

NSRA Chairman's Report 15-03-17

Activities undertaken since the last NSRA committee meeting on 6th January 2017:

Contact with England Squash Regional Forum

The East Midlands Regional Forum comprises Lincs, Notts, Leics, Derbys, and Northants. I have had one face to face meeting with Paul Abel from Notts but other than a few emails the EM Forum hasn't yet met as proposed several times by Skype – however there is one such meeting taking place tonight simply to ensure the technology works well enough; then a proper electronic meeting will hopefully take place next week.

It is my understanding that the Regional Forums are a way of County Associations combining their views and requirements to present to England Squash, as ES can no longer afford to have regional representatives. The obvious downfall of this scheme is that the onus for proactive communication lies with the associations rather than England Squash.

Contact with CAN (County Association Network)

I'm not entirely sure why this exists. It's run by Mike Clemson from Yorkshire, a very fine player who was runner up at last year's O70 Nationals. Paul Abel from Notts is convinced that Mike is looking to ultimately replace England Squash as all confidence in them seems lost. I have had no input – my dealings with ES, which is a governing body vastly reduced by recent funding cuts, has been pretty positive so far.

If CAN come up with plans and actual stuff that I can act upon I'll get involved. At the moment it looks like a lot of talking about how rubbish ES are.

NSRA Newsletter

I sent this via email on 26th January to the 280 recipients currently in the mail list. Open rate was 41% which is fairly encouraging. The next one is imminent.

England Squash Summit, Coventry

Ray Chessum and I attended this summit which also had Steve and Alison from MH, representatives from Hinckley, Gloucester, Kenilworth, Taunton, Duffield, and Brackley in attendance. An interesting day, that at the very least has given me some good out-of-county contacts, as well as providing an understanding of where England Squash now are as a governing body. They've been pretty much

decimated by recent cuts to funding, but some of their current and future initiatives are sensible given the new limits they're subject to.

One very positive change in the way they're directed to use their funding is with junior squash. By all accounts they were actually told not to promote the sport to children during the last funding cycle! This has now changed and they are nearly ready to launch the new Junior Pathway initiative – I have the preliminary documentation and it looks good.

Junior Coaching at Daventry Squash Club

Ray Chessum and I started junior coaching at Daventry on 21st January. We have had a good initial response from a few of the Daventry members who are bringing their kids along every week. Mitch Bates, who this season has been playing his squash out of Rugby in the Leics leagues, has been slightly involved and is making positive noises about coming back into the club.

We have about seven children coming regularly. This will increase subsequent to additional activities (see below). James Roberts, a regular Daventry team player, has enrolled in the Level One coaching course at Market Harborough on 26th March and seems to be committed to keeping the junior club going along with Dave McQuillan. We will need at least one more coach to be regularly involved before Ray and I can start to return to Lings; in the meantime we are committed to getting Daventry juniors back up to previous levels, which will hopefully lead to an increase in overall membership.

Contact with Northamptonshire Sport

I have been in regular discussions with Northants Sport who are fully behind squash regeneration in the county. They are running a "Month of Squash" campaign in April, so will be promoting anything related to the sport throughout the month.

Ray and I had a meeting with the Northants Leisure Trust and NSport two weeks ago to determine just what the "Month of Squash" campaign will amount to. They won't be spending any actual money, so it's down to us make sure they publicise everything we do.

However, thanks to NSport six NSRA members have applied for funding from them to help pay for the Level One coaching course to be conducted at Market Harborough.

NSport are very helpful: the Sports Development Officer, Alex Le Guével, has given me an enormous list of possible funding sources and has also made introductions with many of the people I need to speak to who can help with participation programmes. Which leads me on to...

Schools Squash Festival, Daventry, 26th May

From 9:30am to 1:00pm there will be sixty children in Daventry Squash Club taking part in a squash and racketball festival. Run across all five courts, groups of ten will take part in squash, racketball, agility, squash again, and games – with one group watching from the gallery – for twenty minutes at a time. From about 12:15 they'll then watch some exhibition squash on the show court until the

event closes at 1:00. As they leave they will be given a Northants Sport certificate and details about junior coaching that, if they've enjoyed it so far, they can come and do again the very next morning.

I have the required personnel in place, and David Hanson – NSport School Sport Manager for the Daventry area – has nearly filled the event from the local schools. England Squash are behind it (to what extent remains to be seen) and I might also manage to get Lee Drew, UK National Junior Coach, involved subsequent to a conversation we had on Sunday at the Junior Nationals.

The one thing I will need from the county members is rackets: we will need twenty squash and ten racketball rackets on the day and even if I borrow all the Lings equipment we won't have enough. ES might be able to help but I'm not going to count on it, so I'll be putting out a call to borrow some.

Once this has successfully completed I will roll it out to other districts; David has given me the names of his counterparts from Wellingborough, Kettering, Corby/Oundle, and Northampton with whom I can liaise.

Talking to Brackley, Oundle, and Carlton

Brackley Squash Club is a phenomenon, run by an incredibly enthusiastic chairman called Andy Bright who has completely turned the club around, managing to win the Northamptonshire Community Club 2016 award, and the England Squash Venue of the Year award 2016/17.

They play their team squash in Oxfordshire; but I think I will attract a team into the Northants leagues because some of their away matches are a long way away and I think a few of their members will like the idea of some closer ones. I am there with the Lings juniors on 1st April and will have a discussion with them then.

Carlton are just over the Northants/Beds border on the way to Bedford. They are interested in fielding a team in the NSRA summer leagues and I have a meeting with them next week to discuss junior coaching. I hope to attract a team into the NSRA winter leagues.

Oundle are playing hard to get – after two missed calls from their chairman I am no closer to having any communication.

This Girl Can Initiative

I have submitted an application to Northamptonshire Sport for a This Girl Can course for females aged 25+ to be introduced to squash. Should we get the funding the course will start on 7th May for twelve weeks, and will be targeted at complete novices and those with basic experience. The sessions will be delivered at Lings on Sunday mornings by a Level 3 coach – Alison Inley from Leamington – and should it be successful we will aim to make it a permanent fixture that can be rolled out to the county. The ultimate aim is an NSRA ladies league.

Junior Matches

I have organised a number of matches between Lings juniors with Buckingham, Brackley, Dallington, and Mkt Harbr; with others in the pipeline up at Edgbaston and Hinckley. On Saturday 24th June there will be an interclub tournament at Daventry between most of these clubs that will also be a launch event for a return of the junior Grand Prix, to start in September. Once the Grand Prix are up and running and we have the grading correct I will start to get squads from each club to play team matches.