



Get set for the return of PING!

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Table Tennis England has confirmed it will be expanding Ping!, the street table tennis project this summer, for the eighth consecutive year, thanks to £250,000 of National Lottery and Government funding.

This follows the announcement by Sport England last week of a major portfolio of investments designed to get more people playing sport regularly. Some of this funding will be invested in tackling inactivity through mass participation programmes such as Ping!, which has a proven track record of being able to deliver in this area.

Ping! places free ping pong tables in public spaces all over England and by providing bats and balls on tables in the summer, removes barriers to exercise and makes physical activity more readily available to previously inactive people.

This summer all existing Ping! towns and cities will relaunch their festivals; and for first time Blackpool, Bradford and the New Forest will be bringing tables to landmark public locations and to their communities too in the drive to help more people feel able to take part. There will be a series of events around the Ping! tables for the general public such as '*Name your weapon*' or '*King of Ping*' and for specific groups '*Over 55s Bat and Chat*' or '*South Asian Ladies Wiff Waff*'.

Last year over 750 tables were placed in public spaces of 21 towns and cities, with 1.8million visits to the tables over the summer. 19% of the participants have reported they were previously inactive and 96% said they would play again!

Ping! enables busy people to play as part of their existing lifestyle and while the festival has an emphasis on fun and with tables popping up in all sorts of unusual places, from railway stations to stately homes, the aim is to make a meaningful difference to people's lives.

To find your nearest Ping! table visit www.pingengland.co.uk.

Ping! is delighted to announce that Blackpool has been selected to be this year's flagship location and national launch venue.

As well as providing opportunities for visitors to play in iconic locations including the Blackpool Tower and Winter Gardens; the town will be working in partnership with organisations such as housing associations to provide regular participation opportunities in the belief that table tennis will inspire more active and social behaviour in deprived neighbourhoods.

Cllr Maria Kirkland, Cabinet Member for Leisure Services at Blackpool Council, said:

"This initiative has been very successful in other parts of the country and we are looking forward to see it come to Blackpool.

"We are hoping that the tennis tables will appeal to both residents and visitors alike, and encourage the community to become more involved in fun and free activities.

"Table tennis is the most popular racquet sport in the world and we are hoping to capitalise on this in Blackpool. It's very easy to play so we are hoping to see lots of people getting involved. All people need to do is turn up to the chosen locations across the town, pick up a bat, and most importantly have fun."

The Lasting Legacy

Although the festival component of Ping! lasts for just the summer, the project is actually the launch pad for long-term change. Many of the tables stay in situ or are donated out into the community, inspiring social ping pong hubs and enabling people to have more active lives.

From the Ping! Bristol festival which first launched in 2012, a whole social ping pong scene has evolved. 'Battle of the Paddle' is a business league played on Ping! tables, bar and workplace tables spanning the city centre, with an impressive 30 teams playing on a regular basis.

Meanwhile in Leeds the Ping! project is helping Leeds City Council and Yorkshire Sport to achieve local outcomes and reach individuals they had previously been unable to engage. Peter Thompson, a Ping! Leeds Activator and volunteer spent last summer running regular Ping! sessions at parks in many deprived areas of Leeds, Peter told us:

"I encountered many different people from all walks of life and heard some really inspirational stories. From a cancer patient who told me that coming to the tables each week gave her a purpose and took her away from the grind of her chemotherapy; to the couple both suffering from health and alcohol related issues who hadn't exercised for years and were surprised how much they enjoyed playing and how much better they felt for it!"

#INTHELOOP

Social table tennis is being introduced into other everyday places through the Loop table scheme. Businesses, university campuses, sports clubs and various community groups have access to purchase subsidised table packages, bringing table tennis into the places people already spend time, and introducing a more active, healthier and happier lifestyle. For more information on Loop visit www.keepintheLOOP.co.uk.

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