**Kendal and District Table Tennis League**

**Minutes of Pre Season Council Meeting – 8.00 pm Thurs 15 Sept 2022, Ibis Social Club**

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| ***Present –***  Peter Leahy (PL) (Chairman), Mick Taylor (MT) (Secretary), Tony March (TM) (Treasurer), Bob Gale (BG), Martin Wakelin (MW), Phil Swift (PS), Keith Mallinson (KM), Kevin Hunter (KH)  ***Apologies*** Bryan Rhodes (BR), Norman Philbey (NP), Chris Knowles (CK), Dennis Hooley (DH), Matt O’Flynn (MO), Paul Hines (PH), Seamus Hanna (SH).   1. ***Minutes of Previous Meeting 15 Sept 2022***    1. Agreed as a true record. 2. ***Matters Arising***   2.1 None   1. ***Chairman’s Report (Peter Leahy)***   3.1 The junior league ran successfully last season, with one division before Christmas and two after. It will run again this year, starting next week.  3.2 There is a free umpiring workshop next Monday at Natland and all League players are encouraged to attend.  3.3 A successful coaching for coaches day was held in Feb 2023 and may be repeated later this season.  3.4 Dan O’Connell is available to be used by anyone for coaching sessions. Women’s coaching sessions with Beth O’Connell are being subsidised by the League.   1. ***Secretary and Welfare Officer Report (Mick Taylor)***   4.1 The Management Team has been discussing a possible rule change that would introduce a simple vetting process for players registering after the start of the season. This is to try and eliminate “ringers”, ie players signed up from elsewhere specifically to swing an important match. Any firm proposals will be discussed at an AGM or SGM in the normal way.  4.2 MT will be emailing all League players soon to encourage them to take a free on line TTE safeguarding course. TM and MW have both done the course and MT is half way through. All three agree it is a very useful course.  4.3 As a League, we should be advising all new League members about our Safeguarding Policy, how to access it, who is Welfare Officer and what to do if they have any safeguarding concerns. MT will address this asap. This information could also be on the 365 website.   1. ***Treasurer’s Report (Tony March)***   5.1 We have approx £3900 in the bank. Because of this strong position, we have been able to budget for a £600 deficit over the coming season. This roughly equates to £300 for junior development, £150 for women’s coaching subsidy and £150 for equipment purchase for NP’s work with juniors at Dallam.     1. ***Match Secretary’s Report (Martin Wakelin)***   6.1 No report but refer Item 11.   1. ***Junior Coordinator’s Report (Seamus Hanna)***   7.1 SH was not present, but see attached written report.   1. ***Veterans Officer’s Report (by Phil Swift as John Wood not present)***   8.1 PS reported that JW has entered one team into the Lancs and Cheshire Vet’s League this year. Last season, we finished 2nd in Div 2, but there were only 4 teams in that division. It’s not known if we will be promoted to Div 1.   1. ***ESTTA Report (Matt O’Flynn)***   9.1 MO was not present but see attached written report.  9.2 See also attached written submission by Norman Philbey.   1. ***Website Report (Chris Knowles)***   10.1 Nothing to report     1. ***Makeup of League, 2023-24***   11.1 16 teams have entered, with preferences for division expressed as follows:  **Div 1 (10 teams)**  Burton A, B, C  Natland A, B, C, D  Crook A, B  Dalton A  **Div 2 (6 teams)**  Burton D, E  Natland E, F  Crook C  Grayrigg    11.2 Natland have only 3 places in Div 1 by right (bearing in mind promotion and relegation last season). However, all present thought it better to have Nat D in Div 1, to minimise large discrepancies of ability in Div 2. This despite there being only 6 teams in Div 2. Consequently, it was agreed the divisions should be as above.  11.3 To give Div 2 teams a good number of fixtures, it was agreed that each team in Div 2 would play each other team 4 times. This would result in 20 fixtures in Div 2, 18 in Div 1.  11.4 MW can now produce the fixture list.   1. ***Dates for 2023-24***   12.1 MT has produced a draft calendar of dates which has been circulated. It is also attached herewith (V4, with minor revisions). PS confirmed the date for the Crook Vets Tournament is 18th February 2023.  12.2 MT highlighted a few key dates as follows:  12.3 Fixtures start 25 September 2023.  12.4 Divisional Shield matches this year will be played like the KO Cup, ie on home team home night and at their home venue. First round proper is w/c 6 November 2023, although a prelim round may be required.  12.5 The Annual Tournament is Sun 3 March 2024, subject to availability of Dallam School. MT to book.   1. ***AOB***   13.1 None.  The meeting closed at 20.50    ***Distribution***  All League members by email (not done yet)  365 Website. | ***Action***  ***TM, MT***  ***MT***  ***MT***  ***MT*** |
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***Junior Coordinator’s writted report (Seamus Hanna), 14 Sept 2023***

**1. Juniors**

The Juniors South winter league is due to commence with seven teams of two players in Division 1 (age 11-16) and four teams of 2 players in Division 2 (age 7-11). The Division 1 fixtures will be played at St Luke's, Slyne with Hest and Natland Village Hall and Division 2 at Dallam and Natland. The first fixture in Division 1 is on Tuesday 19 September 2023 and Division 2 starts on 3 October 2023 and both finish on 12 December 2023. Thanks are due to the organising group Norman Philbey, Martin Wakelin, Peter Leahy and Tony March for their time and effort in planning and organising the fixtures and who will oversee the fixtures, plus Paul Hines who will assist at St Luke's. The majority of those playing in Division 1 played last season and their return reflects the interest in and commitment to match play both by the juniors and their parents, without whose support this would not be possible. It has been agreed to fund the award of medals to the winning and runners-up teams in both Divisions. Fixtures, results, tables and averages will be published on the 365 website.

Another combined coaching and tournament day is being planned for juniors in the October half-term hopefully at Kirkby Stephen with Mike Sunderland currently checking hall availability and costs. Coaching will be by Dan O'Connell supported by our Level 1 coaches and other league members.

**2. Potential for a Division 3 League**

Please find attached draft proposal \* from Mike Sunderland and myself and it is almost certainly too late for you to issue this today ahead of the meeting. I hope you or Peter might bring this up at the meeting and if thought appropriate the document could then be circulated. If not, then perhaps it can go on the agenda for the next League Management of Council meeting so this can be discussed.

NB This Div 3 proposal was produced in response to the League Management Committee asking me to contact Mike to see whether they would be able to raise a team for Div 2. Mike is unable to do that at present due to the reason set out in the proposal and this led to the proposal.

I visited the Kendal Leisure Centre Monday night session on 4 September 2023 to explain to their members what is involved and to try to encourage them to join the league, either in Division 2 or if a Division 3 was established. Unfortunately, there was no interest and Louise Braithwaite confirmed at our monthly friendly match last Friday that they do not wish to join Division 2 and are reluctant to travel during the winter nights for Division 3 matches. I suggested a possible spring league or perhaps one day tournament or KO competition as ways to test their interest, but received no immediate response and will work with Mike to see if we can do something for those not currently playing in the league to attract them to the idea of doing so.

The Management Committee asked me to see if those at Cowan Bridge might also want to field a team in Division 2. However, one of their players who also plays at Kendal Leisure Centre was quite emphatic that they play socially and would not be interested in playing in the league.

\* See Appendix A to these minutes.

***ESTTA Written Report (Matt O’Flynn), 12 sept 2023***

Please accept my apologies for the meeting this Thursday. Can I update you and the meeting on the situation with Cumbria Schools. Last season both CSTTA tournaments went ahead. The Team competition was held at St Bernard's School, Barrow at the end of November. The school does not charge us for this event as it sees it as a school competition. Milnthorpe Primary, Dallam, Appleby and Kirkby Stephen took part as well as schools from Whitehaven, Ulverston and Barrow.

The Individual Tournament was held at Kirkby Stephen Grammar School once again. Mike Sunderland was able to make sure that there was a very reasonable charge for the hire. Less than the previous year in fact. The above schools were again represented with Queen Katherine and Kendal College also having  players.

Teams and Individuals went forward to the National stages and Finals of both competitions with Sophie Ackred earning a call up to the English Senior Schools' team.

Both events were very successful - the team event perhaps a little too well supported!

It was recorded in the minutes last year that I had reported that the Association was in financial difficulty - that wasn't completely accurate but what I did report was that we would not be able to afford to stage the Individual event at a venue such as KSGS in future as the cost was too high for us.

We had a review and made the following changes. First we brought in an Affiliation Fee for schools to become members of CSTTA, which we set at £20. We also increased the Individual Entry Fee for the Tournament. Together with the negotiated hire cost of KSGS we were able to run as usual last season.

Barrow League kindly covered the cost of Affiliation for all the schools in Barrow and Ulverston and also donated new permanent trophies for the Team competitions. We also received some private donations from individuals.

I envisage that we will be able to stage both of our events this season as we have done in previous years. We will continue to look at ways of ensuring that CSTTA remains sustainable and provides the unique experiences and opportunities for Cumbria school children to play table tennis.

We have not finalised dates for the events yet but they will be end of November for Team and end of January for Singles.

***Written Submission by Norman Phibey, 14 Sept 2023***

If Matt O’Flynn is there I would like to put on record my appreciation for the introduction of trophies for the winners of the Cumbria schools team events last season.

Also I’d like to make a plea that the singles event winners and runners-up be presented with their awards on the day.

I see no necessity for getting their names engraved and them being denied their award for 5 months as was the case in both 2022 and 2023. The delay leads to anxious children and parents asking me and others numerous times why it is taking so long.

All KDTTL awards in tournaments, for keeps, are given on the day. The trophy itself says what it has been presented for. No need for names to be added but fine if parents do so later.

***Appendix A. Proposal to revive a League Division 3 (Seamus Hanna and Mike Sunderland) 8 Sept 2023***

**1.Context**

Division 2 of the K&DTTL currently contains a wide range of playing ability in the current seven teams:

-Two to three teams are usually at the top of the Division fighting to win the league and gain promotion and be competent to play in Division 1 and substantially better than the remaining teams.

-Two teams generally finishing in the middle positions and with a large points difference gap between them and the top and bottom teams.

- Two teams lagging some considerable distance behind in terms of both points difference and current ability to win individual 5 set games and overall matches.

The factors for this are quite clear, the teams at the top and middle of the league inevitably have more experienced and better players. (Many who have played in Div 1) and those at the bottom as new entrants joining a club as returners or improvers and also juniors starting out in the adult league. The first season can be quite demoralising for the lower teams due to the lack of ability to win games and matches and often suffering heavy crushing defeats. These lower placed teams require considerable mental toughness to face inevitable regular defeats. Whilst this can be off-set by measuring individual performance and development against small incremental gains in terms of points accrued in individual sets/matches and pushing to actually win games, the players in these teams (depending on ability and with some exceptions) take at least a season or two to make real progress.

Although it can be argued that the nature of stepping up from social table tennis to playing in a league means defeat whilst the individual adjusts to the competition, it weakens the overall standard and competitiveness of this league, especially when the placings can be easily predicted. It can also have a detrimental impact on players, particularly on new entrant juniors, who should especially be encouraged into and remaining playing in the league. Whilst the more seasoned and better players inevitably don’t give any quarter in terms of wanting to win, the expectation of easy wins does nothing for either them or the weaker players. Burton, Crook and Natland have had new entrant players in their Division 2 teams in the past few seasons. Continuing with this disparity is not sustainable and needs to be addressed.

Social table tennis is being played weekly at Kirkby Stephen - adults and juniors, Warcop (located between Kirkby Stephen and Appleby - adults and juniors, Kendal Lesiure Centre – adults, and beginning this year at Cowan Bridge - adults. Coaching is available at Kirkby Stephen and Natland to help improve players and they can progress to play in the league at Natland, but this is currently not the case at Kirkby Stephen due to no league teams.

To try to help players make the transition from returner/improver to being a league player if they wish, friendly but competitive matches took place last season between Natland, Kendal Lesiure Centre (monthly Friday evenings singles + doubles) and between Natland and Kirkby Stephen/ Warcop. Kirkby Stephen also hosted a doubles tournament with their players and Natland. In the past, Kendal Lesiure Centre have played Friendlies against Warcop. The purpose of the friendly matches is to give players the opportunity to play against others of a similar standard in a competetive, but relaxed environment. They have been able to test out their abilities and improve their match play without the pressure of league points at stake, and also see if playing in a league would suit them. This season, Natland will have two adults progressing from that group and three juniors (one who played in the friendlies) to play in Division 2 for the first time.

**2.Proposal**

Due to small number of teams currently in Division 2, it would be difficult to re-organise or split this or introduce a handicap system to make games more competetive. Therefore, establishing a Division 3 as a development league and feeder to Division 2 could be considered. This would follow the K&DTTL rules, code of conduct, etc but perhaps be less rigid in terms of team structure and allowing players to transfer from one club team to another if there were shortages. It is about providing an opportunity for match play for those who would not normally enter the league and also revive a team(s) from Kirby Stephen and perhaps new ones from Warcop and Kendal Leisure Centre (who despite being invited each year, have so far not joined Division 2).

To generate sufficient teams to make a viable small Division 3, two-person teams would be preferable with, say, two teams from each club entered, thus easier to filed and creating more teams than with three people. Matches would comprise two singles and one doubles best of 5-sets per fixture thus shorter (1 hour), but arranged so that a club’s A + B teams played against their opponents A+B teams on the same night (2 hours playing duration). This would mean an earlier finish for juniors especially if they play only in the earlier of the two fixtures that night. Teams would play fortnightly/every three weeks so not onerous in terms of time commitment. This arrangement would also reduce travel costs with the four players travelling together, or if one player was not available then two from three players could play in both fixtures. Scorecards would be completed and transferred to the 365 website. Fixtures would be on a home and away basis and played on nights to best suit the clubs and to reduce venue hire costs some could be played whilst Div 1 or 2 matches are being played if sufficient space exists, etc. KO cup and/or Divisional Shield are also possible.

A pilot is proposed for this 2023-24 season to test out interest, playing format, etc and due to organising this and the relatively small number of fixtures, would start later than the other two Divisions. For this pilot it is preferable that it be an informal rather than formal league thus players would not to have to pay for TTEngland compete membership. It would also be helpful if the league fees were reduced for this pilot so that costs are not onerous or of-putting for players. In effect, it would be made as easy and as affordable as possible for them to play. The pilot would be formally reviewed and capture players views and any areas requiring improvement, etc.

This idea is at present being developed jointly by Natland and Kirkby Stephen, but we would encourage other teams, such as Burton and Crook who may have players who would want to play in this Divison 3 to join. Support from the K&DTTL Council would be imperative to ensure new players continue to enter the league and play competitive table tennis at the appropriate level.

Seamus Hanna and Mike Sunderland

8 September 2023