

# Table Tennis England funding is restored

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✘ Table Tennis England has been removed from restricted funding by Sport England, securing finance to develop and run the sport for the next two years.

It means Table Tennis England will now deliver an exciting range of initiatives to better serve existing members and attract new players to the sport.

This represents a huge vote of confidence in the leadership of Table Tennis England following the organisation's root and branch reform over the past two years.

The restructuring was set in motion in December 2012 when the then English Table Tennis Association was placed on a one-year restricted funding arrangement by Sport England following concerns over its ability to lead and influence the sport.

The election of the late Andy Seward as Chairman in 2013, together with a new Board and the appointment of a new Chief Executive, Sara Sutcliffe, and a new senior management team started the drive for change. Following the unexpected passing of Andy Seward, Sandra Deaton was elected Chair in March 2014 and continued to lead the transformation of the association including the move from its former headquarters in Hastings to Milton Keynes. Now rebranded as Table Tennis England, the organisation has demonstrated good progress and secured a longer-term investment.

Table Tennis England will now be offered a two-year investment award up to March 2017 – the end of Sport England's current grassroots sport investment cycle.

The exact value of Sport England's investment will be decided in March 2015 following a detailed analysis of the performance of the sport in the latest national participation results which were also published today.

Welcoming the news, Chief Executive Sara Sutcliffe said: "Today's news is the result of a lot of hard work by the Chair, the Board, many volunteers and the staff of Table Tennis England to bring about some fundamental changes to how the association operates.

"Changes are not always easy but in this case our major partner and key funder, Sport England, was right to put pressure on us to change. Importantly this vote of confidence from Sport England in the leadership of Table Tennis England allows us now to focus on driving delivery of the programmes, to support our members and players and to attract and retain more players to our sport and develop our talented players."

Sandra Deaton, Chair, added: "This announcement is testament to the dedication of all the staff in identifying the initiatives needed to move forward to increase participation and support our members through club and league development. Sport England have demonstrated a renewed level of confidence in our ability to truly understand how to increase participation and deliver results.

Table tennis was one of six sports, alongside tennis, swimming, basketball, fencing and squash & racketball to be placed on one-year restricted funding in December 2012, when other sports were given funding for the whole four-year cycle.

The one-year funding was renewed for all six last year and, today, table tennis has been restored to the normal cycle of Sport England funding, as have tennis and fencing.

Highlighting the fact that Table Tennis England now demonstrates a better understanding of the people that play the sport and has improved its programme for talented athletes, Sport England Chairman Nick Bitel added: "Placing these sports in one-year funding arrangements in 2013, and then keeping them there in 2014, sent a clear message to governing bodies about Sport England's intentions to secure improvements for grassroots

sport.

"The response we've seen has been positive and demonstrates the importance on which sports place the participation agenda.

"I welcome the fact that these sports have made progress, in particular tennis, table tennis and fencing, which are all in a better place to begin increasing participation across their sports.

"Our next step will be to analyse each sport's performance using the latest Active People Survey figures to decide what level of investment is justified."

The Active People Survey shows the number of regular participants in the sport is 96,200, a reduction on the previous 12-month period.

However, with exciting initiatives new in the pipeline and the renewed confidence of Sport England, Table Tennis England fully expects that figure to climb.

**Paul Stimpson**

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