies from National Councillors:*

Shaun Fitzpatrick (Avon), Jonathan Hopson (Berks), Shirley Pickering (Leics); Noel Sewell (Wiltshire).

The following members were represented by their Deputies:

- Shaun Fitzpatrick (Avon - represented by Clive Ellison)
- Jonathan Hopson (Berks – represented by Peter Charters)
- Shirley Pickering (Leics – represented by Jordan Tweed)

## **1. Introduction and Welcome by the Chair**

Neil Hurford (Chair) welcomed all attendees and extended a warm welcome to:

- Clare Briegal, attending her first National Council (NC) meeting as Chair of the Table Tennis England (TTE) Board.
- Liam McTiernan, newly elected Board Director.
- Jordan Tweed (Leics), attending his first meeting as Deputy National Councillor.
- He also congratulated Ritchie Venner on his re-election to the Board for a second term.

NH invited Liam McTiernan (LMc) to introduce himself. LMc thanked NC for the role they had played in creating the post of the fifth Elected Director and for the support he had received in being elected to that role. He has played table tennis since the age of ten, starting in the Kingfisher Club. He is a 'circuit player' at junior and senior level; was involved in the performance pathway; has experience of running clubs; very involved in Nottingham University Club; has been on MAG and is on the Competition Committee. Professionally he is head of strategy in a corporate arena.

Ritchie Venner (RV) thanked NC for the support he had received and welcomed the opportunity to be on the Board for another four years. His main focus is on competition and wants us to be moving together.

### **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:

- Colin Davison, former Chair of Cleveland, involved 50 years in North East table tennis
- Steen Hanson, former National Coach for TTE

Tributes can be found on TTE's website.

## **2. Approval of Previous Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on March 29, 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.

Proposed by Karen Tonge (Cheshire);

Seconded Tony Catt (Sussex).

Approved unanimously.

National Council draft minutes of meeting March 29, 2025:

[National%20Council%20-%20Minutes%20of%20Meeting%2029%20March%202025.pdf](#)

## **3. Introduction by TTE Chair – Clare Briegal (CB)**

CB introduced herself and outlined her background in marketing, World Netball, and her approach to leadership through listening and collaboration. She recognised that TTE is a membership body and that her remit is to lead the Board and work with CEO to create strategies to develop the sport for and with members.

She highlighted the importance of:

- A shared vision for the sport – to create a table tennis nation;
- Removing barriers and increasing inclusivity – opening up the game, particularly to young people, women and girls
- Building strong connections with members.

- Implementation of the current **TT United (TTU)** strategy and ensuring we have appropriate KPIs.

### Q&A Highlights:

- **Tony Catt (TC):** Emphasised communications strategy, identifying the experience and skill set within National Council, and asked about CB's previous success in rowing.  
**CB:** Highlighted success in building a shared vision, sport accessibility, and club development.
- **Joshua Reynolds:** Raised concern over lack of engagement and the risk posed by instability in the ITTF.  
**CB:** Acknowledged the situation within the ITTF and is monitoring developments with World Team Champs implications. She accepted it is a challenge but was confident it would progress. She felt the main risk is if we do not capture the legacy from the event.
- **Alan Ransome (AER):** Asked about reviewing the TTU strategy and NC involvement.  
**CB:** Agreed and confirmed a functional review is underway.
- **Steve Joel (SJ)** also stressed that there are many talented and willing people with the table tennis community, but Table tennis England does not harness that talent or engage by bringing key people together.  
**CB:** She believes in compassionate leadership.
- **Clive Ellison (CE):** There is a requirement of Sport England that the Board reviews stakeholder engagement annually but there was no evidence this had ever taken place or that the Board takes this duty seriously.  
**CB:** Will raise this with Sally Lockyer (SL) (CEO). Identified that the Elected Directors are in place to consider the impact on members of anything that TTE does. **ACTION CB/SL**
- **Various Councillors:** Expressed concern about stakeholder engagement and lack of transparency.  
**CB:** Confirmed ongoing governance review and commitment to improved communication and member input.

CB committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders and supporting transparent processes.

## 4. CEO Update – Sally Lockyer (SL)

### World Team Championships 2026

- Approved by ITTF: 64 men's and 64 women's teams, April 28 – May 10.
- Venues: Starting at Copper Box Arena, moving to Wembley.
- Emphasis on sustainability, legacy, volunteer engagement, and strong partnerships.
- Ticket strategy under review, with priority access for members. Confirmed it would not be dynamic pricing

## Apology – Membership Fees Communication

SL apologised for the poor communication regarding the membership fee changes and acknowledged lessons learned. Paul Bishop (PB) to provide additional financial clarity. SL wanted to reassure NC that a ‘full and robust’ governance review is being undertaken.

### Additional Updates:

- VETTS and affiliation: Recognition of the need to rebuild relationships and re-engage with veterans’ community. Susie Venner (SV) Chair of the VETTS confirmed meetings had taken place and the VETTS was willing to collaborate with TTE but the VETTS position was clear that they would retain their independence and not affiliate to or be regulated by TTE.
- Digital transformation initiatives underway.
- Commitment to timely communication and transparency.

### Comments from National Councillors:

- There should be systems in place within TTE to prevent errors like the membership fees being ‘missed’ or miscommunicated. This was a serious commitment given by the Board to the agm – and it was ignored or overlooked.
- Concern that SL was spending her time on international events and TTIE rather than focusing on TTE matters
- Lack of information coming from TTE in a timely manner, eg Board minutes, Committee reports
- Consider having a Deputy Chair of National Council
- Re GB: Do not lose the voting rights of seven Home nations on ITTF. CB confirmed discussions underway but would not lose voting rights of individual Home Nations

### Actions:

- **Ongoing Agenda Item (Jan 2026):** Membership Fees discussion each January. NH/SV to ensure that Membership Fees are added to the agenda of National Council January meetings. This would act as a prompt for discussing any increases prior to any Board decision being made. **ACTION: NH/SV**
- **CE, TP:** To share and investigate insurance arrangements and communication with clubs
- **Improved access:** Reports, Board minutes and Committee Reports to be shared earlier. **ACTION: SL**

Redacted Board Minutes – February 2025

[REDACTED-Board-Minutes-February-25.pdf](#)

Redacted Board Minutes – March 2025

## 5. Financial Report – Paul Bishop (PB) Co-opted TTE Director

### Key Points:

- 2024–25 audited accounts signed off with a small deficit.
- Reserve levels at ~£350k; emphasis on moving back to surplus budgeting.
- Total income: £4–5m (incl. £600k restricted income, £500k membership, £400k competition fees).
- Expenditure: £1.4m on coaching/performance; £1.1m on central costs; £900k marketing/strategy.
- The process for the increase in membership fees was flawed, but the final outcome was probably the right one. Need to build processes where TTE honours the constitutional promises it has made.
- ITTF seems to be in a healthier financial position, could be in part due to input from the Paris Olympics

PB highlighted the need for:

- Greater transparency in financial reporting.
- Honour commitments made at AGMs and in the constitution.
- Stakeholder confidence in budgeting processes

In the subsequent discussion, a number of National Councillors welcomed the move towards greater transparency in financial reporting. They felt the benefit would be in clarifying whether financial resources were being correctly allocated to those areas that were TTE's priorities.

### Actions:

- PB would be reviewing financial transparency and the associated governance processes. He felt that the way that financial information was communicated could be improved.
- National Councillors to consider whether to create a Select Committee on Finance (see Item 10)
- PB would be considering how to involve National Council in improving the communication of financial information.

## 6. Revisions to “Standing Orders” & “NC – How It Works”

Documents reviewed and **unanimously approved**. Recommended to TTE Board and Executive as a useful document to demonstrate how National Council works.

**Proposed by:** Tony Catt (Sussex)

**Seconded by:** Alan Ransome (Cleveland)

**ACTION:** Documents to be published by NH on National Council website.

[National Council Standing Orders Revised by WG Final Draft.pdf](#)

[How-it-Works Revised by WG Final Draft.pdf](#)

## 7. Challenges Facing County Associations / County Handbook

Tony Catt introduced the County Handbook draft as guidance for new county officials and giving added value to members.

**ACTION:** Handbook to be progressed and published. TC offered support to counties.

[TC County Handbook. 310525.pdf](#)

## 8. TTE Annual General Meeting – July 9, 2025

Neil Hurford submitted the NC Report for the TTE Annual Review. (link below)

**ACTION:** More publicity and earlier publication of the Annual Report. Q&A to be enabled for both attendees and non-attendees.

[National Council Report for Annual Review July 2025.pdf](#)

## 9. Matters Arising and Action List from March 2025 meeting – Neil Hurford

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

[Action%20List%20from%20March%20Meeting%20\(Updated\).pdf](#)

### ***Insurance:***

- Tom Purcell (TP) and Clive Ellison (CE) raised issues regarding club affiliation and insurance responsibilities. TTE should provide more information, insurance cover appears to have been diluted as criteria for affiliation has changed but clubs are unaware  
**ACTION:** CE and TP to share findings. Clarify affiliated vs non-affiliated club coverage.

## 10. “NC – Make It Worthwhile” Paper – Tony Catt

Proposal to form working/action groups aligned to Board Committees to strengthen NC’s role in governance. Create ‘action’ groups rather than ‘discussion group’. General support.

**ACTION:** Consider Finance Select Committee once Paul Bishop is fully integrated.

[NC - Make it worthwhile June 2025.pdf](#)

## 11. Reports of Select Committee

### **a) Constitution – Alan Ransome**

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

[Select Committee on the Constitution Report to National Council 28 6 25.pdf](#)

### The main points were:

- AGM: Unhappy at the manner of the consultation over moving the agm to a midweek evening. Concerns over AGM scheduling and consultation – the usual practise has been that issues which might be controversial or require membership contributions were brought to National Council in advance for an opportunity for more in-depth discussion.
- Suggestions to return to Saturday in-person meetings for engagement/networking.
- Review the Annual Report process.
- (Note by NH/SV – At the subsequent AGM a few days later, there were problems with the sound quality which on occasions made it difficult for those participating to understand what was being said by those ‘in the room’. This has been a frequent problem with TTE hybrid meetings. We will add an item to the agenda of the next National Council meeting that will provide the opportunity for feedback on the AGM. The Board are aware of the problems that occurred and agree that the sound quality was not good enough. An assurance has been offered that they will let NC know at a future NC meeting what they think is the best solution.)

### (b) Competitions

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

[Select Committee on Competitions Report to National Council 28.6.25.pdf](#)

The main points were:

- Major concerns over loss of control and fragmentation in competitions
- Jon Bayliss presented a paper aimed at boosting the effectiveness of the competition programme for young girls/cadets. (see link below). Suggestion to put together a Task & Finish Group; to delay registration for JBL. This has been on the table for 18 months, but in the last few days TTE had put a new proposal on the table which fell short of the discussions
- New proposals discussed, but significant discomfort raised.
- Proposal to re-establish GPs and bring 4\*/GPs back in-house. It has not worked with clubs being asked to run GPs. TTE abandoned a successful format which has now been lost and not been replaced.

**ACTION:** SL to convene discussions with AW, RV, JB

**ACTION:** Consider 2026/27 reintroduction of GPs

[Appendix - National Select Committee for Competition paper on new announcement ref girls playing both Youth BCL.pdf](#)

### c) Disabilities – Karen Tonge

Karen Tonge (KT) presented a report from the Select Committee on Disabilities (link below)

- Sue Hayes (SH) reported TTE has signed an MoU with Special Olympics, progress reported.

[Select Committee on Disabilities Report June 2025.pdf](#)

**12. Index of Articles & Regulations Summary – Neil Hurford**

[Index of Articles and Regs Summary May 25.pdf](#)

Steve Joel (SJ) suggested a schedule for reviews so NC can input.

**ACTION:** Pipeline management to be implemented via JKB.

**13. National Councillor/Invited Representatives Only**

None recorded

**14. Dates of Future Meetings in 2025 & 2026.**

Provisionally...

- Saturday 27 September 2025
- Saturday 24 January 2026
- Dates for March/April and June 2026 to be confirmed (possibly coincide with National Championships)

**ACTION:** Review calendar clashes and coordinate with National Championships.

**15. Any Other Business**

a) Counties and Directly Affiliated Clubs

A discussion took place about experiences with Directly Affiliated Club. A paper was noted.

[Counties and Directly Affiliated Clubs - Request for Information.pdf](#)

[DAC V Counties 210625.pdf](#)

The specific issue that had arisen related to a club that was affiliated to a county, but did not enter teams in a local league. Because county affiliation fees were paid by local leagues on a “per team” basis, the Directly Affiliated Club did not pay an affiliation fee to the County.

Should Directly Affiliated Clubs that didn’t enter teams in a local league pay affiliation fees to the County? The County felt they should, the Club felt that they shouldn’t. Hence the request for information from Counties as to what happens elsewhere.

- KT (Cheshire) said that in Cheshire, Directly Affiliated Clubs not entering teams in a local league did pay an affiliation fee to the County.

- SH (Bucks) referenced a similar situation in Bucks. A number of players who played for the county were members of the Cippenham club in Slough. As there was no longer a Slough league, the Cippenham club entered teams in the Maidenhead league - which was in Berkshire. So members of the Cippenham club paid county affiliation fees to Berkshire – but not to Bucks. This anomalous situation was being discussed within the county.
- SJ (Somerset) felt that as Counties were such an important part of the Table Tennis England governance structure, it was important that all clubs paid for the maintenance of the governance and development structure provided by counties.

This issue would be discussed by the Governance & Risk Committee.

b) Chair of National Council Election:

SV thanked David Hockney for his work in preparing for the forthcoming election and acting as the Returning Officer. (In the subsequent election, Neil Hurford had been returned as the Chairman for another term. Tony Catt also stood as a candidate.)

**ACTION LIST (New actions in red)**

Action	Owner	Time	Outcome
1. More timely information from TTE eg Board minutes	SL/CB	Sept meeting	
2. Richard Scruton to return to update NC on World team Championships 2026	NH/RS	End of Year	In hand
3a. Share stake-holder engagement document after review	SL	When available	Awaiting publication of review
3b. Raise stakeholder engagement duties with Board	CB/SL		
4. Publish NC – How it Works and Standing Order Docs (see pt 6 of agenda)	NH	Done	
5. Revert to NC with proposals on making the finances more transparent, including Select Committee on Finance	PB	Ongoing	Awaiting proposals
6. County Handbook – to be published and progressed	NH/EW/T C	Final Draft to be submitted to Sept meeting	In hand
7. More publicity around agm. Q&A to be enabled for all members. Better communications (see Item 8)	TTE/NC	AGM 2026	

8a) Research and report insurance information for affiliated v. non-affiliated clubs. 8b)TTE to provide clearer advice	TP/CE TTE	Next meeting	
9. Paper on improving opportunities for young girls/cadets (Jon Bayliss), SL to convene workshop with AW, RV and JB	SL		
10. Presentation and content of agm to be reviewed and improved	TTE	Discuss at Sept NC meeting ahead of next agm	
11. Consider reintroduction of in-house Grand Prix 2026/27	Comp Com		
12. Timetable/pipeline dates to be managed and shared with NC for changes to regs to ensure meaningful input (Item 12)	NH to discuss with JKB	Sept meeting	In hand
13.Dates for future meetings (Item 14)	NH/SV	Report at next meeting	
14. To ensure NC is consulted on changes to Membership Fees, this should be a standing item on the agenda of January NC meetings	NH/SV to address when preparing the agenda of the Jan NC meeting		In hand