



## RECORD OF THE CONFERENCE FOR COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS HELD AT COVENTRY SQUASH CLUB ON SATURDAY 1 OCTOBER 2016

**PARTICIPANTS:** Those attending came from Avon, Bedfordshire, Cheshire, Devon, Kent, Leicestershire, Merseyside, Middlesex, Norfolk, Shropshire, Suffolk, Warwickshire, Wiltshire, Worcestershire and Yorkshire

**APOLOGIES** from those who regretted they were unable to be represented because of lack of availability included Cambridgeshire, Cornwall, Cumbria, Dorset, Durham and Cleveland, Hampshire, Herefordshire, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Northumbria, Somerset, and Staffordshire

### **WORKSHOP ON ES AFFILIATION AND MEMBERSHIP (Facilitator Mike Clemson)**

It was noted that an earlier ES Working party chaired by a (then) Board member (Marc Thomas) had recommended that Affiliation (of venues) should be separated from Membership (of individuals), but this had not been taken forward for fear of reducing income from this source. However, the recent County Association update from ES indicated that a revised membership scheme would need to be considered as one response to revised Sport England funding conditions. County Associations would like to be consulted before any recommendations are put to the Board, as their income may be affected by any changes.

Some CAs have arranged with ES that the latter will collect an additional amount when invoicing Affiliates and Members, and forward it to the CA as a 'County levy' in addition to the county rebate. It is open to any CA to request ES to do this, for an amount to be decided by the CA, pending the above review which might lead to revised arrangements.

The Workshop considered the current and potential additional benefits attached to Affiliation and Membership. It was agreed that insurance for players needed to be a key benefit, and that use of or support to venues with squash courts for a variety of purposes by ES and CAs could be restricted to those who were affiliated.

It was agreed by the Workshop, and endorsed by the Conference, that the involvement of the County Associations in the marketing of Affiliation and Membership, in whatever form, is essential to its success, as it is the County Associations who have direct contact with the venues and many of the players in their areas. They therefore need to be involved from the outset in the planning and promotion of a future scheme.



## **WORKSHOP ON JUNIOR DEVELOPMENT (Facilitator Mo Sarwar)**

During the workshop it was felt by all present that following areas need to be highlighted:

- CA's Identify development needs and work to a timeline to provide club support to recruit and develop new juniors with guidance/support from ES.
- Successful counties should share good practice. Facilitated by ES or CAN.
- CA's provide clear communication and guidance to parents regards participation pathway (local, regional, National) with help from ES.
- Encourage 1 day mega junior friendlies between 3 local clubs where every junior participates in match not just the best players.
- Also run county or regional graded grand prix for development players rather than performance players. CAs, Regional Forums and CAN
- Encourage use of positive role models.
- Also provide support for encouraging professional use of social media. CA's, Regional Forums and ES.

## **WORKSHOP ON COACH SUPPORT (Facilitator Mo Sarwar)**

As above, the working group felt it was a useful exercise and made following suggestions:

- Need to increase coach support awareness e.g. mentoring, qualifications, funding opportunities/bursaries. CA's, Regional Forums and ES.
- Coaching structure and opportunities. CA's and ES.
- Need for more coach business training. ES.
- List of qualified coaches (active or inactive) for each county. ES
- More sharing of good practice regards coach support. ES to facilitate or CAN
- CAs to work with County Sports Partnerships to access funding/resources for coach CPD.
- Development Coach Qualifications (L1 and L2) should be organised by CAs and Regional Forums as they can more readily identify needs. Supported by ES.

## **WORKSHOP ON LEGAL ISSUES FOR CAs (Facilitator Richard Antcliff)**

England Squash should provide guidance on a legal structure for County Associations which limits the financial risk to volunteer Committee members. The data processing conditions on the new website are unreasonable and should not be accepted. They limit access to membership data for clubs and County Associations



## **WORKSHOP ON COMMUNICATIONS (Facilitator Richard Antcliff)**

Communications from ES have improved over the last nine months or so and are more refined. We would like ES to keep us more up to date with organisational changes. It was requested that, when any communication is sent to a County Official, it is copied to the County Chair and Secretary. The CAN database of CA contacts could be used, with CAs responsible for notifying any changes.

Online questionnaires sent out by ES have been put together very badly. Rather than use (and pay) external consultants to produce them, County Associations should be consulted first. In general, CAs should be consulted before decisions are made, especially (but not exclusively) on matters which affect their income e.g. Affiliation and Membership.

The Promotional material recently sent to County Chairs was felt not to be required and not relevant, some CAs took exception to the pull-up banners which used the ES logo with the county name, as some CAs have their own logo and brand (Note: were the CAs consulted about the kind of promotional materials they would find useful?)

## **WORKSHOP ON THE FUTURE OF CAN (Facilitator Marc Thomas)**

We discussed the drivers for the creation of CAN (desire for counties to contribute more, poor communication from ES, etc.) and agreed that these still existed. We talked about the various opportunities that exist for counties to contribute (primarily Council, and Regional and National Forums). There was some concern that there were too many initiatives, and resources within counties were limited, but we thought that existing routes did not work well and that CAN could, and should, complement these.

We saw the role of CAN as: a way of sharing information and best practice between on counties (e.g. on funding, or coach development); a way of sharing information between ES and counties; a sounding board for the development of national initiatives; providing constructive challenge on the development of ES policies; and potentially undertaking activities of direct interest to counties (e.g. the inter-county championship).

For this to work properly we thought we needed CAN to: have the buy-in of the majority of counties; have a democratic approach; and have sufficient volunteers (and funding where applicable) to deliver. We noted that the counties have an important role in the promotion of the membership and affiliation system.



## ONE MINUTE WHINGES

Whingers were allowed one minute to state their case before a show of hands determined the extent of agreement or disagreement. All the whinges received overwhelming support

1. ES should consult through CAN before imposing
2. Mis-direction of information from ES
3. Third Party Liability Insurance for members needed
4. The ES website – inaccessible, inaccurate and not up to date
5. The lack of financial support for CAs from ES
6. ES Technology Bulletin Board not understandable
7. New ES Board activity reports needed

## OVERALL CONCLUSION

This has been a valuable event, which has identified a number of useful and appropriate roles for CAN (The County Associations Network). They need to be supported by all the County Associations and recognised by England Squash.

## THANKS

Thanks were recorded to Mo Sarwar for making available Coventry and North Warwickshire Squash Club as a venue for the Conference, and providing lunch and drinks, and to iProSports for sponsoring the costs of the latter. Richard Antcliff and Mike Clemson had stepped in as Workshop Facilitators at short notice because of family illness and motorway breakdown respectively. Last but not least, all the 20+ people who attended as volunteers from all parts of the country, all of whom contributed significantly to the discussions and shared in the conclusions

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