

# County Squash and Racketball Associations Network (CAN)

www.countysquashassociations.co.uk



August 2018

Dear Colleagues

As Chair of CAN, I have been trying to establish a correspondence with the Chair of the ES Board on a number of matters of concern, first by email on 13<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> April. The reply on 25<sup>th</sup> April was: "Dear Alan, Please don't be concerned. We have been considering your letter and I will be sending a reply to you soon. With kind regards. Joy"

Not having received anything further as time passed, I emailed again on 24<sup>th</sup> May and then again on 7<sup>th</sup> June. The content of my email is in the attached document.

In response to this, a telephone conversation was arranged for 8<sup>th</sup> June, following which I expected that the points raised in my letter and emails would be discussed at the forthcoming Board meeting. However, the Board meeting minutes record merely that Joy has "touched base" with me.

It was on 17<sup>th</sup> July that I emailed the chair of the Board again in which I said that, "There are still areas of concern and we feel that a more complete response is needed", and included a further letter.

Joy Carter requested a telephone conversation for Friday 27 July at 11.30 am. This conversation took place at about 1.00 pm. All in all, the phone call was unsatisfactory. She was unhappy with the tone of my correspondence, to which I replied that I had toned it down, and the Board needs to be aware of the strength of feeling in the County Associations. She did not feel that the Board or ES needs to report on every decision it makes. She tried to assure me that the Board is in control of what the Executive does and assured me that the points I had raised would be discussed at a forthcoming Board meeting, although this would not take place until after the CAN meeting on 8 September. I asked her to respond in an email to all the points we had discussed. She refused to do so as she had telephoned as a courtesy to me.

All in all, I was left with the feeling that CAN is seen as an irritation, and sees itself as more important than it is. One of her comments was that there is a wider picture and feedback is received from different sources.

In the ES Annual Report of 2016-17, the CEO wrote that '*work with the County Associations will continue through a range of avenues, and we are positive about the future of these critical partnerships*'. Given the word 'critical', it is hard to understand when issues put to the Board are ignored or, at best, treated with condescension or irritation. It also appears that the CEO has distanced himself from CAN by appointing a Director of Strategic Partnerships to act as the intermediary with the County Associations, while continuing to be personally involved with other matters obviously seen as more important.

I shared the above with the members of your Executive Committee, one of whom commented that '*it was akin to Tesco's no longer stocking bread or butter, receiving a complaint and then being told they don't like our attitude*'.

While CAN does not represent all stakeholders, we represent the vast majority of players via the County Associations and it is frustrating that our/my attempts to communicate effectively with the Board are blocked. Any trust that I have had in the Board has been eroded and I just wish that they would and work with us instead of against us'.

The comment from another CAN executive member sums this up neatly: '*Nowadays, a flexible and progressive organisation recognises that they don't tell people what their products are and how they work; the people tell the organisation with the resources to create them, what those products should be. ES is like an old-fashioned company making the same old thing, blindly stumbling down a dead end alley despite many large warning notices being waved in its face*'

The Code for Sport Governance, which England Squash has adopted is particularly clear on this: "*Organisations shall be transparent and accountable, engaging effectively with stakeholders and nurturing internal democracy.*"

It is clear to me that at the present time England Squash is neither transparent nor accountable. It is not engaging effectively with County Associations and it is questionable whether stakeholders have any real say in the running of the sport.

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The attached briefing document shows some email correspondence and the letter, which I sent to the Board in July. And some of the issues raised with England Squash since November 2017

It is probably a good time to consider carefully and seriously CAN's next steps, so what you decide when we meet together will be crucial. There will be a number of options, but it is important that we agree on the way forward.

We shall discuss the situation early at our Conference on 8 September. It is very important that we hear the voice of all the County Associations, so I ask you as a matter of urgency to attend or to ensure that your CA is represented. If this is really not possible, then I would appreciate your views beforehand.

Regards.

Alan Batchelor