

Somerset LTA

Annual General Meeting Minutes

7th December 2023

Apologies for absence:

Elaine Urquhart (Yeovil TC), Cathy Alexander (Elms TC), Sarah Hall (Yeovil TC), Sarah Strawbridge (Cheddar TC), Ivor Griffiths (Coach), Shirly Hyde (Avenue TC), Kim Eschbaecher (LTA), Rachel Apsey (Coach), Marian Davis (Queen Camel), Jacky Boothman (Chard TC), Skarryn Coombes (player parent), Carole Beach (Bridgwater TC), Wendy Pryce (Coach), Ade Bates (Media consultant), Neil Driver (Somerton TC), Tim Seymour (SLTA Councillor), Sarah Thomas (SLTA Councillor), Zoe Leach (Ladies Captain), Dan Manlow (Mens Captain), Paul Rees (Minehead TC), Rick Boxer (Minehead TC), Dan Stone (Dan Stone Accountancy Ltd)

Attendees:

Andy Fay (SLTA Chairman), Simon Brand (LTA Councillor), Mary Fay (Minehead TC), Susan Rackley (Wellington TC), Julie Sinkins (Millfield Prep), Parul Patel (Taunton TC), Kerry Quirk (Taunton TC), Matthew Wyatt (player parent), John-Paul Jenkins (player parent), Maggie Andrews (Wiveliscombe TC), Rachael Sharland (Wiveliscombe TC), Alison Hillyer (Brent Knoll TC), Barry Ramsden (Avenue TC), Kate Peachey (South Petherton TC), Karuna Tharmananthar (SLTA Councillor), John Barrington (SLTA Councillor), Michele Philipson (SLTA Administrator)

Chairperson's Report – AF

I would like to look at both tennis nationally and locally to give some context to how the game is growing. I'm pleased to report that participation across the sports continues to grow. We have enjoyed an interesting year in terms of national tennis with some new emerging talents like Jack Draper and the junior Wimbledon boys champion Henry Searle. We watched a slightly nervy victory over Sweden in the Billie Jean Cup (formerly Fed Cup) and close run thing in the Davis cup quarter finals against Serbia led by Novak Djokovic which we lost in a very close contest. On the basis of which we have a wild card for next years eliminators for the Davis Cup but the ladies will need to get back to qualifying.

We all hope that Emma Raducanu's rehabilitation continues to go well after double wrist surgery and other corrective treatments Katie Boulter carries the reins as British number one with great distinction and is a super role model to younger players. We seem to have a good crop of younger ladies coming through as well.

On the men's side Andy Murray continues to retain the fierce passion that he has for the sport although a slightly less forgiving body may reduce his playing frequency Cam Norrie has had an up and down year and Dan Evans also had some great results from both the slams and ATP tour events

There is much going on nationally. As many of you will be aware our ambition is to deliver tennis opened up sport for anyone and everyone and as a sport we are at the leading edge for national sports governing bodies on both safeguarding and inclusion and diversity which are key to delivering that ambition. You are already familiar with the safeguarding focus on the continued rollout of the LTA's ground-breaking Inclusion and Diversity Strategy will I think make tennis even more inclusive.

There continues to be some pressure on venues to match these ambitions and I hope you will know that you have the county and LTA regional support for these improvements to our vision of how we make the opportunity to play tennis available to a wide audience safely.

This year's LTA awards nominations have been received and we're in the process of judging. They will be awarded at the most appropriate venue with an additional event invitation to an awards supper later thank you to all of you who have nominated a volunteer. It is a special way to recognise those volunteers who do so much for the tennis in our clubs

So how are we faring in the delivery of these national ambitions in the county you may ask. At the county level I hope you all have visited our much improved website and even followed us on the various social media platforms that we now have much greater visibility on this includes our county strategic plan for the next five years as well as other useful information. The plan is not a fixed document and continues to evolve as we do as a county and as we work to best maximise efficiency, reduce burdens on our precious volunteers and mitigate any risks that we face in the light of an increasing litigious landscape. Sadly the last point is probably the most critical at present. We are looking to run some venue forums which will focus on this subject

The county team's ability to deliver our tennis plan has been significantly boosted by the new funding agreement with the LTA which will allow us to plan with confidence for the future more on this in the Finance Report

Turning to your county team, they continue to do a wonderful job committing time and effort to their roles as volunteers and bringing exceptional skills to our small county group. I would like to express my thanks to them all. Whilst there are too many to mention by name I would like to record our thanks to Dan Manlow and Zoe Leach our Mens and Ladies captains respectively. A special mention for Dan who also looked after the boys under 18 team for many years and has finally stepped down. Promotion at Millfield school is one of the main reasons for this decision, less spare time due to higher workload so we wish him all the best in his new position.

Following our former county administrators Sophie Butland decision to try Australia for a while we appointed Michele Phillipson and as our new county administrator who has done an excellent job and hope everyone of you who has contacted her can confirm my understanding.

I would like to thank all the committee for their hard work and commitment over these particularly challenging times in particular I would like to say thanks Simon Brand for so ably taking on the role of the LTA county councillor for Somerset as well as retaining his role to oversee the county performance through a well run and parent inclusive county training and county caps - quite exceptiona. Karuna also does a great job in the challenging field of safeguarding and inclusion. The key I think remains that this is not about one or two individuals at a club but more a common consciousness that all members are aware of making sure everyone is safe to enjoy our sport new paragraph. I am delighted that Sarah Thomas director of tennis at Millfield has joined the committee and she continues to champion coach development and is an invaluable link to Millfield school who are so supportive of our county programme. Also Tim Seymour from Avenue Tennis Club has joined our team and brings with him a passion to increase competition in clubs and across clubs.

As the jewel in our competitions crown we are also working on uplifting the profile of our county championships held in the last week of August each year. Parul Patel did a fabulous job this year and she has agreed to help us again which is great news we really want to lift it from being another grade 3 tournament to be a festival a tennis attracts a broader player entry. Any thoughts welcomed and we will report back on our plans early next year.

We still have opportunities for anyone interested to join the county committee and in particular the roles for treasurer and secretary as vacant I am filling in on the latter role and would welcome any offers of help. Please feel free to contact me or any committee members. Thank you to all your clubs committees and coaches who are the lifeblood of our county game

LTA Councillors Report - SB

Where are we now in 2023?

We've increased our fan base and reversed the decline in participation
We've championed new forms of the sport such as Padel
We've seen strong results among our elite players

Number of people on our database up from 580,000 in the 2019 to 1.5 million today
Motivated 212,000 people to play more in the last year
Generated over £5.2 million worth of ticketing revenue in 2023
Increase of 275% in the LTA google page number rankings

Performance Pathway developed and implemented across Great Britain
New performance competition calendar
Nine different British players in the ATP WTA top 100 in 2023 this year
Achieved world number one in doubles Neal Skupski and men's wheelchair Alfie Hewitt
Four medals at the 2020 Paralympic Games
Six wheelchair Grand Slam titles in 2023
The NTC upgraded and improved one of only three ITF gold level training centres in the world

Real progress has been made this year in:

LTA Youth
Parks investment
Digital transformation
LTA Tennis Foundation

Treasurer's Report – AF

Andy asked that the accounts be approved. If after independent review there are any changes then approval will be sought

We do still have a vacancy for a treasurer so welcome any interest and Andy would be happy to discuss further the scope of the role and its primary responsibilities

2022-2023 results

New funding plan from LTA to help counties deliver their core tennis programmes, has allowed the county to show a small surplus for the first time in many years. The grant is subject to agreement with the LTA

The LTA financial year ends on 31 December whereas ours runs to 30 September so in the accounts is 9 months of the new funding and is why there is a large figure for prepaid

income which relates to the grant for the period for the final quarter of 2023 which will fall in to our 2023/4 accounts.

Income is consistent with expectations and added to by some interest income reflecting the higher interest being enjoyed at present.

Overall costs has fallen by £8.5k largely as a results of cost savings in competitions although some savings in business costs as well. Thanks to all the team captains who helped us achieve this. With improved funding going forward, we are looking at increase support to teams where we can.

Efficiency savings have been noted in combining the county admin and county training admin roles. Ines Beeson oversees the competition side of the county role and her costs are shown under the competition heading.

Due to a precarious financial position at the end of last year, we took the decision to suspend any grant funding for facility projects and limit support to loans. We did continue to support coach development and supported a number of coaches qualifications

Media consultant, Ade Bates, is increasing our social media profile as we look to bring on board sponsors. Please do feed any news stories to him to promote via the WhatsApp groups

2022/3 and Beyond

The adoption of the new County Funding agreement will continue to transform our financial sustainability. Our 2023/4 budget predicts a small surplus

The challenges to the County continue to be to find ways to support clubs, make sure our County players and would be players are well supported and rebuild closer connections between clubs and the County team. AF would welcome any thoughts on this.

The county is driving hard to identify would be sponsors, thanks to Simon Brand's hard work ably supported by Ade Bates. This will give us the opportunity to invest in events and venues potential going forward.

Legal Status

The County proposes to incorporate as a company limited by Guarantee. As a sponsor of County events, we do have increased risk and hence the proposal to incorporate, hence this move which will limit any directors liabilities. We will be circulating to all clubs but welcome any questions on our proposal. The clubs are our members, and their liability would be limited to a nominal amount of £1

The timescale would be to agree this in principle this evening and to follow up by circulating to all registered clubs. We will hold an EGM to confirm the change with the plan to be incorporated by May next year

Corporation Tax

We hope to release some of the liability that we are holding shortly. We are well placed to meet any potential liability if that were to occur.

Proposer to adopt the accounts including incorporation proposal - Karuna Tharmananthar, seconder Barry Ramsden, approved unanimously

Sponsorship - SB

We have been working with SNAP Sponsorship since October to create a profile that hopefully will encourage sponsors to support us financially. The profile can be viewed at <https://www.snapsponsorship.com/rights-owners/tennis-association/somerset-lawn-tennis-association>. The profile articulates what we do as an association and how extra funding would allow us to achieve our aim of opening tennis up to more people in the county. It encourages potential sponsors to take advantage of certain benefits which are detailed in each of the 4 packages.

We advertised these opportunities to our internal audience with personalised emails in early November. In mid-November we targeted external audiences which are based in Somerset by specific categories including drinks companies, food manufacturers, financial service companies, solicitors etc.

We have agreed so far a partnership with Courtstall for the next year. We plan to continue to advertise for partners throughout the early part of next year and would encourage everyone involved in tennis to share the link with friends and colleagues to maximise the opportunity to support the county in encouraging more people to get involved and to improve facilities.

Safeguarding - KT

LTA Safeguarding Strategy - 2024-26 now being developed

The current strategy focus is on the development and implementation of the highest safeguarding standards across tennis with a shift in emphasis towards greater integration of safeguarding requirements and practice within the governance of venues and associations.

Training and Development

Training remains key to achieving the highest standard in safeguarding. There is training for Welfare Officers and Committee Members and this is well worth following up.

<https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https://www.lta.org.uk/4abe46/siteassets/about-lta/file/lta-safeguarding-training-for-committees-guidance.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

Izzy's Story was launched in February 2023. It is an interactive and immersive safeguarding training for welfare officers and county safeguarding officers to better understand grooming and child sexual abuse. The simulation explains the stages that child sexual offenders go through to abuse a child, and contextual safeguarding which considers the environments and people outside a child's family in the context of safeguarding. Karuna recommended viewing this to the AGM.

Venue Safeguarding Visits

Venue Safeguarding visits continue in Somerset and it is undertaken by the Regional Safeguarding Officer. The visit provides an opportunity to take a look at the policies and practices around safeguarding in a supportive environment.

Venue Health Checks are carried out in addition to the support visits, and can be unannounced. Looking specifically at what venues have in place:

- Compliance with DBS and relevant training requirements
- Reporting of concern included in the venue website as well as all relevant policies
- Display of safeguarding posters etc within the venue
- Coaches and their status - all level 2-5 coaches are accredited

There were 10 venue visits made this year and 3 safeguarding referrals.

Safeguarding Awareness Week

2 October 2023 and many workshops were hosted during the week covering a wide range of topics (<https://www.lta.org.uk/about-us/safeguarding/safeguarding-awareness-week/>)

Thank you to the Club Committees and the Welfare Officers across the County. There remain many challenges:

- Finding volunteers
- Finding someone to take on the role of the welfare officer
- Understanding what is required to meet the safeguarding standards
- Time
- Coach/venue relationship
- On going support from committee/Management
- Unsure of resources available

Working together relentlessly gives us the best chance of overcoming these challenges and providing a safe environment across the county for all to enjoy playing tennis at all levels.

Team Reports

Mens – Dan Manlow, read by SB

The Somerset Men's Tennis Team participated in Division 5 at Summer County Cup held in Felixstowe and were relegated. While the relegation may pose a temporary setback, the focus on player development and the positive team culture bodes well for Somerset's tennis aspirations in the seasons to come.

Winter Division 4 Exeter

Following an exciting campaign, Somerset will remain in Division 4 for the next season.

Ladies – Zoe Leach, Read By SB

Summer county cup at Cheltenham - the team secured promotion to division two for the first time in a very long time

Winter county cup at Southampton - the team were relegated to Division Three after being in division two since 2019

A special shout out to Izzy Burrow for being part of the senior team for the first time and securing two wins over the weekend

Over 35s Ladies – Rachel Apsey. Read by John Barrington

The weather was not great this year so we had shortened matches. We lost to Leicestershire on the first day 3-2 and beat Lancashire 2-1 and Surrey 2-1. It was a great team effort to stay in division 1. We are all looking forward to 2024.

Over 35s Mens – Richard Stock, read by JB

The men's O35's team had another challenging year this year, with both the weather and the resulting shortened match format playing a part in the outcome.

No play on day 1, as Durham & Cleavland pulled out. Day 2 vs Isle of Man the team produced a good win

The team ended second in group 6, after losing to a strong Notts team on the last day, with shortened formats.

It was a shame the weather was so poor, but it was really pleasing to see the team gelling so well, and there is real determination to be promoted next year.

County Seniors – JB

John read out some of the highlights from the results below

SENIORS COUNTY CUP AND SOMERSET LEAGUES 2023-

Men	Captain	Division	Played	Won	Lost	Position
Over 50s	Jon Treen	1A	5	0	3	6th
60s	Mark Rowan	2A	4	2	2	3rd
65s	Bob Kippen	3B	4	0	4	5th
70s	John Barrington	3A	4	1	3	4th
75s	Axel Reuttler	3	4	2	2	4th
Women						
Over 40s	Liz Deem	1B	5	2	3	4th
50s	Nicky Attwood	3B	5	3	2	2nd
60s	Carole Beach	2A	5	3	2	2nd
65s	Anne Guy	3A	4	1	3	4th
70s	Fiona Perratt	3	4	2	2	4th

Leagues

Yeovil & District Summer 2023

	Winners	Points
Mens Doubles Div 1	Trull	90
Women's Doubles Div 1	South Petherton	108
Mixed Doubles Div 1	Martock	93

North Somerset 2023

Men's Doubles Div 1	Clevedon	78
Women's Doubles Div 1	Bridgwater	73

West Somerset 2023

Mixed Doubles Div 1	Trull	76
Mens Doubles Div 1	Trull	68

Junior County Cups and County Training – SB

We delivered 10 x 2 hours of indoor training delivered for all age groups, delivered by highly qualified & experienced coaches. Trials are held each September to determine the squads each term

Recent 8U Festival to encourage more players and to talent ID with 40 players

All coaches benefit from forums & invitation to attend training

All age groups competed in the County Cup competitions, 8U – 18U. The results are on the website

Players in county training are showing improved ability and commitment

Comments

John-Paul Jenkins commented that he was disappointed in the lack of competitive opportunities for juniors in Somerset and that the U9 girls winner could have been better promoted by Somerset as she also won the boys event

Julie Sinkins stated her willingness to support girls development in the county

Club Visits – Neil Driver, read by AF

Neil supports Kim Eschbaecher in her work for the LTA as a Participation Development Partner covering the South West of England.

The responsibility for Accessibility & Participation fundamentally means trying to enable and encourage more people to play tennis in Somerset, and to enable and encourage people to play tennis more often.

Club visits have these objectives

- To find out what's been going well at their Club
- To find out if there's any help that the Club would like from Somerset Tennis
- To offer a document that is a list of possible activities & facilities that can work well to enhance the success of a club & 'to encourage more people to play tennis more often'

In the past year or so I have made visits to the following Clubs:

Wells, Ilminster, Somerton, Taunton, Martock, Bridgwater, The Elms, Yeovil, I and my fellow Somerset Tennis Councillors are keen to make such visits. If your Club would like such a visit to help in developing any aspect of your Club, please do contact Neil or any Councillor. Furthermore, if you have any events coming up at your Club that you think we would enjoy attending, please do let us know (e.g. Open Days, Tournaments, AGMs, Court openings, etc).

Coach Development

The report has been circulated before the meeting so was not read

Accessibility – Ivor Griffiths, read by KT

Wheelchair Tennis taken by Ivor

Regular Sunday sessions at Taunton

Sessions are based primarily on movement, so, at the beginning of each week we focus on that area for at least half an hour, and to include all ages and abilities.

Attendance has recently been dropping to three or four players

More volunteer are needed to seek out funding for us, so we could use the funds to visit schools that have pupils in wheelchairs, without having to rely on Somerset LTA who have always been generous.

Tournaments

Very successful Wheelchair Event at the end of October. In total we had Eight Players.. Debbie Butland was referee and Ivor organised. One of the best we have ever staged.

Walking Tennis taken by Wendy Pryce

Previously run by Sophie Butland, now the lead coach is Wendy. A very successful programme, and more to come we hope.

Adult Learning Disabilities Tennis Group taken by Wendy Pryce

2 groups are brought into Blackbrook TC

Approx 10 for each session including excellent support staff

Mixed ability groups with varying disabilities. Orange, green and red balls and larger purple balls are used

The groups are extremely enthusiastic and a pleasure to coach and be associated with.

Andy explained the Open Court Lead role:

Somerset Open Court Lead opportunity

Somerset Tennis are looking to encourage more disabled people to become active in tennis by appointing a person who feels passionate about this area of tennis as the county's Open Court Lead in 2024.

Open Court is an LTA funded programme to encourage more disabled people to play, volunteer, coach and officiate in tennis. As the main part of this, the Open Court Lead would look to work with Clubs and coaches to set up tennis sessions for people who are physically disabled, including those in wheelchairs, or who are visually or hearing impaired; and/or people who have learning disabilities/difficulties and/or long-term health conditions.

There is expert support available from key members of the LTA to assist the Open Court Lead, so the most important thing is that the County Lead person must be passionate about helping these groups of people.

If you would like to be considered for this role, or if you would like to know more about what the role would entail, please contact Neil Driver (i/c Accessibility & Participation for Somerset Tennis) either by email at neilrdriver@gmail.com - please watch out to include the r between neil and driver - or by phone on 01458 396006.

Election of Council Members

The following offices and roles were voted unanimously, proposed by Parul Patel and seconded by Mary Fay

Chair – Andy Fay
SLTA Councillor – Simon Brand
County Seniors Officer – John Barrington
County Training & Junior County Cups – Simon Brand
Safeguarding Officer – Karuna Tharamanthar
Coach Development - Sarah Thomas
Accessibility – Neil Driver
Padel Tennis – Arthur Turner

The following positions are vacant and volunteers would be welcome for these roles:

Treasurer
Secretary
Open Court Lead

Election of Independent Examiner – Dan Stone of Dan Stone Accountancy

Proposed by Kerry Quirk and seconded by Susan Rackley. Unanimously agreed

Any Other Business

Parul Patel requested that the county look at increasing the number of officials in Somerset and supporting their training and development

Andy Fay thanked everyone for attending

The meeting ended at 2115