

# Blog: It's been a year of radical but necessary change

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**Table Tennis England Chair Sandra Deaton looks back on the great progress made during 2014 – and signposts the important projects for 2015**



Sandra Deaton

As we approach the end of 2014, I would like to take this opportunity to put into context some of the milestones of the last 12 months and outline some of our plans for table tennis for the future.

The past year has been a period of unprecedented change for our sport and for us, as the National Governing Body.

There have been radical changes in our internal structure and governance.

We have a new Board possessing a wide variety of professional skills and experience, and each member with the development of table tennis at the heart of their objectives.

We have a new senior management team to head up our new internal structure.

We are in new premises in Milton Keynes.

There is renewed confidence from our major stake-holders in our ability to drive the sport forward.

All of this has been to provide the basis on which we can now develop our sport at all levels.

## **Fit for purpose**

It is imperative for the future of our sport that we demonstrate to our primary partners and stake-holders that we are fit for purpose to drive the development of table tennis in this country.

Earlier in December, I was part of the Table Tennis England team which presented to Sport England to make a case for the next tranche of funding. You may recall that two years ago, table tennis was one of only a handful of sports which were put on a 'year-by-year' probationary period until we proved ourselves capable of governing the development of the sport.

We have come a long way since then, but we now have much more to do . . . and that is going to be from the grass roots of our sport to our elite athletes.

Before we could influence and improve the participation and development of table tennis, we needed to take a long, hard look at the way we operated as a National Sports Governing body. We have made those necessary changes. We have become a professional organisation with definite strategic aims, targets and objectives. But, always with our focus on what we can do to facilitate, grow and develop table tennis in England.

I have recently re-read the newsletter that my predecessor, the late Andy Seward, sent you almost 12 months ago to the day. He set out our clear objectives and targets for 2014.

[Click here to read the newsletter](#)

We are on target. I want to recap on those, explain what we have achieved and set our new targets for 2015.

Some of the milestones in the last year and those planned for the future . . .

\* We have identified the criteria to create a performance structure to have a wider base of committed, talented future internationals through the creation of Talent Development Centres

<https://tabletennisengland.co.uk/news/talent-development-centres-announced/>

\* We have rebranded ourselves as Table Tennis England and will be using this as a springboard to develop further partnerships of benefit to the sport

<https://tabletennisengland.co.uk/news/featured-news/blog-our-new-brand/>

\* We launched the first National Table Tennis Day in July 2014 with hundreds of events around the country and a high-profile launch in the Houses of Parliament. We will be building on this next year and also looking to participate in the first World Table Tennis Day

\* We have recently completed a detailed insight study to determine what our players across the spectrum want and need to enjoy and continue playing table tennis

\* We have been analysing that data and will be providing a series of 'offers' and development support for social players, committed players, our clubs and leagues

\* We are establishing priority zones with the right criteria needed to expand and develop the sport in a particular location

\* We have commissioned a facilities survey to establish a strategy which will focus on delivering the right assistance and support where it is most needed

\* There is support for a junior performance programme concentrating on training and international experience. Our England Youth Squad of 28 young players is geared to help the elite athletes of the future hit their full potential

<https://tabletennisengland.co.uk/news/england-youth-squad-announced/>

\* We have increased the prize fund in the Grand Prix series and for the first time, brought the women's prize money level with the men's

<https://tabletennisengland.co.uk/news/women-and-men-to-get-equal-prize-money-in-grand-prix-series/>

\* We have a coach education road show to work with regions, counties and clubs

\* We have commissioned a Competition Review with both professional and volunteer representation to offer a competition and event structure that has the player at the centre from a beginner to elite performer

\* We have established a regional forum to help establish strong regional committees to support the volunteer structure in coaching and competition

\* We are mindful that all this must be achieved with economical prudence to obtain a healthy financial bottom line by March

\* We will listen to and target the needs and aspirations of our members, clubs and leagues in the development of competitive table tennis

\* We are continuing to work with partners and identify opportunities to grow the sport at a social level to maximise participation and enjoyment for all ages and all levels

In conclusion, this year, we have committed to make table tennis . . . a sport for all, for life. Everything we do will be focused on and led by that principal vision.

I want to thank our members for their continuing participation and involvement in our sport as players and coaches; our Table Tennis England staff in head office and the regions for their ongoing commitment, professionalism and support; our Table Tennis England Board for helping to negotiate us through this change

with expertise and positivity; our partners and stake-holders for their continued involvement and commitment to helping and working with us; and our many volunteers for their invaluable contribution at every level of table tennis in England.

Merry Christmas and best wishes for a happy and healthy 2015

**Sandra Deaton (Table Tennis England Chair)**

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