



Chairman's message: How we're tackling coronavirus impact

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Hello everyone. Firstly, I hope you and your loved ones are staying safe at home during these unprecedented and uncertain times and that you all continue to do so.

Although we all miss playing our sport, I'm sure we would all accept that the suspension is the right thing to do as we play our part in helping society as a whole to tackle the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

The main reason I am writing is to update you on the impact of this situation on table tennis, what we are doing to support coaches, clubs, leagues and our wider membership, and how our members can continue to support our work.

In common with organisations up and down the country, our first principle throughout this period has been to act in the best interests of the health and wellbeing of our staff, athletes, members, volunteers and the other organisations we work with – while always following the guidance of the Government.

This has meant taking some decisions which a short while ago would have seemed unthinkable – the cancellation of all our events, competitions and courses for the remainder of the season being the most far-reaching.

We have this week confirmed the cancellation of the few national league-based competitions which had outstanding fixtures and published guidance to local leagues on the options available to them for finalising their seasons.

Our AGM is due to be held on July 18th and we are currently exploring options around this taking place online, while retaining all the essential elements of transparency and engagement with our Company Members and wider membership. We will share more information on this as soon as we can.

Our Head Office in Milton Keynes has been closed for more than a month, but the majority of our staff are

working from home to serve our members. We made the decision to furlough – with their agreement – a small number of employees whose workloads had significantly decreased during this period. Those employees whose roles are funded by Sport England or UK Sport are not eligible to be furloughed.

The focus of our staff has been on supporting clubs, coaches and players and making sure that we are ready as a sport for the return to activity which we hope will occur in the second half of the year.

Here are just some of the things we have done:

- [Launched the TT Kidz Afterschool Club](#) to keep kids active and playing table tennis during the lockdown
- [Launched a series of knowledge-sharing webinars for our licensed coaches](#). Five have taken place so far with over 350 attendees.
- [Launched a series of club webinars](#) on a variety of topics, including providing information on how to access Sport England's Community Emergency Fund and how we can support them in their applications for funding
- [Increased the amount of funding available through our Be TT programme](#), which will support clubs and leagues impacted by the coronavirus pandemic to help 'activate' their table tennis activity once restrictions have been lifted
- Set up a [Play at Home section](#) on our website to provide information and tips to players who are playing the sport at home for the first time
- Set up an at-home [programme for young players in our performance pathway](#), helping them to maximise this opportunity to develop their skills and fitness
- Launched our weekly Team England takeovers on social media, where England's elite players set challenges and create content to keep us entertained!
- [Launched the Ready to Return fitness programme](#). Led by technical director Alan Cooke, the programme aims to help ensure players maintain a level of fitness during lockdown to help them play table tennis again post-lockdown
- Released recordings of the [England games from the Team World Cup 2018](#), where England's men won bronze, and released all the matches from [Finals Day of the Mark Bates Ltd National Championships 2020](#)

We will continue to work to support everyone during and beyond this uncertain period and ensure clubs can thrive and people continue to play. We also hope we'll have a surge in people wanting to try the sport more formally for the first time – after all, online retailers are reporting high demand for table tennis tables and equipment.

We are also discussing, internally and as part of wider discussions between the authorities and sports governing bodies, what steps we may need to take before we can resume activities, and how we can best support clubs, leagues, coaches and players when that time comes. We will of course share this with our members at the appropriate time.

We recognise that this is an incredibly challenging time for all of us within the table tennis community and that there has never been a more important time for us all to pull together and to remember what we always say – you're more than a member, you're part of a bigger picture. Here are some of the ways you can support our work:

1. **Continue to refrain from all table tennis activity outside of your home until the guidelines are relaxed** by the government, in order to protect the health and wellbeing of everyone and to support the NHS to save lives. We know many of you are missing the sport and are eager to get back, but it's important to wait for official guidance on how this can be done safely.
2. Try to **do everything you can to support the table tennis economy**. Many clubs, venues and coaches will have suffered from loss of earnings during this period. Our community is small and those who make a living from table tennis have been key in helping the growth of the sport over the years, and are essential to our healthy future. Have a think about how you could help to support them. If you were planning to take a course that was cancelled, can you re-book it for later this year? If you were

planning on paying for some coaching sessions, can you still do so, or will you be able to as soon as you start playing again?

3. Membership renewal season begins in August, so please ask: are you still able **to support us by continuing your membership** with us? We cannot yet predict the impact this situation will have on us, and what will happen come membership renewal season this summer. We hope we can count on your support to help us through this unprecedented time, and ask that if you can afford to, that you renew your membership as normal this year, regardless of whether or not the season has started. For a reminder of how vital membership fees are to us as an organisation, [click here](#). Next week we will announce plans for the 2020/21 renewal process.

We will continue to do everything we can to support our brilliant community and encourage you to stay in touch and involved.

Make sure check out the great things coming up over the coming weeks, including member quizzes, exclusive content and a live Q&A with England's leading players. You can keep up to date by reading news on our website, following us on social media or reading our weekly newsletter, Over the Net.

Finally, we've enjoyed seeing the creative ways in which clubs are engaging with their members and the inventive ways in which many of you are still playing table tennis at home – keep posting on social media and don't forget to tag @tabletenniseng

Stay safe and well – we will get through this together.

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