

Paul and Jo bring Ping! to Heathrow

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Team GB Olympic table tennis stars Paul Drinkhall and Joanna Parker were present at Terminal 3 of Heathrow Airport to kick-start another summer of Ping!

The respective men's and women's English number ones were part of a photo shoot at Europe's busiest airport where airport staff and public alike were invited to get involved.

Ping! 2012 – the Sport England initiative, will see over 700 tables placed in seven locations across the UK with Bristol, Liverpool and London launching on the 29th June. The tables will be up for a month for all to enjoy and can also be found in the brand new locations of Brighton, Sheffield, Leicester and the New Forest.

Two-times National Champion Joanna Parker, said: "If you ask around everyone has played table tennis at some point but I think people don't really know where to go to play regularly.

Something like Ping! is bringing the tables to the people so I think you'll see a lot more people playing and hopefully that will then inspire them to go and find a club.

That's one of the great things about table tennis it's the kind of sport anyone can play at any level and have fun doing it. They're going to public places like city centres and airports so it's not directed at one specific type of person."



Along with the tables, bats and balls are provided free of charge so that anyone can play at anytime. In addition to free play, Ping! offers a scheduled programme of activities entitled 'Random Acts of Ping Pong' as well as master classes, 'Musical Ping' and 'Meet Your Match' singles events.

Three-time European Junior Champion, Paul Drinkhall said: "As you see in Heathrow Airport loads of people have stopped and played and they're having great fun. Hopefully once they've seen this they'll watch the Olympics, watch table tennis and after that maybe get involved and go into clubs and get their children or their brothers and sisters involved. I think Ping! are doing a great job putting tables out in public places."



"Everybody wants to play table tennis, everybody has said they've already played or played on holiday but they just sometimes struggle with the opportunity and they don't now where to play, but with something like this it's going to be more obvious there's a table there."

He added: "With the opportunity just to walk to wherever it is closest to you and play on a table outside with your friends for free it's just a great opportunity for everyone and I hope it gets used well."

Ping! is once again backed by National Lottery investment from Sport England, as part of its work to deliver a lasting legacy beyond London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Sport England Chairman, Richard Lewis, enthused: "Ping! has proved to be one of our most successful sports participation projects attracting over 100,000 participants to date. Together with Sing and the English Table Tennis Association we can spread the Olympic and Paralympic spirit throughout the country and help people create a sporting legacy for life."

Richard Yule, Chief Executive of the ETTA, was equally enthusiastic: "It is fantastic for table tennis to be at the forefront of these initiatives to increase sustainable mass participation. As we know table tennis can be played

by anyone, anytime, anyplace, anywhere. Ping! proves it.”



More photos from the event can be found on the [ETTA's Virtual Press Office](#).

By Russell Moore

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