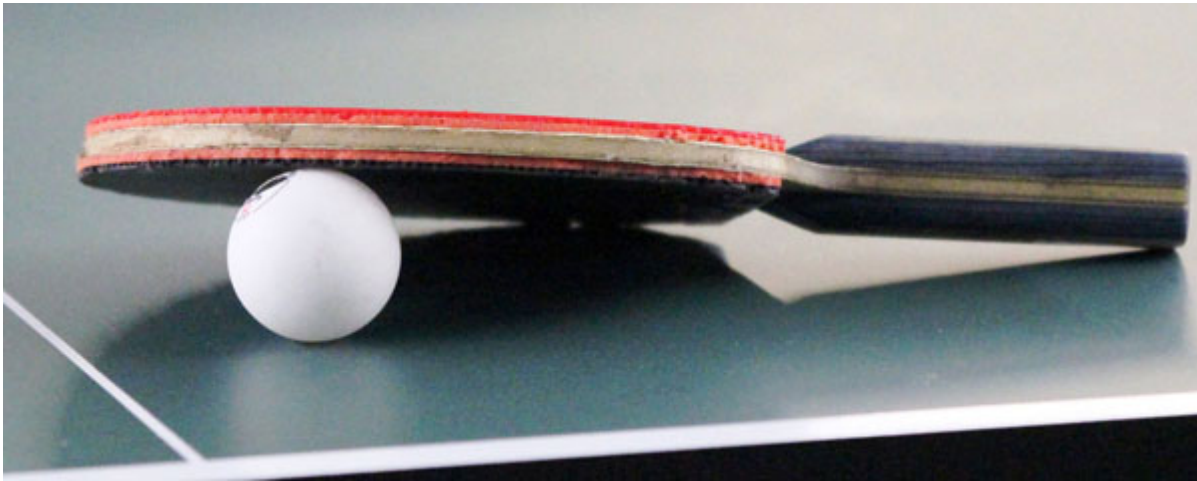


The future of English table tennis

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The future of English table tennis changed direction at the weekend with a major shift in the structure of the decision-making process within the ETTA.

This was the first step on the road to make the necessary changes to secure on-going funding for the sport.

The National Council overwhelmingly accepted the Board's motion to pass the strategic and policy decision-making to the Board. The National Council will remain in an advisory role and retain the power to influence decision, but relinquish the power to impose policy decisions.

Funding

Last December, table tennis was one of only six sports where Sport England did not guarantee its funding beyond 12 months. Sport England also made it clear that they no longer had confidence in the structure of administration of table tennis. They paid for a strategic evaluation of the sport, known now as the Portas Review, which came up with a number of recommendations.

The ETTA needed to implement changes to its structure, governance and the delivery of the sport if funding was to be available beyond April 2014.

This coincided with the election of a new ETTA Board and the appointment of a new CEO, two weeks ago.

That process began in earnest at the recent National Council meeting, who voted 44 to nil to accept the Board's recommendation and begin the process of change to ensure table tennis receives the £8million funding which will be available if it achieves the objectives it has been set.

Change

Chairman Andy Seward explained to the members that the future of the ETTA and therefore the structure of the sport of table tennis depended on their decision to devolve their policy-making role. However, he stressed that the National Council still had two key roles: to communicate down the line to regions, counties and then on to clubs and teams; and to exercise the power of influence over the decision-making of the board.

After the vote, Andy thanked the National Council for their show of support and said: "The ship has diverted course and we will reach the promised land. It was important that I can go back to Sport England with a strong message and a mandate for change. We can now show that we are moving in the right direction and that that process of change has begun.

"There is £8 million at stake for the future of table tennis. We have taken a step nearer claiming that funding. But this is not the end, it is the beginning of a necessary period of change, a time of new opportunities and a secure future for our sport from grass roots to elite athletes."

ETTA Chief Executive, Sara Sutcliffe, told the group that she had had her first meeting with Sport England and the positive and clear message she had received from them was that they want table tennis to succeed.

The support for these changes makes that more likely.

Susie Hughes, Vice Chairman for Communications (July 31, 2013)

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