

**Avon Tennis CIO: AGM  
Chair's Report****27 January 2022****Introduction**

By way of introductions, I am joined here by Tony Barker, President, Clive Sampson, Secretary, Dayrell McArthur, Treasurer, Ian Alexander, LTA Councillor, and the other Executive committee members, Carol Weeks, Maggie Tyrell, Mandy Stonier, Chair of the TDG, Jane Woodruff, Chair of the League Committee, Debbie Curtis, the County Administrator. We also have Plum Laws who does our social media, Ollie Bendall the County Performance Coach for the juniors and Kay Gilbert, Workforce Development. Unfortunately both Claire Treen, County Safeguarding Officer and Liz Semple, our Accountant, are unable to be here due to prior commitments. I will take this opportunity, at the outset, to express my enormous gratitude to all these people, employed and volunteers, for their support to me and for their indefatigable work for tennis in the County throughout this past year. You are each remarkable within your specific sphere of activity. Avon Tennis would not be the recognised centre of excellence that it is without your efforts. Thank you.

I would specifically like to recognise the enormous amount that Ian Alexander does for the County. He is not only our LTA Councillor, and we know how important he is on LTA workstreams at the national level, particularly regarding safeguarding, but for the County he manages the grant, loans and bursary schemes, as well as so much more behind the scenes to keep us on track. A huge thank you to you, Ian.

**Awards**

The work of individuals in the County does not go unnoticed by the LTA and we were all delighted when the David Rawlinson, President of the LTA awarded the LTA Meritorious Award to Clive Sampson in recognition of his remarkable work for Avon Tennis, including being County Secretary and an LTA Councillor over a period of some 20 years. Congratulations once again, Clive, on your much merited Award. The Award was presented by Sandi Procter, Deputy President of the LTA, when she attended a meeting of the Avon Tennis Executive committee in May of this year. We were delighted to have her attend the meeting as it stimulated a useful two-way discussion around a number of topical issues.

**Grants and Bursaries**

As I hope you all know, the County operates schemes to support clubs and venues with loans for improvements to tennis facilities, and also grants for outreach work. Last year we agreed one loan which was actually taken in this current financial year. Other potential requests are in the pipeline. Fewer grants were sought for outreach projects, probably because of Covid-19 pressures on schools.

Notwithstanding the difficult position of the County's finances, the decision was made at the start of the year to continue to support the development of tennis in the County. This

applies equally to our Coaches, as to our clubs and venues. The County Coach Bursary scheme supports Level 1, 2 and 3 coach qualifications.

In addition, this year the County is formalising a procedure to consider applications for support for other levels and categories of coach training, as well as courses for Officials where there is a recognised need within the County. More details will be advised in the coming months.

We encourage all clubs, venues and coaches to make sure that they are aware of all the support that is available, including the various resources available on the LTA website. The details of support from Avon Tennis are on the County website, but please also talk to the officials here this evening if your club might be interested.

### **Club and Venue Forums**

Avon's Tennis Development Group are once again to be thanked for their work in keeping our clubs and venues up to date and connected, through the various online Forums held throughout the year. The feedback remained very positive, that the sessions were informative, interactive and social! You have given us food for thought for more issue focussed sessions, and Mandy and her team remain open to further ideas on what you and your club would find most useful.

Speaking of the TDG, its co-Chair Andy Trott stood down in the autumn due to the pressure of his University job. Andy has been an enthusiastic and effective Chair and co-Chair of the group and his inspiration and initiatives will be missed. The TDG however, remains successfully led by Mandy, thank you both.

### **Coaches Forums**

Kay Gilbert took on the role of County Workforce Liaison with the LTA. She has made huge strides in connecting Club Main Coaches through WhatsApp groups, and also liaised with the Regional LTA Workforce Manager to deliver two Coach Forums during 2021. Both attracted good attendance numbers and positive feedback, so thank you, Kay. Kay also keeps in close touch with Bath University the Regional Coach Development Centre to ensure that their programme of courses is well publicised through Avon Tennis social media.

### **Competitions**

**League:** The 2021 Avon Tennis Summer league ran successfully this season, and the winter and seniors are due to be completed this March. Despite the pandemic, clubs embraced the leagues with enthusiasm and entry numbers did not suffer. Some clubs have struggled with members being off with covid or isolating, but in general they managed to get teams out. Feedback was very positive with players saying how good it was to be back playing competitive tennis.

**Competitions:** The Bristol and Bath Tournament was cancelled in the Spring, but the Avon Championships ran in August, with a good turnout. Thank you Maggie for the work you do for all the County competitions.

**Schools Competition:** Thanks to Carol's persistent efforts the Schools' competition ran for the first time in several years, most successfully, over two weekends in May and June, hosted by Clifton College.

### **County Cup**

Except for the 18 and under event, a full programme of County Cup competitions was held, from the U9s, through the Open, to the 35+ and Seniors. My thanks go to the County Captains, and especially those from the Open team upwards, who are volunteers. I would also like to thank Ollie and Debbie for their persistence in organisation team selection, squad training and competition weekends against a persistently covid uncertain backdrop. Notable County Cup results were the girls U9 who won their Regional competition and performed well in the nationals. The Women's Open Summer County Cup team who won their group, gaining them promotion to Division 2. The Men's Summer County Cup Open team also won their group, so they will progress to play in Division 5. The men had two remarkable individual results- Joe Leather who won all 15 rubbers, the maximum number of rubbers possible, and Matthew Doe who won all 14 of the rubbers he played! Our congratulations to them both.

News hot off the press, but still confidential, I am delighted to be able to report that Avon finished in 7<sup>th</sup> position, jointly with Lancashire, in the County Cup Race this year, thus equalling our highest ever position last gained in 2018.

We should also not forget those Seniors who represented Avon at various age group levels, and thank you to Tony Barker for coordinating with the various team captains.

### **Finance**

Although Wimbledon allowed spectators on an increasing scale in 2021, it was too late to allow counties to take advantage of any opportunities for sponsorship or partnership arrangements. The result is that, for the second year running, the County has run at a significant operational loss, of the order of £25,000. This is not a financially sustainable situation so, whilst we are more optimistic about Wimbledon this year, the changing ticketing arrangements still make it more difficult for the Counties to secure beneficial partnerships. We have therefore been actively exploring alternative source of funding, and sponsorship in particular.

In addition, the LTA, recognising that most Counties are in similar financial circumstances to Avon, if not worse, are liaising with counties about a new funding model. This is likely to mean tying into delivering a core level of LTA initiatives so that there is a consistent offering across the country. In return there will be funding made available. It is early days, and the scheme will not come into effect until 2023, so we must still find alternative ways to fund tennis activities this coming year if we are to continue to support our current programme.

## **Governance Reviews**

The LTA are undergoing an internal governance review, whilst also encouraging and assisting counties to carry out their own review of governance. In fact, Avon Tennis, having just gone through the process of achieving charitable status, is well ahead on this because of the governance involved to becoming a CIO.

Important strategic decisions need to be made foretelling considerable change for counties over the next year or so and, partly for this reason, I have decided that this should be my last AGM as Chair of Avon Tennis. I will stand down at a suitable time, but no later than June 2022, and at this meeting if members so wish. It has been a great honour to be Chair of Avon Tennis, I have enjoyed my time, mainly because of the terrific, dedicated and energetic team around me.

## **'Big Night Out'**

But I cannot close without mentioning the fantastically successful BNO finally held in December. The team who put it together showcased Avon Tennis at its best, and the evening was just what everyone needed, pure fun. Even the serious part of trophy and award presentations was given the light hearted treatment by the MC. It was a great opportunity to present many overdue awards - LTA 2020 County and Regional winners, 'Unsung Hero' awards and County Colours. Congratulations to all the worthy winners, and thank you to Head of Region, Sharon Heeley and LTA Councillor and Board Member, Lesley Cundy for coming to present the awards.

In summary, whilst it has not been an easy year, at least tennis has been played - socially, the Leagues and competitions. Whilst 2022 has not got off to the start we would have wanted, we must and will remain positive and excited about the future, which is so full of opportunities.

Thank you  
Kathy Curling  
Chair Avon Tennis