



31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **LTA STATEMENT on Russian and Belarusian players at events in 2023**

On 20<sup>th</sup> April 2022, the LTA announced its decision to ban all Russian and Belarusian players at its events. As stated then, we wanted to send ‘a clear signal to the Russian and Belarusian states that their actions in Ukraine are the subject of international condemnation’.

We continue to think that this was the right course of action and would like to thank all those who supported it.

A year on and the suffering of the people of Ukraine as a result of the war in their country continues unabated. Problems in tennis or sport more widely are insignificant by comparison.

However, our decision last year to ban Russian and Belarusian players from our tournaments led to significant penalties being imposed on us by both the ATP and WTA tours including the real prospect of the termination of our membership if we were to repeat the ban in 2023.

This would mean the cancellation of our professional tennis events at Queens, Eastbourne, Birmingham and Nottingham this year and indeed in the future.

We have consistently opposed these sanctions and remain deeply disappointed by the penalties imposed on us.

The effect on British tennis of the LTA being expelled from the tours would be very damaging and far reaching for the game in our country. The impact would be felt by the millions of fans that follow the sport, the grass roots of the game, including coaches and venues which rely on the events for visibility and to bring new players into the game, and of course professional British players.

Given this, and our responsibility as the national governing body of tennis in Britain, we have worked closely with the UK Government, ATP, WTA and ITF, alongside the All England Club, to find a solution for 2023. We would like to thank all parties for their constructive approach to these discussions.

Our position in support of the people of Ukraine remains unchanged in 2023 as does our concern around the Russian and Belarusian regimes deriving reputational and other benefits by seeking to associate themselves with players.

Never the less we are aware that Russian and Belarusian players have played on the tours as neutrals for the past year.

Taking these considerations together, we have agreed that all Russian and Belarusian players and support staff who wish to take part in our events in 2023 will be required to sign neutrality declarations. This is in line with the UK Government’s guidance and is an approach that has been used in other sports.

This new declaration will be in place at all LTA events from the start of the grass court season at Surbiton.

Compliance with the player neutrality declarations will be administered and enforced by the tours.

There will also be a zero-tolerance approach to any flags, symbols or other actions which support Russia, Belarus or the war from anyone in our venues, including players and spectators.

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#### **ABOUT THE LTA:**

*The LTA is the National Governing Body of tennis for Great Britain. We are here to govern and grow tennis, from grassroots participation through to the professional game. Our vision is "Tennis Opened Up" and we're on a mission to grow tennis by making it relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable. We work with schools, with volunteers, with coaches and with venues across the whole country. We also represent the interests of over one million Members, men and women, girls and boys, playing on more than 23,000 courts. The LTA runs and supports a network of 11,500 approved tournaments for players of all ages, the four corner-stones of which are the premier grass-court events leading up to The Championships, Wimbledon: the Rothesay Open Nottingham, the Rothesay Classic Birmingham, the cinch Championships (at The Queen's Club, London) and the Rothesay International Eastbourne. For further information about the LTA and tennis in Britain, visit [www.lta.org.uk](http://www.lta.org.uk) or follow us on Twitter @the\_LTA.*