

# County Squash and Racketball Associations Network (CAN)

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## RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS NETWORK (CAN) AT GOODENOUGH COLLEGE, LONDON, ON 17 MAY 2018

PRESENT were representatives of Avon, Beds, Berks, Cheshire, Cornwall, Devon, Essex, Gloucs, Hampshire, Kent, Lancs, Leics, Merseyside, Middlesex, Northants, Northumbria, Suffolk, Warks, Wilts, Worcs and Yorkshire. Also present was Louise Perry from England Squash

### UPDATE SINCE INAUGURAL MEETING

The Chairman of CAN, Alan Batchelor, reviewed the situation as follows –

“The Governing body of ES has a responsibility to **all** levels of the sport. (Articles of Association)

While there are different stakeholders, the County Associations, in my opinion are by far the most significant as we fulfil many of the tasks required to make the sport prosper. The County Associations are in a very real sense, the workers on the ground, more closely in touch with clubs and players than anyone else. And they provide the army of enthusiastic and usually passionate administrators, giving their time, effort and expertise freely to their county. I think it is true to say that most of our efforts are directed to the sport at grass root level. Some may have differing views of what grass root means. To my mind it is that vast array of players, both junior and senior, who play in clubs, leisure centres and other facilities and have not, or not yet reached the higher levels of competitive play. The County Associations are key to introducing new players to the sport, but also to provide the opportunities for all those players to access the pathways to excellence and higher levels.

When England Squash finally recognised CAN in November of last year, there was a genuine desire on the part of England Squash to begin a process of communication with us and since then Mike and I have had two meetings with Linda Taylor, who joined ES just last year, and with Louise Perry. At the latest meeting at the end of last month, Eamon O’Rourke, a Board member was present. We have not yet had a meeting with Keir Worth and Mark Williams, nor with the Board.

The meetings have been cordial and constructive, but our viewpoints have not yet coalesced. ES are keen to ask CAN to be one of the vehicles through which their programmes can be implemented; programmes such as Squash 101, Squash Girls Can, Squash 57 etc. Of course, we will help to deliver their programmes, but we are not yet at a stage where England Squash trusts us enough to engage CAN fully in its preparations for programmes. We are not a sub committee of England Squash.

As to being a genuine partner, we still have a way to go. If you look at the ES website under the section Our Partners you will not see “County Associations.” This may be a simple oversight, but it raises questions about England Squash’s priorities.

I would add one more thing. I understand from Eamon O’Rourke that the Board of England Squash is working closely with the Executive. While this is highly commendable and the members of the Board are learning a lot, I hope that they will still be able to adhere to the Code of Governance that the Board:

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- (A) be the ultimate decision-making body and accordingly exercise all of the powers of the organisation;
- (B) be responsible for setting the strategy of the organisation; and
- (C) maintain and demonstrate a clear division between the Board's management and oversight role and the Executive's operational role.

The Code of governance recommends that *the Board will need to draw on, and consult, a range of stakeholders.*

It was this point that Paul Trott raised in his report in August. Among the items in his report is this:

“A behaviour change is required at ES to engage with grass roots and in particular experts in the counties. CAN has drawn up a list of experts, we recommend consultation with these experts early in decision making.”

There has been a welcome change in that channels of communication are being opened, but it still seems that ES continues with an agenda which is geared more to squash at the higher levels, both nationally and internationally and grass roots squash is left some way behind. “

The CAN Co-ordinator, Mike Clemson, said that the Inauguration of CAN in November 2017 reflected its formal recognition by England Squash and by the County Associations themselves, none of whom had indicated their desire to be removed from the CAN mailing list. Mike welcomed the input and commitment of the Chairman and the members of the CAN Executive Committee, plus those who had volunteered to be CAN Consultants and Advisors. One of CAN's main roles is the distribution of information and requests for feedback and, since the Inauguration, there had been 33 mailings, of which 8 were on behalf of England Squash. The website had also been updated. While there had been a behaviour change as regards ES relationship with the 'grass roots', as proposed by the Paul Trott Working Party, Mike's view was that there was still a lack of synergy between the aims of ES and CAN, and we have some way to go before we can say that genuine partnership working with ES has been achieved, although we are moving in the right direction with the Consultancy scheme

## REVIEW OF ES COUNCIL MEETING

It was generally felt that the nature of the meeting inhibited the raising of issues, and that the agenda continued to comprise a series of presentations with very little time left for discussion. It was noted that the Consultation days organised by ES in conjunction with major Championships offered a better opportunity for in depth discussion on specific topics, and were to be welcomed

## CONSULTANTS REPORTS ON AREAS OF ACTIVITY

This item was truncated for lack of time following the discussion on the earlier item, but the following points were included



- (a) The following resolution arising from a proposal from Paul Main (CAN Consultant on Junior activity) was agreed unanimously –

“CAN supports the development of junior squash at all levels and supports any actions which promote participation in the sport and supports players to maximise their potential with the aid of a comprehensive and clear Competition Pathway. CAN wishes to support England Squash in all its efforts to achieve those twin objectives. It therefore requests England Squash to justify all current and proposed material changes with clear statements of what the objectives are, what outcomes are sought and how such outcomes will be evaluated before any changes are implemented.”

- (b) Vickie Prow (Affiliation and Membership) reminded us that the County Associations have a vested (financial) interest in encouraging clubs to affiliate and declare all their members, and should support the agreed Affiliation and Membership strategy. It was pointed out that there are some clubs who simply don't want to manage their players ES membership, and this should be OK as long as they can affiliate with no members and get those players who wish to do so, to self-register. It was not clear, however, whether these players were included in the county rebate
- (c) It was noted that we need a replacement Consultant on the Promotion of Coaching, in view of the resignation of Vicky te Velde, and we still require volunteers to act as Consultants for the following areas – Promotion of Refereeing; Increasing the number of new players at the grass roots; and Growing County Associations to enable them to play a full part in the development of the game
- (d) It was noted that there is interest in how some counties fund their activities and what they spend it on, and Richard Bickers offered to circulate the CAs asking about levels of county league team fees and financial support for Inter-County teams

## COUNTY AUDIT

After discussion, it was agreed that such an audit would be useful, and Alan Batchelor offered to work with Linda Taylor to take it forward

## PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

This item was not discussed for lack of time, but it was noted that there had only been three responses to the invitation to CAN members to give their preferences. All three had included Publicising and Popularising the game; two had featured the Promotion of Participation for all ages, and the marketing of ES Affiliation and Membership, and there had been one vote each for Junior promotion at grass roots level, and Providing Competitive Opportunities for local players.

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## REGIONAL FORUMS AND THE NATIONAL FORUM

It was noted that some Regional Forums are more active than others, and that the National Forum is not playing a pro-active role at present. It was understood that ES would be making available more development funds in 2018-19, working out at an average of around £3k per county, for the Promotion of Participation, Talent and Workforce development. This would be channelled from ES direct to the Regional Forums. The amount available to each region might vary according to the number of County Associations in the region, but would be influenced mainly by the quality of the bids and their relevance to the criteria applied within each area of activity. The National Forum might be required to progress the Inter-Active Mini-squash wall

## OTHER PROPOSALS FOR CAN ACTIVITY

Three proposals for further activities for CAN had been put forward by Paul Abel, but were not discussed for lack of time. They were referred to the Executive Committee for consideration

## NEXT MEETING

It was anticipated that the next meeting would be held in November, in conjunction with the ES Council meeting and AGM, and would be the first CAN AGM. It was suggested that it would be desirable for the CAN meeting to be held before the Council meeting, in order for questions/comments to Council to be agreed beforehand, and key areas for discussion highlighted

The meeting closed at 3.30 pm with thanks to all present