

Written evidence submitted by The LTA

SUMMARY

The LTA is the governing body of tennis in Britain. Our vision is ‘Tennis opened up’, and our mission is to grow tennis by making it relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable.

Tennis has a significant positive impact on the health and wellbeing of players. Independent research commissioned by the LTA into the economic and social impact of tennis found a £780m health and wellbeing value to the population of tennis players.

In the 12 months to July 2022 4 million adults in Britain play tennis annually, almost 1.7 million adults play tennis monthly, and 600,000 children play tennis weekly. Around 40% of the annual tennis player base is female. Of monthly tennis players, 20% are from a diverse ethnic background and 18% are have a disability or long term health condition. While tennis is one of the most equal sports, we know there is still more to do, including to engage more people from lower socio-economic groups in the sport.

Alongside the UK Government we are also overseeing an investment of £30million to renovate park tennis courts across Britain and make them more accessible for all through our PARKS INVESTMENT FUND. Over the next two years, the LTA will be supporting local authorities to help ensure park facilities are sustainable for the future and drive increased participation in the sport. The Parks Investment Fund will provide capital investment for resurfacing, repainting and fence repairs at existing facilities, for those facilities that are in the worst condition. We will be investing in digital infrastructure such as funding installation of gate access systems and supporting the implementation of online booking across all park tennis facilities to make it easier to find and book a court, which will also help evidence usage and the outcomes of this investment. The LTA will also be providing tennis products, programmes and activities, including tennis for free, to drive increased participation at park venues.

Reducing inequalities is at the very core of our vision of “tennis opened up”. The LTA is committed to reducing inequalities and increasing participation through programmes including LTA SERVES, the LTA OPEN COURT disability tennis programme, LTA YOUTH, and LTA YOUTH SCHOOLS. Earlier this year we published our SHE RALLIES ambition, recognising that tennis has led the way in women’s sport, but also setting out our aim to be a truly gender equal sport in every single respect. These programmes are made possible through Sport England providing expertise, support and an enhanced investment of £10.2m of government and National Lottery funding to the LTA to help open up tennis for more people. This partnership is key to co-delivering the ambitions of Sport England’s 10-year Uniting the Movement strategy, of which the vision of “tennis opened up” is aligned.

The UK Government also has a role to play in reducing inequalities and increasing participation. Building on the welcome long-term commitment for the sector that has been set out in Sport England’s Uniting the Movement strategy, to both increase and address ongoing inequalities in participation, the LTA believes delivery of genuine cross-Governmental working is critical, realising one of the central ambitions of Sporting Future. This could be delivered through introduction of a cross-departmental taskforce on sport, physical activity and wellbeing, driven by the centre of Government.

In addition, the following areas need to be addressed by Government:

1. Immediate action to support sport through the energy / cost of living crisis. This could include:

- a. An in-year grant to local authorities and an increase to the local government settlement from 2023/24, ring-fenced to protect public leisure facilities.
- b. A review of financial and regulatory arrangements for participation in sport, and for community sports venues, to help support venues and reduce the cost of participation in sporting activity:

VAT on coaching activity to be zero rated (not exempt) rather than standard rated.

VAT on competition entry fees to be zero rated

Reduction in VAT on energy bills for all community sports facilities to 5%

Removal of VAT on sports equipment

Removal of business rates for community sports facilities.

- c. A rapid upscale in support for decarbonised heat generation options.

2. A priority focus on children and young people and strategic and transformational change in the place of sport, PE and physical activity, with a big, bold commitment and target of an hour a day of sport and physical activity for every child, both within and outside the school day, in line with the Chief Medical Officers' guidance. This should be supported by:

- a. A National Curriculum requirement for a minimum number of hours of sport and physical activity. This could include both curricular PE and extra-curricular sport. At present, the minimum requirement only exists as guidance from the Department for Education.
- b. A long-term funding commitment for the PE and school sport premium, and for School Games Organisers, to give existing workforce certainty of provision.
- c. Improved Ofsted inspection of what is delivered in schools, to ensure quality provision of PE.
- d. Creation of a national physical literacy framework to ensure every child that leaves primary school has basic fundamental movement skills.
- e. Improved training for workforce, including delivery of specialised PE teachers in every primary school and sporting leadership roles in secondary schools.

3. Ongoing investment in sporting infrastructure through:

- a. Building on the UK Government and LTA Parks Investment Fund and the multi-sport investment through the Football Foundation, particularly to help improve energy efficiency and support net zero transition, to help the LTA realise its ambition to build a further 96 community indoor tennis centres across Britain and reach 400 Padel tennis courts by 2023

- b. Encouraging innovation around delivery of facility funding, including exploration of combining public and private funding streams.

One opportunity to open up an additional stream of funding for grassroots sport which would help keep the nation active and would be cost neutral to HM Treasury would be for Government to explore the greater freedom that the UK has with respect to sports betting rights, now the UK has left the EU. There is an opportunity to legislate to restore sports betting rights to UK law, resetting the relationship between sport and gambling so that sporting bodies receive payment for use of our data in betting services, which could be invested back into grassroots sport.

THE LTA

The LTA is the national governing body for tennis in Britain, and as a not-for-profit organisation, our role is to govern and grow tennis in Britain, from grassroots participation through to the professional game.

Millions of people take part in tennis in Britain every year, including as players, coaches, volunteers and officials. Tennis delivers physical and mental health benefits and helps establish important life skills, regardless of age, ability or background, as well as helping to tackle societal issues like loneliness and obesity. When our top British players experience success at major events on home soil and around the world, the country comes together as fans and the next generation are inspired to pick up a racket.

The LTA's vision is to open up tennis and these benefits to more people and places across the country by making it more relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable to anyone, from players of all abilities and backgrounds to its many millions of fans.

PARTICIPATION IN TENNIS

Yearly adult participation in tennis has recently passed the **4 million mark** for the first time in over four years, with almost **1.7 million** adults playing tennis monthly. Participation amongst children is also at the highest level we have seen since we started tracking in early 2020, with c.**600,000** children playing tennis weekly.

We are committed to annually publishing the diversity composition of the people playing, working and volunteering in, and watching our sport, using the census as a baseline to carry out a Red/Amber/Green rating. The latest data is available on page 32 of our [LTA Inclusion Strategy 2021-23](#):

- The 2011 census reported that 50.9% of the population was female, 14% was from a diverse ethnic background and 18% had a long-term health problem or disability (including related to age) that limited their day-to-day activities.
- As of May 2021:
 - 49% of the players on our performance pathway were female (green), 26% were from a diverse ethnic background (green) and 20% were disabled (green).
 - 30% of monthly players were female (red) 20% were from a diverse ethnic background (green) and 18% were disabled (green)



- 40% of yearly players were female (green), 16% were from a diverse ethnic background (green) and 11% are disabled (red).

Data from the Sport England Active Lives survey indicates that there are fewer women than men who are regularly active and the same trend is reflected in tennis. Women make up around 40% of the annual tennis player base, but this drops to 30% in competition. There are also less girls competing than boys, with girls comprising around 30% of competitors in formal competitions, whilst in recreational competition girls account for 46% of competitors.

Amongst both children and adults, tennis participation is lower amongst lower socio-economic groups. For instance, in 2021 our children participation tracker found the proportion of children playing tennis each year is 21% higher among upper than lower socio-economic groups.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TENNIS

The health and wellbeing benefits of regular sport and physical activity are well established. Sport England commissioned research by the Sport Industry Research Centre found that every £1 spent on community sport and physical activity, a return on investment (ROI) of £3.91 was created for individuals and society. Furthermore, the combined economic and social value (SROI) of taking part in community sport and physical activity in England in 2017/2018 was £85.5 billion. Investment in sport gives a good return and tennis is no different.

The prevention of serious physical and mental health conditions through physical activity alone has a value of £9.5bn, according to the Sport England research. Independent research commissioned by the LTA found that the wellbeing benefits of playing tennis are ca. £2,000 per person, which results in £780m health and wellbeing value to the population of tennis players. There is evidence (consistent with what is found for all sports) that the health and wellbeing benefits of tennis are significantly more positive for those from lower socio-economic groups.

The data also shows that not only are the health and wellbeing outcomes of tennis as good as other sports, but rates of volunteering are better for tennis players compared to those who do other sports. People who volunteer in sport tend to be happier, they often feel a sense of pride and say that their life has a sense of purpose. Volunteering alone adds another £85m to the social and economic value of tennis.

IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC

COVID-19 has presented the greatest challenge to sport and the way it operates in modern times. However, the pandemic has also clearly illustrated the central role and place of sport in society in the UK, and the value that it delivers to communities across the country. Government therefore needs to place sport at the heart of the nation's recovery, and the refresh of the Sporting Future Strategy and the School Sport and Physical Activity Action Plan offer an opportunity to do so.

Participation levels in sport and physical activity among children were already concerning prior to the pandemic, but young people have been particularly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with only 45% of children meeting the Chief Medical Officer's recommendation of an hour a day of sport and physical activity¹. As the nation rebuilds and emerges from restrictions, it is vital that access to participation in sport for children is prioritised.



The pandemic had a significant impact on the venues, organisations and workforce that deliver tennis in Britain and who help to form the fabric of communities across the country. Restrictions on sporting activity at various times throughout 2020 and 2021 significantly impacted revenue for these venues and organisations, eating away at their reserves and leaving them far more vulnerable to further economic shocks than before.

REDUCING INEQUALITIES AND INCREASING PARTICIPATION

‘Tennis Opened Up’ is a vision with inclusion at its heart. We want tennis to be relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable for anyone and tackling inequalities within our sport is key to achieving that.

The LTA is taking action...

The LTA is committed to achieving “Tennis Opened Up” and is implementing a comprehensive package of actions to reduce inequalities within tennis and wider society, and increase tennis participation. These programmes are made possible through Sport England providing expertise, support and an enhanced investment of £10.2m of government and National Lottery funding to the LTA to help open up tennis for more people. This partnership is key to co-delivering the ambitions of Sport England’s 10-year Uniting the Movement strategy, of which the vision of “tennis opened up” is aligned.

Through the PARKS INVESTMENT FUND, the UK Government is investing £22million and the LTA, via the LTA Tennis Foundation, is investing £8.5million in bringing public park tennis courts in poor or unplayable condition back to life for the benefit of their local community. In England, Scotland and Wales, in 2021, over 1.4 million adults played tennis in parks. 33% of park court players were C2DE and 43% were female. Currently 45% of park courts are categorised as being in poor, very poor or unplayable condition, preventing many from picking up a racket and getting active, and critically, half of unplayable venues are in the most socially deprived areas of the country. Moreover, the LTA’s insight shows that one of the biggest barriers to participation is finding, booking and accessing a court, group activity, or finding someone to play with. Over the next two years, the LTA will be supporting local authorities on their park tennis facilities through:

- Supporting implementation of online booking including through the LTA’s digital platform, LTA rally, to help make it far easier for participants to find and book a court and tennis activity
- Investment in digital infrastructure including funding installation of gate access systems
- Capital investment for resurfacing, repainting and fence repairs at existing facilities, for those facilities that are in the worst condition.
- A range of studies and best practice support around sustainable operating models for park tennis facilities
- Tennis products, programmes and activities, including tennis for free, to drive increased participation at park venues.

LTA YOUTH is the LTA’s junior programme, created to help many more children enjoy the benefits of playing and staying in tennis, whatever their age, gender, ability, disability or background. It has

¹ <https://www.sportengland.org/news/childrens-activity-levels-down-many-embrace-new-opportunities>

been developed to be fun, inclusive and competitive, with specially designed progressive coaching and content that will help develop children aged 4-18 as both players and people.

One element of this is the LTA YOUTH SCHOOLS programme, through which the LTA provides free teacher training and resources for schools, to help more children be active through tennis. Each school that completes training receives a £250 voucher from the LTA for 10 hours of LTA Accredited coaching or a bag of equipment. The option to redeem coaching time is designed to establish links between schools, and local clubs or venues.

LTA SERVES is a programme that is geared to help some of those who are most likely to be impacted by the cost of living crisis, providing opportunities for communities to get involved in tennis sessions across a range of venues such as Community Centres, Youth Clubs, Mosques, Gurdwaras, Mandirs, Church Halls, Housing Associations. The LTA is continuing to work to scale the programme, which has a focus on areas of highest social deprivation. The programme currently has 400 venues and 14,000 monthly participants of which 45% are from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

The LTA's OPEN COURT programme enables people with a disability or long-term health condition to pick up a racket and play tennis. In 2020, around 15,000 disabled people played tennis on a monthly basis across the 500 venues involved. Almost 60% of monthly participants are players with a learning disability, with the remainder including wheelchair tennis players, visually impaired players and deaf or hearing-impaired players. As part of the programme, the LTA supplies venues with adaptive equipment, training and resources to increase opportunities for disabled people to get involved in tennis, as well as dedicated support and advice from the LTA team.

Supporting disability-specific participation activity is just one strand of the LTA's work to make the health and social benefits of the sport open to disabled people. It sits alongside activity to make tennis more inclusive, supporting venues and coaches to open their doors and make tennis welcoming to disabled people whether they want to play, volunteer or coach.

Though our SHE RALLIES initiative, the LTA is also committed to ensuring tennis continues to lead the way for women's sport and women in sport. She Rallies represents our ambition to be a truly gender equal sport in every single respect.. The comprehensive plans we are putting in place as part of She Rallies touch every aspect of our sport, but with a focus on taking action in the key areas where it is most needed, and we know we can make a difference for women and girls in tennis - participation, workforce and visibility:

- a. PARTICIPATION: Targeted activity to drive increased participation in tennis among women and girls, with a focus on key age groups.
- b. WORKFORCE: Provide the support and opportunities needed for more females to join the tennis workforce, and supporting the whole workforce to better understand and cater for female needs
- c. VISIBILITY: Inspiring women and girls through increased female representation, driving greater visibility of women's tennis reflective of its status as a leading women's sport.

The LTA's drive to become a gender balanced sport is a key part of what we are doing to transform tennis in Britain. It marks a major step forward in delivering against the commitments we made in our inclusion strategy for tennis in Britain and is fundamental to our plans to achieve our overall vision to open tennis up to anyone with an interest.

But tennis is facing challenges...



Impact of energy crisis

Tennis venues, particularly clubs and indoor facilities, are facing huge challenges with the increase in energy prices that we are seeing across the country. In many cases, the LTA is concerned that there could be a threat to the continued operation of facilities, such is the level of financial pressure they are facing.

The LTA has around 10,000 registered venues across Britain, including clubs, indoor centres, commercial venues, parks, educational facilities and other community facilities. All venues, and the participants who use them, are facing challenges as a result of increasing costs for energy and living. However, larger venues with indoor tennis provision, including larger clubs and the network of community indoor tennis centres that the LTA supports, which are predominantly owned by local authorities and operated by leisure trusts, are facing the most significant challenges.

A recent survey of clubs by the LTA found that venues are facing an average increase in energy costs of 70% across July and August. Anecdotally, we have evidence of bills rising by up to 200%. In August 75% of venues responding to the LTA are concerned about their energy costs in the future, with larger venues particularly worried about how costs may impact them.

Many venues have already taken every cost cutting and energy saving measure available to them, such as installation of solar panels, LED lighting, and PIR motion sensors. As part of the LTA's [Environmental Sustainability Plan](#), the LTA is developing detailed guidance for venues on practical steps that they can take to reduce their energy usage and save money, alongside a number of webinars for venues, to provide support through this difficult period. But given the scale of energy cost increases, there is only so far this support will help.

When costs rise, venues generally must pass the cost on to participants or face closure. Some venues the LTA has spoken to are considering closing for part of the week to reduce costs or even moving away from providing tennis completely. However, increasing membership or pay and play fees will naturally impact those who are least able to participate in sport, exacerbating inequalities in participation. Sport England's annual Active Lives Survey identifies that people in lower socio-economic groups (LSEGs) are the most likely to be inactive (33%) and the least likely to be active (54%).²

As household budgets are squeezed, activity levels and participation in sport tends to fall. London Sport found that 8 in 10 lower-income families are already being less active as a result of financial constraints. 36% of adults across the UK say the cost of living is now affecting their lives, with 27% saying they'd also cut back on physical activity and sport due to escalating costs³.

Tennis venues were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and in most cases have exhausted any reserves that they held, with many in significant debt. The majority of tennis venues are not business ratepayers and so do not have a rateable value, meaning that they did not benefit from much of the Government's support, aside from the furlough scheme and LTA / Sport England support⁴.

Tennis and all sport facilities need assistance to stay open and accessible, particularly as inflation running at 10.1% will reduce purchasing power of fixed budgets, such as Sport England grants.

² <https://www.sportengland.org/research-and-data/research/lower-socio-economic-groups>

³ <https://news.london-sport.org/pressreleases/ten-years-on-from-london-2012-nearly-half-of-londoners-forced-to-cut-back-on-exercise-as-cost-of-living-crisis-bites-3194621>

⁴ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/lta-calls-for-government-help-grassroots-tennis-recover-from-covid-19-pandemic-wh6xh2dix>

The increase in interest rates will also have a significant effect on the feasibility the LTA Tennis Foundation's facility loan scheme, which provides interest free loans from £25,000 up to £250,000 for low-cost indoor structures and floodlights. The fund enables communities to grow participation by accessing all year-round facilities, but with the sharp increase in interest rates the cost to the LTA of providing interest free loans has significantly increased.

Long-term challenges

A longer-term challenge faced by tennis in Britain is that the stock of facilities, and particularly community accessible indoor facilities, across the country is ageing, with renovations overdue and cash-strapped Local Authorities unable to invest the required funds to ensure that facilities can operate sustainably for the future.

There also remains a lack of community accessible indoor facilities, being a country, which averages 133 days of rain or snow, this results in tennis participation becoming unnecessarily seasonal. Local, affordable, modern facilities are key to driving year-round participation and reducing inequalities. From mapping existing provision and utilising demographic data, the LTA has identified 96 locations across Britain which are currently lacking provision of community indoor tennis facilities, but where there would be demand. However, given the financial pressures which the pandemic and cost of living crisis have entailed,

Currently, 55.4% of children and young people do not meet the Chief Medical Officer guidelines of taking part in sport and physical activity for an average of 60 minutes or more every day⁵. The pandemic also had a significant impact on activity levels and the proportion of active children and young people remains 2.2% down compared to pre-pandemic, meaning there were 94,000 fewer active children and young people. Even prior to the pandemic, the much-needed increase in the number of active children has been slow or static. While 600,000 children are playing tennis weekly, we know that this number needs to increase, and want to play our role in helping to improve activity levels, and the physical and mental health and wellbeing of young people.

The UK Government's role in tackling inequalities and increasing participation...

In light of the energy and cost of living crises, tennis clubs and facilities are facing a serious and immediate challenge which threatens their future. Many of them are faced with the choice of closing or passing on the cost to participants during a cost-of-living crisis, which could further exacerbate inequalities and render tennis inaccessible for many. Government intervention is needed so that progress made during the post-covid recovery is not lost in the face of another crisis.

1. The UK Government needs to take immediate action to support sport through the energy / cost of living crisis including:

- a. An in-year grant to local authorities and an increase to the local government settlement from 2023/24, ring-fenced to protect public leisure facilities.
- b. A review of financial and regulatory arrangements for participation in sport, and for community sports venues, to help support venues and reduce the cost of participation in sporting activity:

VAT on coaching activity to be zero rated (not exempt) rather than standard rated.

⁵ [PowerPoint Presentation \(sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](https://www.sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com)

VAT on competition entry fees to be zero rated
Reduction in VAT on energy bills for all community sports facilities to 5%
Removal of VAT on sports equipment

Removal of business rates for community sports facilities.

- c. A rapid upscale in support for decarbonised heat generation options.

In the longer term, to reduce inequalities and give every child the best possible start, we believe there is a need for strategic and transformational change in the place of sport, PE and physical activity, both within and outside the school day. Given the impact of the Covid pandemic on the experience and development of children and young people, it is now more important than ever to update and improve the School Sport and Physical Activity Action Plan.

- 2. There must be a priority focus on children and young people and strategic and transformational change in the place of sport, PE and physical activity**, with a big, bold commitment and target of an hour a day of sport and physical activity for every child, both within and outside the school day, in line with the Chief Medical Officers' guidance. This should be supported by:

- a. A National Curriculum requirement for a minimum number of hours of sport and physical activity. This could include both curricular PE and extra-curricular sport. At present, the minimum requirement only exists as guidance from the Department for Education.
- b. A long-term funding commitment for the PE and school sport premium, and for School Games Organisers, to give existing workforce certainty of provision.
- c. Improved Ofsted inspection of what is delivered in schools, to ensure quality provision of PE.
- d. Creation of a national physical literacy framework to ensure every child that leaves primary school has basic fundamental movement skills.
- e. Improved training for workforce, including delivery of specialised PE teachers in every primary school and sporting leadership roles in secondary schools.

Access to local, affordable facilities is key to growing participation in tennis and ensuring that tennis is open and accessible for anyone. While work being done to bring public park tennis courts in poor or unplayable condition back to life for the benefit of their local community through the UK Government and LTA Parks Investment Fund, we know that access to indoor facilities is vital to transforming tennis from a summer sport to a year-round sport. The LTA has an ambition to build a further 96 community indoor tennis centres across Britain and reach 400 Padel tennis courts by 2023. These facilities will allow communities to access tennis regardless of the weather and drive year-round participation.

- 3. The UK Government should ensure ongoing investment in sporting infrastructure through:**



- a. Building on the UK Government and LTA Parks Investment Fund and the multi-sport investment through the Football Foundation, particularly to help improve energy efficiency and support net zero transition, to help the LTA realise its ambition to build a further 96 community indoor tennis centres across Britain and reach 400 Padel tennis courts by 2023
- b. Encouraging innovation around delivery of facility funding, including exploration of combining public and private funding streams.

One opportunity to open up an additional stream of funding for grassroots sport which would help keep the nation active and would be cost neutral to HM Treasury would be for Government to explore the greater freedom that the UK has with respect to sports betting rights, now the UK has left the EU. There is an opportunity to legislate to restore sports betting rights to UK law, resetting the relationship between sport and gambling so that sporting bodies receive payment for use of our data in betting services, which could be invested back into grassroots sport.

The UK Government's role to play in reducing inequalities and increasing participation is significant. There is more work to do in addition to the long-term commitment for the sector that have been set out in Sport England's Uniting the Movement strategy. To both increase and address ongoing inequalities in participation, the LTA believes delivery of genuine cross-Governmental working is critical, realising one of the central ambitions of Sporting Future. This could be delivered through the introduction of a cross-departmental taskforce on sport, physical activity and wellbeing, driven by the centre of Government.

September 2022