

**Table Tennis England
Competition Review 2021
Update & Membership Consultation**

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1. Introduction

The Table Tennis England Board have agreed a review of the Competition programme.

The review is being led by the Head of Competition & Events, supported by a [Steering Group](#). The Steering Group (see **Appendix A**) comprises a cross-section of the Table Tennis England membership, balancing expertise and key representation; their role is to: *monitor, guide, and sense-check*. Additionally, three members of the Steering Group, together with the Head of Competition & Events, form a Project Team; their role is to: *drive and execute* the review.

The Table Tennis England competition programme is complex and inter-connected, and has grown organically into its current form over many years.

Previous competition reviews in 2009 and 2014 led to valuable refinements but no fundamental changes. It is now considered that appetite exists within the membership for a more in-depth consideration of opportunities.

Table Tennis England will undertake a root-and-branch review of domestic competition in order to address a number of known issues and ensure the programme is fit-for-purpose to meet the needs of our members.

The purpose and structure of this document is:

Section A: to share details of the project

Section B: to share relevant information to inform members' understanding

Section C: to invite structured feedback from the membership as part of the consultation phase

Following the consultation process, we will use the feedback to help inform decisions.

If you have any queries after reading this document, please contact Neil Rogers, Head of Competitions & Events neil.rogers@tabletennisengland.co.uk

Thank you sincerely for your input and insight.

Neil Rogers

Head of Competition & Events

October 2021

SECTION A

2a. Goal

The Goal of the review is to deliver: *“the right format, frequency, location and standard of competition across all demographics, for existing and potential members”*

2b. Scope

The Scope of the review is:

- IN scope: national competition programmes that sit within Table Tennis England governance/ delivery (including tournaments, sanctioned events, national leagues, schools)
- OUT of scope: social competition, and competition programmes that do not sit within Table Tennis England governance/ delivery (including VETTS, BUCS, local leagues¹)

2c. Aims

The Aims of the review are to:

1. Reduce current levels of ‘calendar congestion’ and unsustainable burden on available officials, whilst identifying appropriate space in the calendar for events and performance squad commitments
2. Engender a more sustainable delivery approach; reduce financial cost to Table Tennis England and external organisers, and provide *Value for Money* for players
3. Facilitate opportunity for more creative and innovative external/ sanctioned event formats
4. Provide greater quality assurance of external/ sanctioned events
5. Encourage a more equal geographical spread of tournaments
6. Create ‘upward pressure’ through a pathway of tournament events (must balance with #2)
7. Prepare talented athletes experientially for international competition
8. Deliver greater opportunity to identified gaps in TTE demographic, including Women & Girls, and accessible integrated competition for athletes with disabilities
9. Consider extent of future integration of schools events into core structures²
10. Assess the relative benefit of existing programme events
11. Offer an objective basis for removal of existing lower-value competitions from the programme
12. Deliver a high-quality & inclusive event environment
13. Deliver a high-quality player experience

¹ Delivery and format of Local League sits outside TTE purview, and - both practically and in terms of member engagement - local league is very much a ‘concurrent opportunity’ rather than a linked structure. Whilst an understanding of member experience, appetites and opportunities are fully integrated in the consultation and insight processes, it is not necessarily considered at this stage that Local Leagues would be directly impacted by this review process or by short-term anticipated change

² Following the integration of ESTTA (the English Schools Table Tennis Association) and Table Tennis England in 2017, this specific aim will be explored directly with the Table Tennis England Schools Committee and focussed on internal structures and support

3. Process & Timeframe

The anticipated Process and Timeframe for the review is:

	Process	Detail	Timeframe
Phase 1 – 6 months	✓ Mapping	Identify all event details on common template to provide global map of competitive opportunity	Spring '21
	✓ Insight1	External: research exercise to provide illustrations and possibilities - other benchmark NGBs in England and other TT associations in Europe	Late Spring '21
	✓ Enabler	Implementation of changes to Junior/ U19 age-group ³	Summer '21
	✓ Enabler	Alignment of TTE National Championships and Cups with ITTF age-groups: U11, U13, U15, U17, U19, U21 & Seniors ⁴	
	✓ Enabler	Launch of 'TT Leagues' fixtures/ results platform for national league programmes ⁵	
	Consultation	a) Open membership consultation, inc. specific targeted questions b) Forums to be held with key stakeholder groups	Oct-Nov '21
	Insight2	Internal: establish narrative insight via targeted interactions with c.20 knowledgeable members of TTE community + TASS women and girls research outcomes	
	Analysis	Analysis of consultation feedback	Dec '21
Decision1	Update to Board inc. agreement to proceed and projected costings related to subsequent phases	Early '22	
Phase 2 – 6 months	Modelling	Outline modelling of future events and overall programme	Spring '22
	Decision2	Outline proposal to Board for in-principle agreement; principles to filter into scheduling/ arrangements for '23/24 season	
	Enabler	Background launch of new rankings system	
Phase 3	Development	Detailed development of events and overall programme	Spring - Summer '22
	Enabler	Explore options for i) Online League Entry module, and ii) endorsed Tournament Management platform for national and sanctioned events	
	Enabler	Launch of Online Tournament Entry module (TBC)	Summer '22
	Enabler	Full launch of new rankings system (TBC)	
	Enabler	Development of Memoranda of Understanding with BUCS and VETTS (TBC)	
Decision3	Full agreement by Board		
4	Implement1	Phased/ partial implementation & progression of identified dependencies	Season '22/23
5	Implement2	Full implementation	Season '23/24

The process with ✓ have been completed.

We have now reached the processes highlighted in yellow.

³ [Junior category extended to under-19— Table Tennis England](#)

⁴ [Competitions: Changes come into effect for new season— Table Tennis England](#)

⁵ [Big developments on TT Leagues for new season— Table Tennis England](#)

SECTION B

4a. Competition Mapping

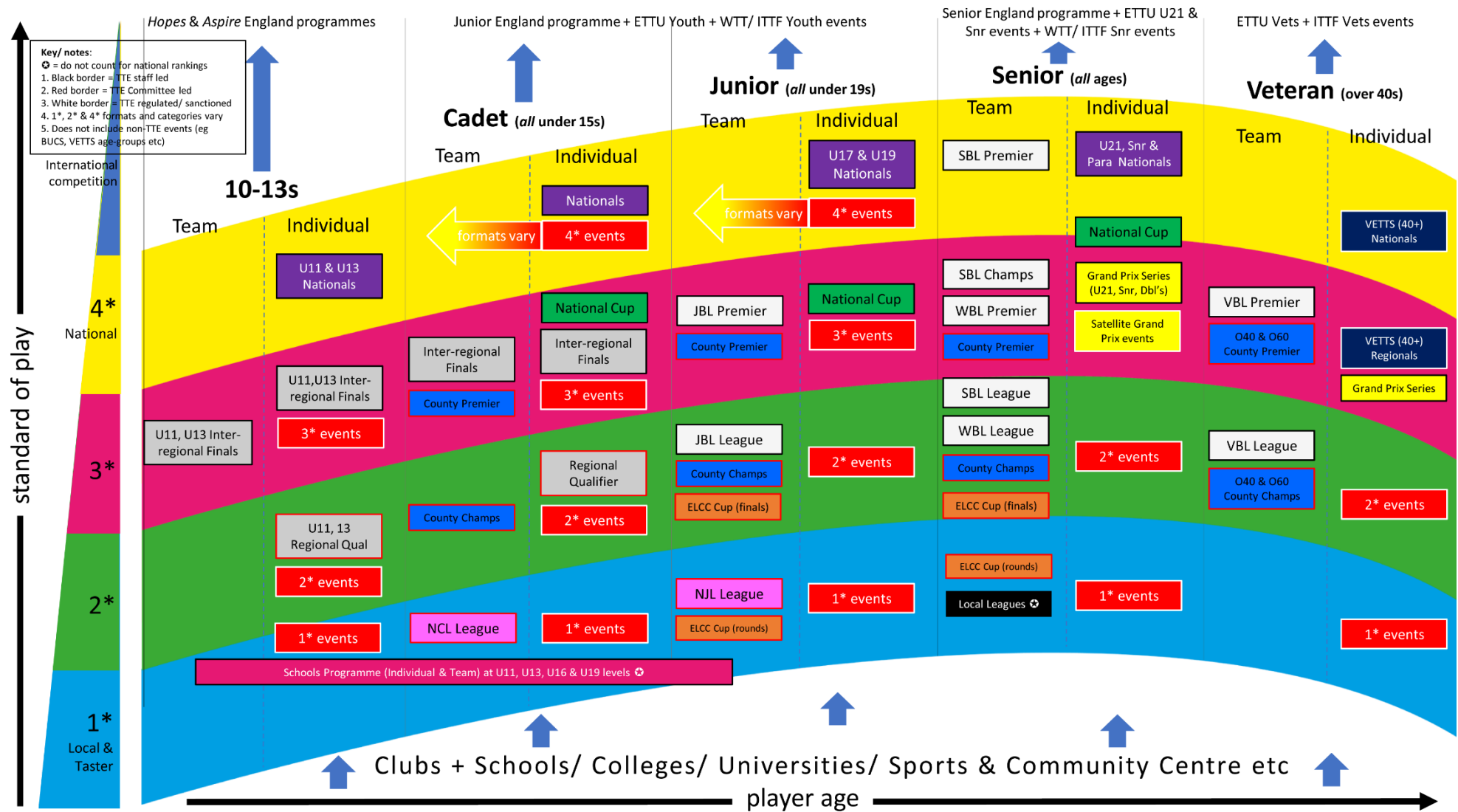
The first step of the review has been to map the current national programmes on a common template, in order that members can have a comprehensive picture of activity and opportunities.

This includes all national Table Tennis England events, three (of five) 4* events as an illustration of national sanctioned events, as well as BUCS and VETTS as significant national events in the calendar.

The detailed breakdown of this exercise with full quantifications can be seen in **Appendix B**

This information is presented in a more general and digestible format as i) a visual representation, ii) a narrative description, and iii) geographically.

i) visual representation of the competition programme:



ii) a narrative description of the competition programme:

TTE-led Competitions	
Programme	Description
Mark Bates Ltd. National Championships (closed)	A series of three annual KO tournaments for men's and women's individuals and doubles pairings at U11 & U13s, Cadet, U17 & Junior, and Para & U21 & Senior (open) age-groups. Restricted to the top32 England-eligible players, determined by rankings (and additionally through a separate qualification event for Senior, and leaderboard at 4* events for Cadet and Junior)
National Cups (closed)	A series of three annual tournaments for boys and girls at Cadet, Junior and Senior age-groups, played in a round-robin format. Restricted to the top10 England-eligible players, determined by rankings. The Senior event is new/ aspirational for season 21/22
British League (BL) (open)	A national merit league structure, in varying formats, for clubs/ teams at Junior boys and Junior girls (JBL), Senior (mixed/ open, SBL) Women's (only, WBL) and Veterans men's and women's (VBL) age-groups. BL is the premier team-based competition in England, and also open to teams from other Home Countries. BL comprises over 300 teams, 1,400+ players, competing at c.30 home/ away fixtures, 6 national weekends & c.50 divisional weekends
Grand Prix (open)	A national series of five KO tournaments per season, held regionally, consisting of a broad mix of age-groups and events including U21 men's and women's singles, Senior (open) men's and women's singles and doubles, Veterans open doubles, and multiple Senior (open) men's and women's banded singles events determined by ranking points. Typically between 100-180 entrants for each tournament, averaging 2-3 events each
County Championships (closed)	A national merit league structure, hosted regionally below Premier level, for representative teams selected on players' TTE county affiliation, at men's and women's Cadet, Junior, Senior, Veteran and Over-60 age-groups. Around 1,200 entrants. Also open to home countries counties.
National Cadet League (NCL) & National Junior Leagues (NJL) (open)	A programme of regionally-hosted league events, reconstituted on an annual basis, for mixed-gender clubs/ teams at Cadet and Junior age-groups. Aimed at grass-roots players, with c.250 Cadet and c.200 Junior participants
Inter-regional Qualifiers (closed)	An annual event, held at the discretion of each the ten TTE regions ⁶ , and potentially also incorporating regional championships in other age-groups, to determine the individual regional qualifiers from boy's and girl's U11, U13 & Cadet age-groups to attend the <u>Inter-regional Finals</u> . Restricted to England-eligible players affiliated to TTE counties within a specific TTE region
Inter-regional Finals (closed)	An annual KO tournament in both team and individual formats, at boy's and girl's U11, U13 & Cadet age-groups, for c.200 singles and c.100 team participants qualifying or selected from <u>Inter-regional Qualifier</u> events. The event is specifically aimed at the tier of players below the top10, and therefore entry is restricted to those <i>outside</i> the top10 rankings or already invited to <u>National Cups</u>

⁶ Yorkshire, North West, North East, West Midlands, East Midlands, South West, South, London, South East, Eastern

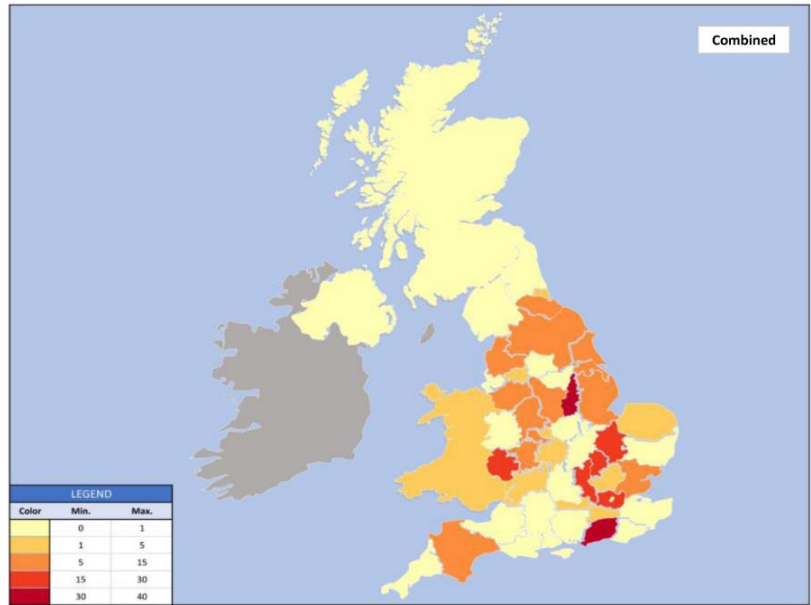
English League Cup Competition (ELCC) (closed)	An annual KO tournament in team format, at Junior and Senior age-groups, for representative teams selected on players' TTE local league participation. A national finals event follows zonal qualification tournaments, with c.150 participants. This is the oldest event on the Table Tennis England calendar.
Butterfly Schools (closed)	Consists of both Team and Individual events, for boys and girls, at U11, U13, U16 and U19 age-groups. Entrants represent their school and require permission to compete. TTE deliver regional and national finals in the team event, and national finals in the individual event, following Borough Finals > County Finals > Zone Finals delivered by schools at local level. National finals consists of around 330 entrants to the individuals event, and 120 in the team event.
Jack Petchey Schools (closed)	With the support of the Jack Petchey Foundation, TTE also deliver the County rounds of the <i>Butterfly Schools competition</i> in London & Essex, and the Zone finals for the Team event in London. For the individual competition, there is also a London Final for those qualifying from the County Finals

Externally-led Competitions	
Description	Description
Local Leagues (open)	A wide-ranging annual merit league structure, club-based at local level, in varying formats, typically for clubs/ teams at Senior (open) age-group. There are c.230 sanctioned local leagues consisting of around 2,500 clubs fielding 7,000 teams. Local leagues are non-regulated but supported by TTE, and typically take place on weekday evenings
1*, 2*, 3* & 4* events (open)	A wide-ranging tournament programme, typically club-based at local level, in varying formats. There are c.160 sanctioned 1*, 2*, 3* & 4* events each season, regulated by TTE – these are the most frequent and accessible tournament events for players
Satellite Grand Prix (open)	Complimentary event consistent with <u>Grand Prix</u> format, regulated by TTE, but externally- rather than internally-led. Typically two events each season held within UK but out with England (eg in Jersey and Wales)
VETTS (closed)	A national series of seven KO tournaments, held regionally, for members of the VETTS organisation. Sanctioned and regulated by TTE at 40+ (Veteran) age-group only, with additional non-regulated age-group events also held in 50+, 60+, 70+ & 80+ age-groups

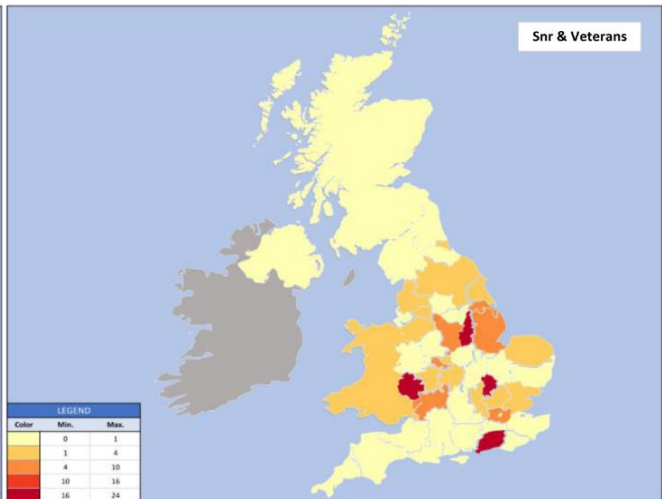
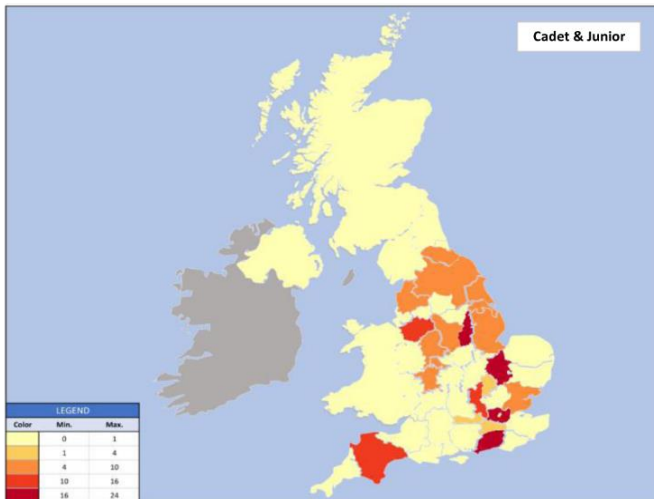
Please note that for Season 21/22 Junior event eligibility has been changed from U18 to U19, and the age-groups for National Championships and National Cups have been amended from previous seasons

iii) the following diagram shows an illustration of Tournaments (only) by Geography, and includes national and regulated events (inc 1*, 2*, 3* and 4* tournaments):

County	Cadet	Junior	Senior	Veterans	Combined
Bedfordshire		2	11	5	18
Berkshire	1	1			2
Bristol			1	0	1
Buckinghamshire	7	8	1	1	17
Cambridgeshire	8	8			16
Cheshire	6	6	2		14
Derbyshire	1	3	2	3	9
Devonshire	6	6			12
Durham	4	4			8
East Yorkshire	3	5	2		10
Essex	4	1	2		7
Gloucestershire			1	3	4
Herefordshire			10	9	19
Hertfordshire				1	1
Lancashire	2	2	1	2	7
Lincolnshire	3	5	2	2	12
London	10	8	4	1	23
Manchester			1		1
Norfolk			2	1	3
North Yorkshire	4	4	1	1	10
Nottinghamshire	11	11	12	5	39
Staffordshire	2	3			5
Surrey	1	1			2
Tyne & Wear				1	1
Wales			1		1
Warwick				1	1
West Midlands	2	2	4	4	12
West Sussex	7	9	12	11	39
Worcester	3	3	3		9
TOTAL	85	92	75	51	303

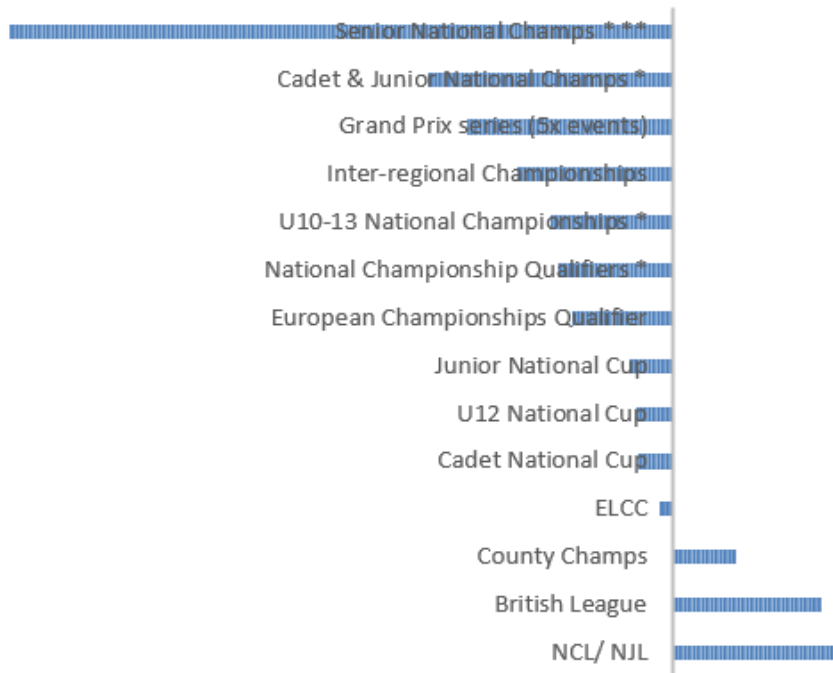


Not including divisions of British League, County Championships, NCL/ NLL
Based on the TTE 19/20 Calendar prior to COVID-19 cancellations



4b. Competition Financing

An illustration of the operational event finances (only) of the regular Table Tennis England -delivered programmes in 4a. is shown below:



These illustrations do not include the following income:

- Sponsorship (for events denoted *)
- Recoverable VAT for sponsored events (for events denoted *)

These illustrations do not include the following expenditure:

- Salaries and indirect staffing costs
- General office costs and IT support
- Broadcast and sponsorship support (for event denoted **)
- Support committee costs
- Equipment purchase and storage
- Irregular or one-off event costs, including home qualifying fixtures for ETTU men's and women's European Team Championships and Home Countries Championships at various age-groups

It is self-evident that league programmes are generally more financially viable than tournaments, or tournament series.

Overall, the Table Tennis England Competitions & Events programme is delivered at an operational deficit of c.£100k, not including staffing costs or Sport England funding, and is therefore 'subsidised' to Table Tennis England members and participants.

4c. External Insight

This process was undertaken to provide a broad illustration of domestic tournament and league formats in a number of other England/ GB national governing bodies (NGBs) and European table tennis associations (TTAs), together with enabling factors, as a basis to prompt potential opportunities for Table Tennis England.

Please see **Appendix C** for reports of each interview, together with a list of the partner organisations and key discussion points.

Some points of interest or particular note include:

- Club-based leagues form the vast majority of competition activity in other European TT associations, between 70% - 90%, and is considered to be (by far) the most important aspect of competitive play. This is generally held to be c.50% at national level within Table Tennis England - though is of course disconnected from lower (local) leagues in our competition model
- Typically, other European TTAs 'govern more' and 'deliver less' – there is a greater emphasis on providing frameworks for competition which is delivered 'on the ground' through regional or club structures, with TTA delivery focussed more on National Championships (and/ or International hosting). Typically, the role of clubs/ regions in delivery of *national* activity is far greater than with Table Tennis England.
In fact, the Sweden TTA and England Squash do not deliver their own National Championships – and the LTA (Tennis) and England Squash maintain a distinction between *Competitions* and *Events* – eg. structures (potentially creating operating surplus to support wider activity), and practical delivery (potentially operating at an operational loss)
- An integrated national league framework (eg local > regional > zonal > national) is a common approach for leagues – as is restricting graded tournament entry by ranking or by other means
- A focus on *schools* and *youth* as the building blocks for both growth and senior success is another common theme
- With the possible exception of France TTA, all England/ GB NGBs and European TTAs have similar issues with a) encouraging their top seniors to play domestically, and b) providing opportunity for 'up and coming' players to compete against established national squad members. In fact, most are in a worse situation than Table Tennis England
- Most European TTAs see value in hosting major international events as a home competition opportunity and a catalyst for profile and talent development - and, once sustainable on a long-term basis, for financial benefit. However, all also share a level of concern as to how the new WTT circuit and changes will impact
- In France, the tiered tournament structure is used as the primary qualification route to National Championships – ensuring all members are engaged at some level, and theoretically able to qualify through standard competition
- In Portugal, the women's national league is merit-based at the top-end only, with promotion/ relegation from the lower tier(s) which are constituted each season based on entry numbers and strength. This enables the option of short-term commitment and also the opportunity for new teams to find an appropriate standard of play much more quickly – an interesting option/ opportunity for Women's British League (or the future equivalent)

4d. Contextual Info

As a cross-section of the Table Tennis England membership balancing expertise and key representation, the Competition Review Steering Group offer an oversight of key issues, changes or challenges that are planned or anticipated in the future, that we need to be aware of or might help shape our approach.

These can be broadly grouped into eight themes:

i) Sport England's national priorities/ Diversity & Inclusion

c.50% of Table Tennis England's total funding comes from Sport England, nearly £2m each year. Sport England's new 10-year [Uniting the Movement](#) strategy is focussed on 'tackling inequalities', and this is one prism through which Table Tennis England activity in the next 10yrs will be structured.

Separate to this, but supporting many of same themes, will be the new [Table Tennis England Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#), launched in Autumn 2021 and spanning a 5yr period, and focussing primarily on Women and Girl's, Disabilities and Ethnically diverse communities. The action plan will include the following:

- Conducting equality impact assessments across the organisation - including events and competitions, support committees, event volunteers, and technical officials
- Plans to deliver ambitious work related to Women and Girls over the next 5 years, which we anticipate will lead medium- to longer-term to higher numbers taking part in junior and senior competition

Also supporting the last point is the recent [research project between Table Tennis England and the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme \(TASS\)](#), exploring the experiences of women and girls aged 18-30 in Table Tennis. [A detailed overview of the research and recommendations can be seen here](#)

ii) Increased international commitments for talent/ performance players

The recently launched WTT series, and revised ITTF rankings, potentially have significant implications for Table Tennis England talent/ performance players.

Firstly, team competition is clearly becoming a lesser priority on the global stage. Team events no longer attract individual ITTF ranking points, including at World Championships and Olympic level. Instead, ITTF have launched a separate team ranking list⁷

Secondly, the ITTF ranking is now calculated against a players' best 8 events in a 12 month period for Youth and Senior players, which will increase to 10 events in 12 months for Youth players in 2022^{8 9}. This not only increases the amount of WTT/ ITTF events that talent and performance players will need to enter in order to maintain an international ranking, but some events will also become mandatory for players ranked high enough (eg Liam, Paul, Sam & Tin-Tin at Grand Smash and Champions events). Lastly, events will be blocked

⁷ Head-to-head results in WTT/ ITTF team events will continue to be imported for TTE domestic ranking

⁸ The ITTF expect that Snr players may typically play around 14 events to gain 8 quality results to average their ranking

⁹ For players in who can compete in more than one age-group at Youth events, each will count as a separate event for ITTF ranking purposes

and delivered by 'hubs', with several events running back-to-back in neighbouring countries, which may increase the duration for which players are unavailable for.

The natural implication of this is that a) there is a decreasing likelihood that our best Senior players will be available to play domestically, excepting perhaps the National Championships, b) it may be increasingly unrealistic to expect the top Juniors to play more than a handful of domestic events each season, and c) there is potentially greater benefit on focussing Talent/ Performance -level opportunities in the domestic programme at (eg) U11, U13 and U15, with fewer opportunities required at Junior and Senior levels.

iii) Table Tennis England Ranking Project

Table Tennis England are undertaking a separate project, complementary with the Competition Review, related to the [national Ranking and Ratings system](#). This can be seen in the process/ timeframe on p3.

The Competition programme and the Rankings system form two sides of the same coin. Development of a new ranking system and competition framework will ideally go hand-in-hand in order to optimise the way in which they best support each-other.

The Ranking project aspires to deliver:

- Increased incentivisation for table tennis players to compete more regularly
- Integration of male and female lists onto a single Ranking list. It is anticipated this will engender more opportunities for mixed events
- Integration of all age-groups onto a single Ranking list. It is anticipated this could change appetite of players to play in certain events, or against players from different age-groups

iv) Alternative/ Commercial competitors

It is worth noting the recent emergence of the "Table Tennis Daily Super League" – although this took place outside of England - and whether this suggests that commercially-run independent competitions may be attractive to members.

It would appear that production values and social media profile are greater than at Table Tennis Events of a comparable level (eg British League), though it is not a ranking event, and the financial model clearly only sustainable in its current form with significant commercial support or underwriting.

This could potentially be seen as either an alternative or additional opportunity – as a risk or something to be embraced and integrated as another avenue of valued competitive play. In the latter instance, this would require active integration into the calendar to avoid clashes.

v) Table Tennis England's international hosting aspirations

The Table Tennis England Board backs a strategy to bring WTT events [World Table Tennis](#) to England, and discussions are ongoing with WTT. The primary challenge remains resource. Table Tennis England is not able

to fund these events, and substantial partnership funding is needed from the ITTF/ WTT, and/ or host cities/ venues. Youth WTT events would support the talent programme and reduce costs to that part of the business by providing an event in England; Senior WTT events would provide opportunities for spectators of elite table tennis, and assist with the strategic aim of improving/ changing the perception of table tennis.

Table Tennis England are also in ongoing discussions with ITTF [International Table Tennis Federation - Home of Table Tennis \(ittf.com\)](https://www.ittf.com) about the World Championships 2026 and Para World Championships 2026, potentially as an integrated event in the ITTFs centenary year. Additionally, Table Tennis England are actively involved in the current bid with BPTT to host the European Para Championships in 2023. Each of these events would provide opportunities to support the elite programme, support officials' development, provide opportunities on home soil, and attract media attention – and, for para, to support the Paris 2024 qualification route.

vi) Venue and Equipment Hire for larger events

National events that can be held within a club environment – such as Senior British League divisions, or National Cups – are currently actively delivered in conjunction with the vital and valued support of Table Tennis England members; this is generally a cost-effective solution for accessing both venues and equipment, and enables us to support member clubs and bring national activity into local facilities. However, National events that are larger than can be held within a Club environment require the use of a) commercial facility hire, typically at municipal or university facilities, and b) equipment hire for large numbers of tables/ barriers etc. Commercial hire charges for both venues and equipment unavoidably make larger events less cost-effective.

In particular, our ability to guarantee best value for money for TTE members is constrained in terms of equipment supply due to this being an effective duopoly; at the current time, it remains borderline as to the cost/ benefit of hiring equipment externally, and longer-term purchasing/ insuring/ maintaining/ storing/ transporting a national stock.

The National Badminton Centre – the current home of Table Tennis England – is the size of 8 badminton courts (67.8m x 18.3m overall). Theoretically this could house up to 16 table tennis tables at 10x5m. The lighting is not currently suitable for table tennis competition, but an upgrade to 1,000lux+ is scheduled for Spring 2022. This would enable the TTE to potentially host a number of small-medium sized events at the NBC, with the additional benefit of on-site accommodation and catering facilities.

vii) Technical Officials recruitment strategy

The first 3-year Officiating Strategy is now coming to end (mid-2022). This aimed to a) increase the numbers of Umpires, Referees and Tournament Organisers at entry level, b) increase the number of female umpires, c) increase the number of umpires aged under 25, and d) provide new opportunities for all officials to upgrade their existing qualifications. The strategy was supported with training and CPD opportunities. As a result of the work carried out over the past three years, the number and diversity of umpires in particular has been improved, and just over 50 new TO2's (Tournament Organisers) have recently been qualified, increasing the opportunity for local competition offers.

As the first strategy is coming to an end, the next one is being developed. This will focus on upscaling the volume of courses and greater utilisation of technology, thus allowing more people to access them. It will also continue to focus on greater diversity. Having learnt many valuable lessons from the first strategy, physical courses will be run at key competition locations around the country, so that more localised teams of Officials can be created.

viii) Technological support/ improvement

Table Tennis England have invested in a bespoke League fixtures/ results platform – [TT Leagues](#) – that is already being used successfully by many local leagues, and recently launched for British League also¹⁰ Future development options are anticipated to include the addition of an online League Entry/ Payment module.

Development work is ongoing with Sport:80 (who operate [TT Memberships](#) and the [TTE ranking system](#)) to create an online Tournament Entry/ Payment module within TT Memberships. This was recently trialled for the *Junior National Cup 2021* and *Cadet & Junior National Championships 2021*, and is currently in a subsequent phase of refinement following feedback from those events. Future complementary developments are anticipated to include access to an endorsed Tournament Management platform for national and sanctioned events (1*, 2*, 3* & 4*)

Table Tennis England has a developing relationship with [Recast](#), an online streaming platform, which may be used for future national events¹¹ Looking forward, complementary developments are anticipated to include access to an endorsed streaming platform for British League Premier Division, and for club/ member events.

¹⁰ [Big developments on TT Leagues for new season— Table Tennis England](#)

¹¹ [Recast partnership set to grow our sport— Table Tennis England](#)

4e. Player Reports

Using Season 19/20 membership, events and rankings data, the following reports are currently being prepared:

- 1) How many distinct domestic events in this period
- 2) For each domestic event, the range of participants' rankings – this will show to what extent lower-level events still attract higher-ranked players, and vice-versa
- 3) For each age-group and ranking band, the frequency and range of individuals' event participation
- 4) For each Senior event, the range/ density of ages participating – this will show to what extent Senior (open) events attract Cadet, Junior and Veteran players
- 5) For each Open event, the relative numbers of TTE members and 'reciprocal members' (eg Home Countries or International players) – this will show to what extent different events attract players whose home association is not Table Tennis England
- 6) For 1*, 2* and 4* events, the distance from participant's home postcodes – this will show how far entrants typically travel for different tiers of competition, and what geographical overlap we might expect

If possible these reports will be published as an update to the documentation once the consultation has launched; alternately, these reports will be used by the Project Team as a further source of information to inform options for competition modelling.

For further information, please **Appendix D**

SECTION C

5. Membership Consultation & Insight

We have now reached the stage of *Membership Consultation* and *Internal Insight*. All members will have full opportunity to feed-in and offer their thoughts.

The Consultation will consist of three connected processes:

a) Open feedback

b) Forums

The forums will be hosted online with key stakeholder groups including: i) O18 players, ii) U18 players/ parents, iii) talent & performance group & players, iv) MAG, and v) National Council. The forums are scheduled to take place during the consultation window

c) Insight interviews

1:1 interviews, typically online, will be hosted with c.20 specific individuals who are considered to be knowledgeable and experienced members of the Table Tennis England community. The insight interviews will take place after interviewees have completed their online submission, so this can be used as basis for discussion. The interviews are scheduled to take place during the consultation window.

Please see **Appendix E** for acknowledgements

In addition, specific discussions will be hosted with the Table Tennis England Schools Committee in respect of schools programmes, with British Para Table Tennis (BPTT) in respect of para players and with the Table Tennis England Technical Officials Committee (TOC) in respect of technical officials' support of competition programme¹²

The remainder of this document will now focus on point a) the open feedback exercise.

The key purpose of the Consultation is to equip the Steering Group with the necessary information to support outline modelling of a future events and overall programme – not to consider specific aspects of specific competitions.

Consultation Questions

The consultation questions are dynamic and follow logic-paths depending on the respondent and the info submitted in earlier questions. The possible sections include:

- About the respondent, to allow us to contextualise and cross-reference responses (though the responses themselves will remain completely anonymous)
- Reflections on existing competitions

¹² Key topics will include: how far officials are willing to travel/ how many events officials able to support each season/ how many matches willing to umpire per day/ what changes can potentially be made to technical officials support requirements without undermining event integrity in order to make them more cost-effective

- Being fit for purpose for the future
- Fundamentals and 'known issues'

Your answers can be submitted online here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CompetitionReview2021>

The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete, and will remain open until midnight on **Sunday 21st November**.

Please actively refer to the information in SECTION B to help inform your response (Competition Mapping and financing, External Insight, Contextual Info and Player Reports)

Players

6. * Please select your age group. [single code]
- Cadet (Under 15)
 - Junior (Under 19)
 - Senior (Over 19)
 - Veteran (Over 40)
7. * What is your most common level of involvement in table tennis? [single code]
- I no longer play
 - I play socially/recreationally
 - I play in local competitions
 - I play in national competitions (1* and above)[Logic to Q12]
 - I play in international competitions [Logic to Q12]

Those who select a.-c. to Q5 or Q7

Accessing competitions

8. * What are your reasons for not accessing structured play or competitions outside of your local area? Please select all that apply. [multicode]
- I am not interested
 - I've tried before and didn't enjoy the experience
 - I am unclear about competition opportunities
 - There are not enough competition opportunities close to me
 - There are a lack of competition opportunities for people like me
 - Financial reasons
 - I can't play or support in competitions due to ill health
 - I can't play or support in competitions due to family commitments
 - I can't play or support in competitions due to work commitments
 - I can't play or support in competitions due to educational commitments
 - Other, please specify [text box]
9. * Is there anything that would motivate you to access structured play or competitions outside of your local area? Please select all that apply. [multicode]
- A better understanding about competition opportunities

- b. More local opportunities
- c. More competition opportunities for people like me
- d. More competition opportunities at different times throughout the year
- e. If I knew I would get more matches
- f. Other, please specify [text box]

10. * How far would you be willing to travel for structured play or competitions? [single code]

- a. 0-24 miles
- b. 25-49 miles
- c. 50-74 miles
- d. 75-99 miles
- e. 100+ miles
- f. I don't know

11. * If you were to play or support competitions outside of your local area, how much time would you be willing to put aside? [single code] [Logic to Q50]

- a. An evening
- b. Half a day
- c. A full day
- d. A full weekend
- e. I don't know

Those who select d. or e. to Q7

Players

12. * Are you a classified para player? [single code]

- a. I am not a para player [Logic to Q16]
- b. Class 1-5 (physical impairment – sitting)
- c. Class 6-10 (physical impairment – standing) [Logic to Q14]
- d. Class 11 (intellectual impairment) [Logic to Q16]

Those who select b. to Q12

13. * Do you have a preference for classes to be combined or separate? [single code] [Logic to Q15]

Columns: Strongly disfavour, Disfavour, Neither disfavour or favour, Favour, Strongly favour

- a. Classes should be combined
- b. Classes should be separated

Those who select c. to Q12

14. * Do you have a preference for classes to be combined or separate? [single code]

Columns: Strongly disfavour, Disfavour, Neither disfavour or favour, Favour, Strongly favour

- a. Classes should be combined

- b. Classes should be separated
- c. Classes should compete alongside able-bodied players

Those who select b. or c. to Q12

15. * Do you have a preference for para events to be integrated or separate to the wider competition programme? [single code]

Columns: Strongly disfavour, Disfavour, Neither disfavour or favour, Favour, Strongly favour

- a. Para events should be integrated
- b. Para events should be separate

Those who select d. or e. to Q7

16. * As a player, what are your main motivations for entering competitions? Please select up to two answer options. [multicode – max two]

- a. To improve as a player
- b. To improve ranking
- c. For the competition opportunity
- d. To help my physical health
- e. To help my mental wellbeing
- f. To develop social connections
- g. Other, please specify [text box]

17. * Are you motivated by prize money? [single code]

- a. Not at all motivated
- b. Slightly motivated
- c. Moderately motivated
- d. Very motivated
- e. Extremely motivated
- f. I don't know

18. Is there anything that would encourage you to travel further for competitions? [comment box]

19. * Thinking about competitions generally, how do the following factors impact your decision to enter? [matrix – must code each row]

Columns: Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Very, Extremely, I don't know

- a. The number of matches you play
- b. The length of competition being too long
- c. The cost of competition
- d. The distance to travel
- e. Whether I get to play players at a similar level to me
- f. Whether I get to play players of the same age
- g. Whether I get to play players of the same gender

All valid respondents

Existing competitions

20. * To what extent do or would you enjoy playing or supporting the following singles tournament formats? [matrix – must code each row]

Columns: Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Very, Extremely, I don't know

- a. Straight knockout
- b. Group and knockout
- c. Progressive knockout (e.g. all players to final places)
- d. Round robin

21. * To what extent do or would you enjoy playing or supporting the following knockout tournament formats? [matrix – must code each row]

Columns: Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Very, Extremely, I don't know

- a. Doubles
- b. 2-man team knockout
- c. Team knockout

22. * Do you have a preference for the number of matches (best-of-5) you play or support per day? [single code]

- a. 1-3
- b. 4-6
- c. 7-9
- d. 10+
- e. I don't have a preference

23. * In your opinion, how long should a competition day run from registration to end of the final game? [single code]

- a. Less than 6 hours
- b. 6 hours (e.g. 10AM to 4PM)
- c. 8 hours (e.g. 9AM to 5PM)
- d. 10 hours (e.g. 9AM to 7PM)
- e. 12 hours or more

24. * How do you consider the current balance between national tournament and national league opportunities? [single code]

- a. Too much league

- b. A little too much league
- c. About right
- d. A little too much tournament
- e. Too much tournament
- f. I don't know

25. * How aware are you of the following competitions? [matrix – must code each row]

Columns: Not at all aware, Slightly aware, Moderately aware, Very aware, Extremely aware

- a. National Championships
- b. National Cups
- c. Grand Prix
- d. Inter-regional Championships
- e. Schools events
- f. British League (BL)
- g. County Championships
- h. National Cadet (NCL) & National Junior League (NJL)
- i. English Leagues Cup Competitions (ELCC)
- j. Sanctioned events (1*, 2*, 3*, 4*, Satellite Grand Prix)

26. * Have you had involvement with any of the following competitions? Please select all that apply. [multicode]

Pull answers through from Q25 – only if aware (and none of the above – Logic to Q31)

27. * How frequently should we host the following competitions? [matrix – must code each row]

Columns: Less frequently, About the same, More frequently

Pull answers through from Q26 – only if involved

28. * How do you value the following competitions? [matrix – must code each row]

Columns: Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Very, Extremely

Pull answers through from Q26 – only if involved

29. * On a scale of 0-10, 0 being not at all likely and 10 being extremely likely, how likely is it that you would you recommend the following competitions to others involved in table tennis? [matrix – must code each row]

Pull answers through from Q26 – only if involved

30. Is there anything we can do to improve the following competitions? [multiple textboxes]

Pull answers through from Q26 – only if involved

Looking ahead

31. Does the competition programme face any future challenges which have not yet been highlighted?
[comment box]

32. * How would you approve of periodising the calendar so that event pathways build periodically towards peaks? [single code]

This means specific weekends might be designated for 1* and 2* events, to take place concurrently, building towards 'protected dates' for regular 4*s. On the one hand, this could encourage lower-level events to be local in nature, and naturally tier players by ability, but might also restrict player and organiser choice as to when they can play lower-level events.

- a. Strongly disapprove
- b. Disapprove
- c. Neither disapprove or approve
- d. Approve
- e. Strongly approve
- f. I don't know

33. * How would you approve of restricting tournament entry (e.g. by ranking) to create upward pressure and help incentivise progression? [single code]

This could either restrict lower-ranked players in higher-level events, or higher-ranked players in lower-level events, or both.

- a. Strongly disapprove
- b. Disapprove
- c. Neither disapprove or approve
- d. Approve
- e. Strongly approve
- f. I don't know

34. * Should we consider aligning player eligibility and membership affiliation to a calendar year (January to December), the same as World Table Tennis and International Table Tennis Federation? [single code]

This would ensure event and ranking eligibility is the same, but conversely, a lag might help to better align the events from which selections and invitations are made.

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know

35. * How important is online access and visibility of fixtures, results, league tables and player statistics?
[single code]

- a. Not at all important

- b. Slightly important
- c. Moderately important
- d. Very important
- e. Extremely important
- f. I don't know

36. * How important is the ability for players or teams to submit their own results online? [single code]

- a. Not at all important
- b. Slightly important
- c. Moderately important
- d. Very important
- e. Extremely important
- f. I don't know

37. * How important is the streaming of national events? [single code]

- a. Not at all important
- b. Slightly important
- c. Moderately important
- d. Very important
- e. Extremely important
- f. I don't know

38. * How should local league integrate with national (British) league? [single code]

- a. Separate (structured, so teams can enter one or the other)
- b. Separate (structured, so teams can potentially enter both)
- c. Integrated national league structure (e.g. a single pyramid joining local and national leagues)
- d. I don't know

39. Do you have any proposals or suggestion as to the role of regions, counties or clubs in the delivery of a structured series of events (rather than separate and independent events)? [comment box]

40. * Should events delivered by regions, counties or clubs (e.g. 1*, 2*, 3*, 4*, etc) be driven upward by the hosts (e.g. by applying to host from a menu of events) or by a tender process for a tournament series structured by Table Tennis England? [single code]

- a. By the hosts
- b. By Table Tennis England
- c. Both, depending on the level
- d. I don't know

41. What changes can potentially be made to technical officials support requirements for 1*, 2*, 3* and 4* events in order to make them more cost effective? [comment box]

Please note that we cannot undermine event integrity and safety, or fail to deliver a tiered approach to event environment and officiating support.

42. * How many events each season do you feel each age group should play at National level? [matrix – must code each row]

Columns: Less than 5, 5-10, 10-15, 15-20, More than 20, I don't know

- a. Under 11
- b. Under 13
- c. Cadets (Under 15)
- d. Juniors (Under 19)
- e. Seniors (Over 19)
- f. Veterans (Over 40)

43. * Do you feel more mixed-gender events needed? [single code]

- a. Yes
- b. No [Logic to Q45]
- c. I don't know [Logic to Q45]

Those who select a. to Q43

44. * For what age groups do you think mixed-gender events would be most valuable? [single code]

Columns: Not at all valuable, Slightly valuable, Moderately valuable, Very valuable, Extremely valuable, I don't know

- a. Under 11
- b. Under 13
- c. Cadets (Under 15)
- d. Juniors (Under 19)
- e. Seniors (Over 19)
- f. Veterans (Over 40)

All valid respondents

45. * Do you feel more Under 21 or Under 23 events are needed to aid transition from Juniors to Seniors? [single code]

- a. Yes
- b. No [Logic to Q47]
- c. I don't know [Logic to Q47]

Those who select a. to Q45

46. * For what gender do you think more Under 21 or Under 23 events would be most valuable? [single code]

- a. More important for men

- b. More important for women
- c. Both men and women

All valid respondents

47. * Do you feel more competition opportunities for Over 60's are needed? [single code]

- a. Yes
- b. No [Logic to Q49]
- c. I don't know [Logic to Q49]

Those who select a. to Q47

48. * What format would you prefer for Over 60 opportunities? [single code]

- a. Tournament
- b. National League
- c. I don't have a preference

All valid respondents

49. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for how we can support positive competition experiences for all demographics? [comment box]

Suggestions might include technical innovations or ideas for how we can support the social experience alongside competitions (e.g. organised social events or hotel packages).

6. Next Steps

Following the Consultation (open feedback, forums, insight interviews), the Project Team and the Steering Group will analyse the feedback, and use the Aims (page 3) to shape and assess outline proposals for consideration by the Table Tennis England Board.

An overview of the feedback from this consultation will be shared with the Table Tennis England membership.

Please see Process & Timeframes (page 4) for further details of subsequent phases.

It is noted for information that changes to the competition structure directly impact on the following areas:

- a. TTE Regulations
- b. TTE Staffing
- c. TTE Officials and Committee support
- d. Ranking opportunities for players (see section 4.d.iii)
- e. TTE Licensing (membership) requirements and income
- f. TTE External event sanctioning inc. tournament levy income
- g. TTE Ranking levy income
- h. TTE Event Calendar, which is typically populated up to 2yrs in advance

Thank you for your time and input!

7. Appendices

Appendix A: Steering Group

The Steering Group is comprised as follows:

Name	Role (if applicable)	Remit/ Representation
Neil Rogers*	Head of Competition	Chair
Simon Mills*	Director of Sport	General
Simon Griew*	Board member	Ranking
Greg Yarnall	Head of Development & Volunteering	Participation
Alan Cooke	Technical Director	Performance
Brian Jackson	Chair of Technical Officials Committee	Technical Officials
Don Parker*	Board member (elected)	Members
Neil Hurford	Chair of Members' Advisory Group	Members
Gary Wood	British League General Secretary	Clubs and organisers
Graham Trimming	Member	Clubs and organisers
Kelly Sibley	Senior Women's Team Captain	Players
Graeme Barella	Member	Players
Sandra Deaton	Chair	Ex-officio
Sara Sutcliffe	CEO	Ex-officio

Those denoted * also comprise the Project Team.

Appendix B: Competition Mapping data

Please note that data for the Cardiff GP and Jersey GP remains partially incomplete.

Sincere thanks to the following individuals for their assistance with this exercise: Carol Miles (TTE), Simon Oyler & Steve Smith (Cardiff GP), Paul Silcock (Jersey GP), Greg Yarnall (schools), Mike Smith (ELCC), Jan Johns (VETTS), Stan Clarke & Dave Goulden (County Championships), Mike Atkinson (NCL/ NJL), Karen Tonge & Dave Cochrane (BPTT), Alex Perry/ Mike Payne/ Ben Philip/ Ryan Koolen/ Neal Kington (BUCS), Brian Jackson & Martin Ireland (Blackpool), David Hutchinson (Stockton), Ken Phillips (Cippenham), Simon Morgan (Hereford), Jason Ramage (Sycamore), Rory Scott (Horsham Spinners), Bhavin Sanjani (London Academy), and the many many TTE County Chairs & Secretaries

Appendix C: Notes from Competition Insight meetings

All details are based on 1:1 interviews; errors and omissions excepted and author's own.

The following notes aim to provide a broad illustration of domestic tournament and league formats in a number of other England/ GB national governing bodies and European table tennis associations, together with enabling factors, as a basis to prompt potential opportunities for Table Tennis England.

Partner organisations were selected on the following basis:

1. **France TTA** - strength of regional structure and delivery
2. **Germany TTA** - 'gold standard'
3. **Portugal TTA** - notable international improvement in recent years
4. **Sweden TTA** - international hosting success; also building on existing links
5. **Badminton NGB** – evident similarities
6. **Judo NGB** – undertaken on a partner basis, in singles and team format, and with a domestic club structure
7. **Squash NGB** - evident similarities
8. **Tennis NGB** – evident similarities

Discussion points included:

- Strength of professional game
- Domestic mega-events
- Extent of dedicated facilities
- Relative international strength of domestic events
- Relative strength of national team at international level
- Is there a national 'home' venue for the association and for event delivery
- What role, if any, do regions play in delivering national events
- Degree of para integration
- Do top players play domestic events regularly
- How many opportunities do up-and-coming athletes have to challenge existing national team members at domestic events
- How many and what level international events are hosted with regularity

This is not intended to be a comprehensive audit with fine-detail; the focus is on broader brushstrokes for information and to prompt possibilities.

Sincere thanks to each of the eight TTAs/ NGBs for their kind assistance with this exercise.

Neil Rogers

Head of Competition & Events

June 2021

Fédération Française De Tennis De Table (France TTA)

FFTT have an enormous playing base – over 1m people playing Table Tennis in France, and 120-140,000 taking part in NGB competitions. If anything they feel their market penetration is insufficient, and their competition approach too rigid; their aspiration is to make competitions more flexible and accessible, and to facilitate more recreational play.

Club-based leagues form the vast majority of competition activity, around 90%, and is the most important aspect of competitive play.

There are two levels of pro-league for men (20 teams), and one for women (10 teams); these are considered amongst the strongest in Europe. Below this top tier are three levels of national competition (224 men's teams), and below this: 7 zones, 20 regions and 100+ 'departments' (counties). This is a single league framework, top to bottom, running October to June. Geographically, France is 2.5x the size of England.

FFTT deliver National Championships for each age-group (on a top 64 basis), qualification for which is attained via a series of tournaments throughout the season. The qualification events are delivered by regions/counties. Around 15-20,000 players will compete in the qualification process, with 4-6 ranking events in each group, and points accrued on a leader-board basis, the value of which vary dependent on the grading of the event. Wildcards are reserved for (eg) national squad members.

Alongside this, local tournament events are delivered by clubs, less than 100 per year, which are separate and independent.

FFTT do not have a home venue, though the Olympics in Paris 2024 may offer a potential opportunity in this regard. There are a good number of dedicated full-time table tennis facilities nationwide, typically 4-18 tables.

The top French players may play abroad (eg Germany), or may play domestically due to the strength of the French pro-league. Around 60-70% of the best players are based domestically, and consequently play domestic league and tournaments, also training at national training centres. Players based abroad may play one or twice a year in domestic events. There is therefore a good opportunity for up and coming players to play national squad members – and their system embeds the chance for the best Cadets to play Juniors, and the best Juniors to play Seniors - the issue for the French federation is providing adequate challenge for the best Senior players.

FFTT aspire to have one international tour event hosted each year, especially in the build-up to the Olympics.

Deutscher Tischtennis-Bund (Germany TTA)

DTTB host a single national championships combining all age-group events, inc Cadet, Junior, Senior and Veterans – with over 500 competitors in all – their largest annual event.

A series of Cadet and Junior events of various sizes are held – top12, top24 and top84. Additionally, DTTB run a senior national team championship event for clubs.

Below this, regions and clubs run open ranking tournaments on a graded level (local, regional, national), c.500 per year. Each region is required to deliver a certain number of events each year, without which this would not be possible.

As with France and Portugal, league format is by far the most important – with over 9,000 clubs competing (and hence many more teams) This is a single structure, from local to national, excepting the Bundesliga (professional league), which is a separate organisation. DTTB run tiers 2-5 (men) and tiers 1-5 (women), and Regional associations are responsible for supporting tiers 6-14 of the league.

DTTB do not have a national home venue, but there is a good number of dedicated full-time club facilities, which provide venues for the programme – and without which, could not happen.

Ultimately, the strength of the club structure is critical for the delivery of the sport.

DTTB have a long history of hosting two annual international events – the German Open, plus one other event (eg. World Championships, World Cup, European Championships, Vets World Championships etc) This provides a home event for players, a spectator opportunity and generates TV coverage. The new WTT formats and standards will present a new challenge.

The best German players will only compete at the National Championships, due to international (circuit) competition commitments. This comprises the only opportunity for up and coming players to play against national squad members.

Another key challenge is considered to be youth engagement and grass-roots growth, particularly a lack of table tennis in schools.

Federação Portuguesa De Ténis De Mesa (Portugal TTA)

The FPTM season runs from October to May/ June, and is significantly weighted in favour of club/ league activity. Compared to Table Tennis England's c.50/50, Portugal is closer to 80% or 90% league-based, with league activity each weekend of the season. This is attributed to the strength of club tradition and club-based activity.

The league structure for men runs on three tiers, all of which operate on a merit-based home/ away format, becoming more regionalised the lower down the pyramid – around 80 teams in all. There are play-offs from the regionalised structure for promotion. The top league concludes after the regular season fixtures with a top4 play-off contest for the title. The women's system is similar, but is merit-based at the top-end only, with promotion/ relegation from the lower tier(s), which are constituted each season based on entry numbers and strength – around 15 teams in all.

The tournament programme is much smaller, comprising around 4 senior and 20 youth events each season, which are scheduled around league commitments in the national calendar. Tournaments are classified on 3 levels.

Ranking points are awarded on an increasing scale corresponding to the league tier and tournament classification.

FPTM allow members to play both domestic league and other national leagues, like TTE but unlike France and Germany, in order for players to maximise their earning potential. However, players competing both home and abroad must play at least 50% of Portugal domestic league fixtures.

FPTM generally provide a framework and regulations only for domestic events, with event delivery by clubs and regional structures.

FPTM have a significant commitment to hosting ITTF events, currently 5 or 6 per year. This is a strategic objective to support youth development, and also serves as an income generator. FPTM are able to be very flexible and responsive to international hosting needs, and rely on strong support and resourcing from regional government structures.

FPTM have a national training facility, which can be used if required for smaller national events and for hosting requirements. The best Portuguese players do not typically play domestically, except possibly for National Championships and toward the end of their career, but do live/ train/ study at the national training facility. Up-and-coming players do not therefore have regular opportunity to compete against the top players, but can train alongside them.

Table Tennis in Portugal is small, but in a growth phase with increasing profile and popularity. This is mainly attributed to the public visibility gained via hosting major events together with high-performing senior national players at those events. This has led to gains in sponsors and income, and interest in the highest level of domestic events (eg the men's league title play-offs are now televised). Investment is being targeted in youth development to ensure this is sustainable.

Despite this competitive success, club facilities and municipal facilities are still very limited for participation.

Svenska Bordtennisförbundet (Sweden TTA)

Sweden have around 10,000 licensed players, in a two-tier membership system very similar to TTE – a district license (akin to Compete) and a national license (akin to Compete Plus). Also similar to TTE, their female participation rate sits at less than 10%.

Around 200-250 tournaments are held each year, although there is evidence of decreasing participation. These are tiered from beginners through regional through to the Swedish Tour, and consists of around 100-150 national tournaments, with c.10 at the top 'Swedish Tour' level. Qualifying to the National Championships can be earned from national tournaments, which are open entry but restricted by ranking if over-subscribed. All events, including national championships, are typically delivered by clubs rather than the TTA, who do not have this manpower. This is managed through comprehensive 'directives' to ensure consistency and quality-assurance across different and changing delivery partners; a key challenge for Sweden TTA remains ensuring this approach is based on a viable financial model for hosts.

Additionally, top10 events are held each year, in a very similar format to the TTE National Cups.

There is considered to be a broad 70/30 split between league and tournament play respectively, and tournament play is felt to be very important to pathway development.

Sweden have a single national league structure, with around 5 divisions/ 300 (men's) teams at national level, underpinned by a regional structure. The top two national tiers (men's) and top national tier (women's) are delivered on a H/A basis, but is grouped below this into weekend events of multiple fixtures.

The players in the top men's tier (8 teams) and women's tier (6-8 teams) are reportedly more than 50% foreign, who compete on a paid-to-play basis. This is often cost-advantageous to these clubs, as no costs are incurred for ongoing development, training, housing and salary. The natural consequence is that these clubs deliver reduced development opportunities and a less valuable training environment. However, to change this would arguably decrease the quality of the league. The Sweden TTA do not restrict players in their league from also competing in other league programmes.

Sweden TTA do have a national centre, but it is not possible to host any competitions there.

The Sweden Open is an international event of 50yrs standing, and made possible by 1/term city investment and support (on the basis of "beds and heads" return-on-investment). However, the new WTT model means enforced change, on a much less viable financial basis, and it is not known if this remains feasible. Conversely, events with a lower international and performance profile, such as Veterans, would be considered far more attractive to a city host due to the participant numbers and projected local spend.

The top Sweden players do not typically play domestically, and have in recent years also missed the National Championships; this is considered a growing issue. There are consequently very limited opportunities for the next tranche of players to compete against national squad members.

Badminton England

Badminton provides the closest match to current Table Tennis England programmes in many ways.

Badminton England operate tournaments across 4 tiers, with around 250 taking place each season for a total of 4,000 players. These are restricted at lower-level (eg the top players cannot play-down; the opposite of the Tennis approach). The tournament calendar is not periodised currently, either chronologically or geographically. Some tournaments enable a qualification route to National Championships, and entry to National Championships requires a minimum numbers of tournaments are contested. Counties are the main delivery mechanism for tournaments, and this often provides income to support county team activity (see below). The season runs Jan-Dec, to align with the international calendar/eligibility, and membership can be done on a matching or 12month rolling basis.

There is no national Club-based league programme, though this is a future aspiration. Team events run on a County basis, September to April, with around 120 junior and 120 senior teams. County eligibility determines team composition, so this approach does not always provide the best playing opportunity for individuals. The social value of the county leagues is high.

At local-level, Club-based activity is significant – this is where the bulk of Badminton players play their Badminton. Local activity is organic, independent and unregulated, but ultimately supports the national programmes via membership income.

The National Badminton League (NBL) was a professional team league, launched in 2014 with six franchised teams, and running for three seasons. One match per fixture date was televised by Sky Sports (latterly BT Sports). This was heavily subsidised by the NGB, despite a title sponsor, and ultimately deemed non-sustainable and cancelled.

Badminton England have a dedicated facility in Milton Keynes, which is the training base for the performance programme and can also be used to host smaller competitions.

Prize money at international tournaments is considered good, and supports a small number of professional players. The NGB do not restrict access to international circuit events.

Senior squad players do not typically play domestic events due to international commitments, but occasionally play National Championships ('with a lot of cajoling'). Up-and-coming players do not get the chance to compete against squad players. Overseas leagues can offer payment to capable players, and there is a trend for senior players to often coach junior players at domestic events (professionally) rather than compete themselves.

The All-England Open is a premier-tier international event, hosted annually by Badminton England, which acts as a revenue generator for the NGB. There is an aspiration to host more Junior international events to support youth development. England would be considered a top5 nation in Europe, and top10 globally.

British Judo

Whilst perhaps not a benchmark comparison that immediately springs to mind – Judo, like table tennis, is a club-based sport, played one on one, in singles and team formats – and faces surprisingly similar challenges.

British Judo has 5 levels of domestic tournaments, outside key events like National Championships. Around 200no. L1-L3 events take place each season at club level, with c.15no. L4 (national) events, and 1-2no. L5 (international) events. Entry to different levels is broadly restricted by belt gradings, and members can apply for wildcard selection to national events. Periodisation of these events has been resisted by the membership. The competition programme broadly runs September to June.

Plans for a team club league at regional level, with a national finals event, have been proposed unsuccessfully.

Annual adaptive and visually-impaired events take place alongside other national competitions. Para athletes may also choose to compete on an inclusive basis at national events.

There are very small number of dedicated Judo facilities in the UK, and the area required for national events limits the commercial venues that can be used. British Judo do not have a national home, but utilise a small number of regular venues. British Judo have less financial resource than leading associations in international Judo (France, Russia and Japan) – event delivery is considered broadly on a par, but without the ‘gloss’.

Areas (akin to regions) are expected to deliver events (eg L3), and are provided a percentage of funding from gradings that take place. These are events are standalone, and do not form part of a series or progressive events.

The professional game is limited; ranking points are considered not worthwhile at European level, and financial rewards on the international circuit are low – entry is tightly restricted by the NGB, and effectively limited to World Class Performance Programme athletes. WCPP funding is the key funding source through which Judoka can be full-time athletes.

The top players (national squad) rarely compete domestically due to international commitments, and this often includes missing the National Championships. Players outside the national squad will rarely, if ever, get the chance to compete (or spar) against the national squad members.

British Judo have previous hosted a European Open event, but this is considered to have a low performance benefit, and significant external funding would be required to host in the future. An international Para event is planned in the near future, and relative strength in Para competition is considered stronger.

British Judo would be considered a top20 nation (Olympic disciplines) and top5-10 (Para disciplines)

England Squash

England Squash undertook a review of their delivery structure 2yrs ago, and have fundamentally split *competitions* (structures; creating operating surplus to support wider activity) and *events* (practical delivery; almost always operating at an operational loss)

The events function is now led by the PSA (the international federation for Squash), which is practically viable as the PSA are also based in England. The PSA are now responsible for the delivery of National Championships, plus annual hosting of the British Open ('grand slam' -level international event) and Junior British Open. This approach met with resistance from NGB members.

The league system operates at various levels. Club Leagues and County Leagues are run by clubs and counties respectively – ES membership is required, but otherwise these structures are independent. The National Club League is an ES property, and contracted externally for delivery. A Professional Squash League is the top domestic tier, and is also contracted externally for delivery, with an element of NGB funding.

Masters (veterans) events are run as a circuit by an affiliated organisation; masters effectively operate as a self-contained community

Dunlop were formerly a large sponsor, but sponsorship has been less forthcoming in recent years and this has resulted in a loss of operating finance. The tournament structure is almost exclusively focussed at Junior level (U19) and below. The structure consists of 5 levels – diamond (eg national champs, see above), platinum (c.2 x national), gold or silver (c. 6x regional), bronze (local, c.20 weekends with 6-7 simultaneous events), and copper (starter). The NGB delivers platinum events, and below this are hosted by clubs/ regions/ counties, with a levy payable for entry and ranking functions. Entry to bronze-platinum events is not ostensibly restricted by ranking, but on a practical basis preference will be given to higher-ranking players if over-subscribed. Notably, the Bronze level is the 'bread and butter' of the tournament structure, and is periodised in the calendar.

The NGB do not run any Senior tournaments, excepting the Inter-County Champs (in a team format). There is an organic and independently organised domestic circuit of events, hosted ad-hoc by clubs – and, at higher-levels, a European tour, and International tour.

The opportunity for professional athletes in squash is relatively low, and a full-time career is rare for more than 1 or 2 players each generation unless independently-funded (notably, Squash is not an Olympic sport)

Squash have a national squash centre in Manchester, a legacy of the 2002 Commonwealth Games, which is part of the network of performance facilities for national squads and can be used to host smaller events. However, the facility is now 20yrs old and requires investment.

The top domestic players do tend to play domestically – in club events (for pay), or as an active member of the squash community – the best chance for up-and-coming players to compete against national squad members is actually outside National Championships.

Lawn Tennis Association (Great Britain Tennis)

Tennis in Great Britain makes for an interesting comparison, and the immediate thought is naturally of a racket sport with a huge membership, large public profile and immense resources – arguably all things Table Tennis England might aspire to.

Tennis has an enormous competition programme – over 9,000 competitions running across all 12 months of the year. The ‘bread and butter’ tournament series is graded across 7 levels, from local lower-level events to a national circuit with prize money. Access to the top-end events is restricted by ranking (eg. lower players cannot play-up)

In Team formats, a national league is contested by clubs, and runs summer and winter involving 40-50,000 players.

There is a substantial schools programme, run on the basis of local leagues with a national final. There is a good level of activity led and delivered at county level, including county championships and a county cup formats (for teams).

The LTA are working on a collaborative basis with a commercially-led pro-league in the UK (funded via betting income); this is felt to be a valuable playing and prize-money opportunity for capable players.

A critical mass of players exists for a standalone circuit of wheelchair/ visibility-impaired/ learning-disability events – consisting of 50-60 events each year, with over 1,000 entrants. There is little integration possible beyond deaf and learning disability players, who may play on an inclusive basis.

At national level, the competitions are run by the LTA (with 13 core Competitions staff), and also facilitated at local level by employed remote-working staff (7 additional Competition staff in the regions). This covers only the non-professional events.

Professional events (see final paragraph) are supported by a separate and dedicated Events department.

The professional opportunity is strong in tennis; the international circuit is vast.

Tennis has an extremely strong domestic mega-event (Wimbledon), with huge public profile, sponsorship and broadcast interest. Wimbledon arguably enjoys a cultural position and reputation that extends far beyond simply a sporting event.

Dedicated tennis facilities are also widespread in GB, with tens of thousands of courts in private clubs and public settings.

The NGB has a dedicated training/ playing facility at its HQ in Roehampton, the National Tennis Centre, though this tends to be performance-focussed. Interestingly, larger commercial providers (eg the network of over 100no. David Lloyd Clubs) are typically unable to make facilities available for hosting purposes due to membership commitments. Consequently, the LTA have recently purchased a large dedicated facility in Nottingham which will be a key enabler for hosting domestic competitions and international circuit events.

World-ranked players may play at National events 'a few times a year'. Notably, there is no adult National Championship events, and these are only run at age-group levels. There is limited opportunity for players immediately below the top-tier to play the highest-ranked British players.

In addition to the world-renown Grand Slam event at Wimbledon, GB is also regular host to other top-tier professional circuit events – including the ATP (men's) tour finals, Queens (men's only) & Eastbourne. In total, around 30 international circuit events are hosted each year, including 6 or so 'elite' events.

The GB#1 Andy Murray – 2x Olympic champion, 3x Grand Slam winner and former World #1 – enjoys a profile alongside the highest bracket of international sportsmen and women.

Despite this, it might legitimately be considered that GBs profile and participation levels belies genuine strength in depth at the top level.

Appendix D: Player Reports

Due to the incomplete Season 19/20, data is based on the period 01 August 2019 to 15 March 2020, eg 7.5 months of a 12 month competition season (eg around 2/3rds)

During this period there were 114,296 singles match participation instances¹³ in national ranking events, by 3,954 distinct players (an average of 30 matches per player, during this player)

The sincere thanks of the Steering Group is noted to Steve Smith, for his invaluable and expert assistance with this section.

- 1) How many distinct domestic events in this period
- 2) For each domestic event, the range of participants' rankings – this will show to what extent lower-level events still attract higher-ranked players, and vice-versa

Separately group 1 + 2* + 4* + GP events, with distinct participants and their rankings*

- 1* Cadet
- 1* Junior
- 1* Senior
- 1* Veteran
- 2* Cadet
- 2* Junior
- 2* Senior
- 2* Veteran
- 4* Cadet
- 4* Junior
- Grand Prix events

Plot range and density of rankings of M/F participants in each events category

- 3) For each age-group and ranking band, the frequency and range of individuals' event participation

Segment Cadet/Jnr/Snr/Veteran players - plot frequency of events (not matches) that distinct M/F in each segment play

Also segment by ranking bands (shown below) – plot frequency of events (not matches) that distinct individuals in each segment play

Men's Band 0 2201+

Men's Band 1 1701 - 2200

Men's Band 2 1351 - 1700

Men's Band 3 1101 - 1350

Men's Band 4 551 - 1100

Women's Band 0 2001+

Women's Band 1 1601 - 2000

Women's Band 1 1201 - 1600

Women's Band 3 1001 - 1200

Women's Band 4 0 - 1000

¹³ For TTE events, this includes both players; for ITTF events, this includes only the England players

Men's Band 5 401 - 550

Men's Band 6 0 - 400

Nb. Cadet, Junior and Veterans bandings different

- 4) For each Senior event, the range/ density of ages participating – this will show to what extent Senior (open) events attract Cadet, Junior and Veteran players

Segment the following events, and plot range/ density of ages of M/F participants

- *SBL*
- *WBL*
- *Grand Prix Open events*
- *1*Snr*
- *2*Snr*
- *4*Snr*

- 5) For each Open event, the relative numbers of TTE members and ‘reciprocal members’ (eg Home Countries or International players) – this will show to what extent different events attract players whose home association is not Table Tennis England

Segment the following events, and plot numbers/% of different membership categories (by individual, not participation instances)

- *SBL*
- *WBL*
- *JBL*
- *VBL*
- *Grand Prix*
- *1**
- *2**
- *4**

- 6) For 1*, 2* and 4* events, the distance from participant’s home postcodes – this will show how far entrants typically travel for different tiers of competition, and what geographical overlap we might expect

For 1, 2* and 4* events (3 groups) calculate distinct participants for each group, and plot range/ frequency of travel distances from home postcode to event postcode*

Appendix E: Forums/ Insight Interviews

Many thanks to the following groups and individuals for their time and insight:

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- John Mackey
- U18 Players/ Parents forum: <add names here>
- David Maddison
- Chris Newton
- Martin Ireland
- Alan Ransome
- TTE National Council: <add names here>
- Richard Scruton
- [...]