

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

Somerset LTA

Finance Report 2022/3

Introduction

The accounts were circulated at the beginning of the week so hopefully you will have had a chance to look at the figures. If not, I will summarise the position and then look briefly at the underlying factors before looking forward to 2024 and beyond.

These figures have not yet been subject to Independent Review, so, if agreed by the meeting, I would ask that these be approved as is and in the unlikely event of any significant changes that follow the Review, would require further approval by this forum.

The figures show only 2023 and 2022 comparative when last year I included several years figures. As we are getting to more normal times so the need for historic context is reduced and I wanted to avoid bombarding you with too many figures.

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

2022/3 Results

You will have noticed a substantial uplift in income for this year. The reason being the introduction of a new funding plan from the LTA which seeks to provide a level of financial support that will allow all counties to deliver their core tennis programmes. This is very welcome and has allowed the County to show a small surplus for the first time in many years.

Previously the County received grant funding for the LTA via a main grants and County Training grants and retained all the Registration fees paid by venues. The new grants replace those other grants, and the Registration fees are now retained by the LTA centrally. Overall, the net effect is to almost double our LTA support which is excellent news.

The grants are subject to funding agreement, which we signed off on your behalf, and not surprisingly itemise a number of deliverables, both in terms of programmes and events as well as adopting various aspects of good governance. The agreement is subject to annual review in terms of measuring delivery against the various targets and also include allocating parts of the grants to various activities including competitions, County Cups and county championships, and performance, through training.

One final point to make is that 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.

Looking at other income on the year this is consistent with expectations and added to by some interest income reflecting the higher interest being enjoyed at present.

Turning to expenses, overall cost has fallen by £8.5k largely as a result of cost savings in competitions although some savings in business costs as well. The former was a conscious effort to save costs due to the difficult situation that we found ourselves at the end of 2022, as reflected in the comparative figures, and our 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.

On the latter point of business costs, and as noted elsewhere, with Sophie Butland heading off to Australia, we appointed Michele Philipson as County Administrator which compliments her previous role as administrator for County training / County Cups and the real cost will not come through until next year although there already seem to be some efficiency savings from combining these roles. It should also be noted that we appointed Ines Beeson to oversee 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 also took the decision to suspend any grant funding for facility projects but rather limit or support to loans. We did continue to support coach development and supported a number of coaches as they climbed to new levels of qualification.

The LTA affiliation fees remain at £200 but we missed a couple of years for some reason and had a catch up earlier in 2023 so were effectively showing three years of fees which will reduce back to £200 in 2023/4.

We continue to employ an outside consultant to maintain and increase of Social media profile which the committee feel is money well spent as our profile is maintained at a high level especially important as we look to bring on board sponsors. Ade provides his time above and beyond his strict contract terms and has already reached out to clubs to avail themselves of the WhatsApp venue group and other initiatives. This resource is available to clubs to tap into although obviously any significant projects will come with additional costs and please do feed any news stories to him to promote.

2022/3 and Beyond

As I referred to earlier and indeed last time of reporting, the adoption of the new County Funding agreement will continue to transform our financial sustainability. Our 2023/4 budget predicts a small surplus covering existing costs and more ploughed back into key areas,

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. I 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. I won't take anything away from Simon's presentation which is already paying dividends. This will give us the opportunity to invest in events and venues potential going forward.

Legal Status

In an increasingly litigious times, it is important for all clubs and Counties to review the legal status to ensure that their volunteers are not exposed to any more risk than they should be. Whilst insurance can mitigate most risks, we should continue to review.

The County, like many clubs, is an unincorporated association, potentially liable to Corporation tax. So, we enjoy the benefits of the loose association but without the legal protection of full company status, whereby any action against the club is only against the legal entity (Company) and not individuals behind it.

With this in mind, 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. We will be circulating all clubs but welcome any questions on our proposal. The clubs are our members, and their liability would be limited to a nominal amount, say £1 per club.

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

Corporation Tax

As I have reported before, we are now filing annual returns so will hopefully be able to release some of the liability that we are holding shortly. There are a number of Counties in a similar position, but they have not made any provision, so we are well placed to meet any potential liability if that were to occur.

Conclusion

Welcome any questions but otherwise would like to ask the meeting to approve these accounts as they stand.

Sponsorship – Simon Brand

- Despite receiving significant resources from the LTA to run the core activities as mandated by them, there is always scope to do more with additional funds that will improve the opportunity for everyone to get involved in the sport. These can be used to support clubs improve facilities or subsidise events, provide bursaries to our coaches to enhance their professional qualifications and to support the elite squads both junior and senior who represent the county in matches and at the county cup events.
- To that end, 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 (ie those people we know and who understand what we do e.g. Council members (incl previous councillors), senior county players (incl ex players), parents of junior county players, club contacts, alumni organisations etc) with personalised emails inviting them to consider the offer of partnering with us and to share the link with their friends/contacts in early November. In mid-November we targeted external audiences (ie those people who do not know anything about what we do but could be interested in sponsorship) which are based in Somerset by specific categories including drinks companies, food manufacturers, financial service companies, solicitors etc.
- This process is ongoing and to date we have agreed 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.

I have recounted a few of the key issues that were part of the LTA's focus on safeguarding. This was reflected in many of the local communications and support visits across the county.

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. The shift in emphasis is likely to be 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>

Izzey'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.

Accessibility & Participation Report for Somerset Tennis (SLTA) AGM December 2023 by Neil Driver

As the Somerset Tennis Councillor with responsibility for Accessibility & Participation in Somerset, I support 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. To help achieve these goals I have been visiting Clubs in Somerset over the past year or so.

In making these visits, I have had 3 main 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'

[SLTA Promoting Accessibility & Participation at...](#)

In all of my visits I've discovered that the Clubs are already providing many of the activities & facilities listed in my document, but that some of the ideas are new to them &/or are a reminder to consider them in the future. I've also added to my list from some activities that Clubs are offering with very good success.

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

- Wells LTC 28/10/22 - Colin Blatchford-Brown (Chair) & other Committee members - along with Simon Brand
- Ilminster TC 28/11/22 - Gill Dunn (Chair) & other Committee members
- Somerton TC 31/1/23 - Matt Brown (Chair) & other Committee members - along with Kim Eschbaecher
- Taunton Tennis Centre 20/2/23 - Kerry Quirk - discussion about Open Court
- Wells LTC 22/5/23 - Kevin Durney (Head Coach) & a Committee member - along with Kim Eschbaecher
- Martock TC 4/8/23 - Laura Hebditch (Chair) - after a visit by Kim Eschbaecher
- Bridgwater TC 6/9/23 - Carole Beach (Chair) - Somerset Ladies' Seniors Tournament - plus discussion with ladies from numerous other Somerset venues including Sue Rackley (Chair at Wellington TC)
- The Elms 10/10/23 - Cathy (Chair) & other Committee members - Andy Fay stood in for me as I was away on holiday
- Yeovil TC 16/10/23 - Luke Andrews (Head Coach)

I am keen to visit more Clubs & Venues in Somerset in 2024, and to re-visit the ones I've visited previously. My fellow Somerset Tennis Councillors are also 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 myself 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).

28.11.23

Report by Neil Driver

Somerset Tennis (SLTA) Councillor

Report for AGM on County Coach Workforce Development – Sarah Thomas

LTA Strategic Aim is the retention and recruitment of Coaches in Somerset

We held a free Somerset Coach Network event on Friday 22nd Sept from 9-12 noon at Millfield Prep where Chris Chapman and Mike Aust presented on Performance standards for U10 players following on from their U10 National Performance course experience mentored by Shane Deacon. The presentation included both on-court and off-court sessions sharing the valuable experiences, skills, and information they learnt and provided insights to enhance our understanding of the current standard within this age group. Sam Lewis LTA [Competition Development Partner](#) also provided some LTA competition insights. Attendees were able to apply for 3 CPD credits via the LTA Independent Learning scheme <https://www.lta.org.uk/roles-and-venues/coaches/development/independent-learning/>

Our next Somerset Coach Network event is planned for Fri 26th Jan 9-12 noon at Millfield Prep where Suzanne Williams, of FIT4Coaching, will deliver an on court Strength & Conditioning CPD session entitled “Never Waste a Warm-Up”. Suzanne is an LTA Level 5 Performance tennis coach, a UKSCA accredited S&C Coach, she has a BSc (Hons) in Sport Science and is an LTA Coach Developer. She was Emma Raducanu’s original S&C coach from 7-11yrs. The session will include a mixture of theory and practical work where coaches will not only learn the sport science behind optimal preparation, but also be able to have a go at the exercises for each phase.

Our Somerset coaches will have a chance to network with fellow coaches, learn and share ideas, plus apply for 3 CPD points through the LTA Independent Learning scheme.

Over 20 Coaches attended the LTA Coach Forum at Millfield school in November which focused on Louis Cayer inspired doubles tactics and formations. The coaches explored doubles drills on court, using the attacking and defending phases of play and then benefitted from an off-court discussion with fellow coaches on developing themselves and their businesses, and to be more aware of possible strategies to protect their wellbeing. Coaches attending received 4 Coach credits.

54 Somerset Coaches are on the Somerset Coaches Network whats app group and all Somerset Coaches were invited to join via email.

We meet regularly with the LTA Workforce Development Partner, Julie Jones and Ann Williams from Exeter Uni CDC to ensure there is access to a range of opportunities for coach development. 12 candidates signed up for the LTA Assistant course in Oct and Nov at Millfield School and we ran an LTA Youth Tennis Leaders course at Millfield, so we are hopeful that those Leaders will sign up to the next LTA Assistant course. We also hope to trial a female only Tennis Leaders course, in order to encourage more females to become tennis leaders, volunteers and to apply for their LTA Qualifications.

Somerset LTA provide bursaries for LTA qualifications to grow and support the coach workforce in Somerset and the LTA are currently offering heavily subsidised Female only Assistant courses and the LTA Padel Instructor course is free for females until March 2024, in their efforts to support the female workforce.

Sarah Thomas
Director of Tennis

Junior County Training Programme – Simon Brand

- The junior county training programme for all age groups (8U, 9U, 10U, 12U & 14U) resulted in 10 x 2 hour sessions being completed throughout the year. These sessions took place at Taunton for the younger age groups and Millfield senior school for the older age groups. In addition we ran 3 sessions for the boys and girls 18U teams to prepare them for their county cup in February. We are very grateful to Millfield for allowing us use of their excellent facility.
- The training is led by the most experienced and qualified coaches in the county and we are grateful for their continued support in delivering the training. We are grateful to have such highly qualified and motivated coaches running the sessions and the feedback from the players and parents has been really positive. We are fortunate that all the coaches involved in 2022 have remained committed for this year as well as next. That said, we are losing Dan Manlow as the 18U boys' coach due to the demands of his new job as Director of Tennis at Millfield. We are extremely grateful for his leadership of this age group over many years and wish him the very best in the future. Jeremy Priddle supported by Max Hurtubise (Millfield coach) have agreed to take over this responsibility with immediate effect.
- This year we ran a trial for all age groups in September to determine selection to the programme. We did this to ensure that the standards of JCT are maintained and because some age groups are over-subscribed. Those unsuccessful at the trial have an opportunity to be selected downstream as the squads are reviewed every term and players are selected or deselected based on performance. This creates a competitive environment and ensures that the squads are represented by the very best in the county.
- We ran additional training sessions for those 9U & 10U plus 12 & 14U players not selected to attend training to give them an opportunity to benefit from a training session and to demonstrate their abilities. The latest session took place at the venue on Sun 19 Nov under the leadership of Tim Seymour and Jeremy Priddle. In addition, we are running sessions for those players in the 14 - 18U age group who are not yet good enough to represent the county at 18U to encourage them to continue to play and to build esprit de corps. A tennis festival aimed at those children born between 2016 and 2018 was held at Taunton on 3 Dec whose aim was to encourage anyone to come and try the game and to identify those players who demonstrate potential.
- The programme continues to develop under the leadership of Chris Chapman who not only coaches the 12U age groups but also monitors the performance of the coaches to ensure the highest of standards are maintained. He also actively contributes to the professional development of the county coaches by holding regular coach forums whereby he exposes the coaches to the latest thinking and developments learnt during his experience working with national level coaches in

delivering the 10U Player Pathway. We would like to thank him for his dedication and professionalism in delivering a programme that has seen more players eager to get involved and abilities improve.

Junior County Cup

- The junior county cup programme resulted in every age group competing in the various groups at venues around the region. The format has changed in the last year such that teams compete in groups of similar standard and at venues within the region where possible. This has reduced the requirement for travel and accommodation thus saving considerable resources. However, this new format means that the teams are neither promoted nor relegated depending on the results unless the team is ranked in the top 14 counties based on the combined rankings of the top 6 players; instead they are assigned a group of similar standard and play for pride and to gain competitive experience.
- The results of each team can be found on the website under County Tennis, Junior Teams.
- All the teams competed in an excellent fashion and were praised for their conduct, sportsmanship and mental approach to the matches. They all wore the shirt with pride and set an excellent example. Perhaps what is most encouraging is that we are beginning to see the fruits of our improved programme and a greater commitment and ability from the players. We look forward to next season with optimism.

Ladies Summer & Winter County Cup Report – Zoe Leach

- Summer County Cup in Cheltenham
 - After a loss on day one, the team bounced back to win the remaining 4 days and top the group
 - Securing promotion to division 2 for the first time in a very long time
 - This tops a successful few years in the summer with 3 promotions in the last 4 years
 - Congratulations to Annabelle Davis, Fran Davis, Natalie Ackland, Grace Piper, Nirva Patel, Beth Lacey, Amelia Davies & Zoe Leach
 -
- Winter County Cup in Southampton
 - A very strong division saw the team lose to Middlesex, Cheshire & Lancashire
 - Unfortunately getting relegated to division 3 after being in division 2 since 2019
 - Shout out to Izzy Burrow for being part of the senior team for the first time and securing 2 wins over the weekend

Mens County Cups Report – Dan Manlow

Summer div 5 Felixtowe

The Somerset Men's Tennis Team participated in Division 5 at Summer County Cup held in Felixstowe. Despite being relegated, the team showcased commendable spirit and enthusiasm throughout the competition. The event provided a platform for the introduction of promising juniors Charlie Ruffell and Josh Craze, who made their debut and contributed positively to the team dynamics.

The team faced strong opponents in Staffs, Devon, Leics, Notts, and North Wales, ultimately succumbing to defeats in each encounter. While the outcomes may not have favoured Somerset, it's crucial to highlight the team's resilience and strong spirit throughout.

Despite facing challenging opponents, Somerset Men's Tennis Team exhibited a commendable level of competitiveness and sportsmanship. Each match saw the team members giving their best effort, showcasing the tenacity and camaraderie that defines Somerset tennis.

As Somerset reflects on the Summer 2023 County Cup, the experience gained by the team, especially the junior players, becomes a valuable asset for future campaigns. 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 Div 4 Exeter

The Somerset Tennis Division 4 WCC team embarked on an exciting campaign at the Winter County Cup in Exeter, featuring a vibrant mix of youth and experience. The youthful infusion included debutant Oliver Honey, alongside emerging talents Charlie Ruffell and Jack Brimm, all supported by the seasoned presence of Dan Manlow, Ali Felton, Sam Edwards, and the team's inspirational figure, Gabb.

The team started the competition on a high note, securing two impressive wins against Devon and Northants. The victories showcased the potential and energy of the younger players while benefiting from the valuable experience of the more seasoned members of the squad.

As the tournament progressed, Somerset found themselves in a promotion decider against Derbyshire, a match that would determine their division standing for the upcoming season. The pivotal moment unfolded on Court 3 in a doubles match, where James Mitchell and James Edwards fought valiantly. The contest went down to the wire, with Mitchell and Edwards displaying resilience and determination. Despite their courageous efforts, they eventually fell short, losing a closely contested third set with a scoreline of 10-8.

The outcome means that Somerset will remain in Division 4 for the next season. While the promotion narrowly slipped away, the team's performance showcased a harmonious blend of youthful exuberance and seasoned expertise. The Winter County Cup in Exeter served as a valuable learning experience and a testament to the team's competitive spirit. Somerset looks forward to building on this foundation in future campaigns, with optimism for continued growth and success in the dynamic world of tennis.

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

John Barrington

Ivor Griffiths

WHEELCHAIR

The first half of the Year until July, the regular Sunday sessions were fruitful to the weekly average of 6-8 players. From September we have lost Emily, our Player who has progressed to National Training, because she needs weekends for Studying as she is still at Queens College. Another of our star players, Ian, (Bristol) has been abroad for several weeks, another Ian has moved to France, and Ellie, who hoped to be back in September, has been in and out of hospital. Charlotte who has had to have one of her legs amputated has returned recently and is doing very well. I tell you all this as most of us do not have these sort of issues which are usually on top of other medical issues. We do have One of Emily's fellow National Players in Training, who is delighted to come down from Gloucester most weeks to enjoy Practice Matches, and on several occasions in the Summer we were attracting Players from Cornwall (Newquay) and Plymouth. Not happy to travel in the unsure Winter months. Our sessions are based on Primarily 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.

I am glad to say we are attracting more Young Players. The Star of our sessions is 10 Year Old Toby, and he is a very popular Leading Light when the other Young Players come. However, the bad news is that attendance has been down to Three, sometimes Four.

Our desire would be to find some volunteer who would have the time to find some funding for us, so we could use the funds to visit schools that have pupils in Wheelchairs, 'I did this myself when I visited Toby's school' with success. Kerry and I do not have the time to address this.

I am happy to discuss anything related to Our Wheelchair Programme without having to always beg for money. This is not a request for Funds from the Somerset LTA Council, as they have been more than generous in the past. We need a 'Someone' willing to find us some Funding so we can develop and help us to attract additional players!

TOURNAMENTS

Yes we staged a Very Successful Wheelchair Event at the end of October. It was a long day of Singles in the Morning and Doubles in the afternoon, with players, mainly from Somerset and Devon, but with two wonderful players from the Reading area. In Total we had Eight Players who all played 'Fast Four' Matches, Best of Three Sets. Debbie Butland, as Referee and Myself, were so impressed with their stamina,

especially as most started at 9.00 AM and finished at 5.30 PM. Weary Comments of enjoyment, however, were offered as they all departed for home. One of the best we have ever staged.

WALKING TENNIS

Has increased in Popularity within the last 12 months. I know, as I have covered sessions from time to time. It used to be run by Sophie Butland, but now the Lead Coach is Wendy. and I am sure she would probably be more accurate in the numbers who attend regularly as in the region of 8-12 players, by my reckoning. All in All a very successful Programme, and more to come we hope!!

Wendy Pryce

Adult Learning Disabilities Tennis Group

2 groups are brought into Blackbrook TC by minibuses and cars from their centres on Tuesdays to play tennis on the Bubble Courts 12-1 and 1-2.

There are approx 10 for each session which include staff - 3 in 1st group includes 2 1-1s, and 1 staff 2nd group (2 staff if above 8 2nd group).

Excellent support staff who take part - we are in contact by email/messages re players as well as during sessions.

The players are of mixed ability both groups and include variety of disabilities apart from usual ones (co-ordination/movement etc) plus hearing, sight, artificial supports. Wheelchair ALDs generally play summer term. 1 player takes part ALD tournaments having done so elsewhere before moving to Somerset. Others keen on tennis activity are at beginner stage. Mix in between due to coming several years. We use orange green red balls and larger purple mainly for warm ups/targets plus other equipment (all of which are loaded into my car along with rackets for everyone).

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