

Ping! project back for more

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1. Popular Ping! project is back to create a summer of outdoor ping pong across three cities.
2. Hundreds more tables to pop up across country thanks to new Ping! small grants spin off.
3. Total National Lottery investment worth over £500,000.

Billingsgate Fish Market could do with one for the fishmongers. Sheffield would like 10 for their city centre, and Watford Council thinks that placing one at Watford Gap Motorway Service Station could get drivers stretching their legs.

Sport England today launched *Ping! the Public* – a new initiative to boost recreational table tennis. £250,000 of National Lottery funding has been set aside to pay for public ping pong tables. From village halls to city councils and the Woman's Institute to after-school clubs, non-profit organisations can apply for their own table. The only stipulation is that it is free for people to use and enjoy.

"We'd like to see ping pong tables popping up everywhere – from village greens to university canteens, and city squares to community centres," said Sport England's Chief Executive, Jennie Price. "The important thing for any organisation applying for a table is to demonstrate that it will be well used."

This fund has been created in response to the overwhelming success of *Ping!* – the city-wide ping pong initiative which has transformed the popularity of social table tennis. The project launched in London in 2010 – with 100 tables placed across the capital – before moving to Birmingham and Hull last summer.

In each city the public response has been huge. And today Sport England confirmed £280,585 of lottery funding for the third year of the project, which will see *Ping!* travel to Bristol and Liverpool this summer as well as returning to London ahead of the Olympic Games.

"*Ping!* has proved one of our most successful sports participation projects, attracting over 150,000 participants to date," said Jennie Price. "Moreover, our Active People Survey shows that once people start playing they don't want to stop."

In the year of the London Olympic and Paralympic Games, ping pong is certainly coming home. Summer 2012 sees *Ping!* sweeping across the country: local councils in five more areas have already secured lottery funding from Sport England's Small Grants scheme to produce their own version of *Ping!* Birmingham, Brighton, Hampshire, Leicester and Sheffield will all be placing tables in prominent locations for everyone to enjoy. *Ping! the Public* will make it easier for dozens more smaller organisations in other areas to follow their lead.

In addition to free play, the English Table Tennis Association will host a series of masterclasses, tournaments and coaching sessions. Also on offer are *Random Acts of Ping Pong*, an unusual programme of art and social ping pong, from artist designed tables to *Singles for Singles* (an event to help you find your perfect match) and *Midnight Ping!* with glow in the dark balls. The tables are up from June 29th for four to six weeks.

Ping! is produced by Sing London – the non-profit organisation whose projects include London's *Street Pianos Project* and *Talking Rubbish* bins. "A ping pong table is a relatively small intervention, but it's amazing how much fun it can generate," said Sing London's Creative Director, Colette Hiller.

It is co-produced by the English Table Tennis Association – the national governing body for table tennis – whose Chief Executive, Richard Yule, said: "Table tennis can be played by anyone, anytime, anyplace, anywhere. *Ping!* proves it. Great exercise and great fun is guaranteed on a *Ping!* table this summer."

The *Ping! the Public* Fund opens on 9th April and closes on 23rd April. An unusually fast turnaround means that applicants will have a response within six weeks – just in time to celebrate the 2012 Games. Non-profit organisations who want to apply should register their interest at www.etta.co.uk/news/ping-package

To find your nearest table and get playing as part of *Ping!* this summer, go to www.pingengland.co.uk

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