



**Open Court**  
Disability Tennis

## Visually impaired tennis advisory group

### Meeting:

Thursday 5 September 12:30 – 15:30, Pocklington Trust Offices,  
Tavistock Square, WC1H 9LG

### Present:

- Chair: Kirsty Thomson
- LTA Reps: Dave Hardman, Matt Grover, Claire McCulloch
- North Rep: Rosie Pybus
- South Rep: Paul Gillett
- Coaching Rep: Louise Assioun

### Apologies:

- British Blind Sport Rep: Logan Gray
- Midlands Rep: Neil Bates
- Player Rep: Roy Turnham

### Agenda items:

1. Welcome (5 mins)
  - Group welcomed and introduction of everyone in attendance.
2. Approval of minutes and review outstanding actions from previous meeting(s) (10-15 mins)
  - Group approved minutes of previous meeting and appropriately reviewed outstanding actions from previous meeting.



### 3. LTA Update (10 mins)

#### Competitions

- Sophie Hall will be leaving her post as Disability Competition Coordinator at the end of September as Liz Terry has returned from maternity leave. Claire and Liz will now take on VI regional tournaments.
- Group thanked Sophie for her commitment and dedication to the VI regional tournaments.
- The new regional tournament in Glasgow went well and was supported well by the players so thank you to all involved.
- The Competitions Team are looking to confirm VI regionals for 2020 over the next few weeks. Competitions team will communicate this across the player database once confirmed. If a club or group wish to look into hosting a regional please contact Claire or Liz in the LTA Competitions Team who will discuss this with you.
- Discussions were raised about creating a layer of competition below regional events as saturation point has nearly hit at the regional events. This could include match pays, team challenge events etc. This will give greater depth and inclusion of activities in tennis.
- Claire asked for feedback around international players attending UK VI regionals. Feedback is positive, but an option to put a cap on how many are able to attend that does not restrict UK players being able to enter was requested.
- Players can play up a category in all competitions; this is to allow everybody to play at a competitive level. Whatever division players would like to be considered for international selection, they must play a minimum of 2 events in that



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category. A formal communication will be sent out soon to confirm this.

- 14 county championship events delivered disability tennis draws this summer, including visually impaired.

## Development

- Reminded the group of the new LTA team structure and that Matt Grover is no longer working within disability tennis. Will still be an advocate and working on disability, but is now supporting the wider LTA participation directorate.
- Harry Ash will be starting as the 'new' Disability Development Partner for London and South East; also supporting East Anglia, replacing Dave Hardman who has been promoted to Disability Development Manager.
- LTA working on a new 'Junior Programme' with Dave Hardman sitting on the working group to make it more inclusive to people with disabilities.
- Planning days with Tennis Scotland and Tennis Wales to formulate disability tennis provisions.
- Currently looking to further develop a specific VI tennis ball for all classifications. In talks with various manufacturers on how this can be achieved through adapting the current ball.

## 4. Growing the game in the UK (1.5hrs)

### BBS update

- BBS are attending Sight Village in Manchester (1<sup>st</sup> October) and London (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> November). Everyone welcome to come up and visit the events and learn more about the sight loss sector.





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- Activity finder is progressing well – thanks for the data on tennis clubs. Hoping to have a first attempt online by end of October.
- Our Have a Go Day programme is coming to an end for the year.
- Planning to attend the VI tournament in Birmingham in October.
- Priestley Smith school in Birmingham are raising funds for a bespoke VI sports facility. Might be good to have tennis representation at a meeting on Tuesday next week around design? Judo football and goalball all attending as Paralympic sports.

### Current player base update

- Participation figures are currently being collated through our external provider Critical Research. Do not have an official figure but reports suggest we will be on track to hit or over achieve our peak season figure of 2018 which had a total of 687 registered visually impaired players involved within the open court programme.

### Update on activities

- LTA are hosting a Junior Visually Impaired Tennis Festival at David Lloyd Worcester which is a brand new location of VI Tennis. Neil and Midlands Team are currently engaging with groups to come along and give tennis a go. Eight are signed up.
- Looking to organise a VI coaching clinic to be held in the North. Prospective dates will be in November. The clinic will





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look to use approved GB techniques that will help players and coaches improve their game and coaching styles.

## Regional feedback - North, Mids, South

### North

- Competitions page needs to be updated and the removal of the CVI abbreviation. Would be appropriate to stick with BBS terminology and sight classification.
- Players would like improved information about travel for regional events, making it more accessible to everyone.
- For future Glasgow regional events, aim is to make sure information about public transport is near hotels.
- VI Tennis demo taking place at the Murray Trophy. A great opportunity to showcase the sport on a local/international level.
- Query around selection criteria for international tournaments. To clarify selections onto the GB Team are open to all, meaning that juniors are able to qualify for the team. If a junior was selected, safeguarding measures would be put in place by the LTA to cater for juniors during camps and international trips.
- Release selection criteria earlier for the international tournaments; allowing players to plan their year if they want to be included in the selection for a place on the international team.
- North have expressed an interest in an 'open' tournament for all abilities and classifications and something the LTA competitions team will look into. Again, this depends on court time and space.



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- There is a LTA tournament results app but it is not accessible. Claire will look into this and speak to the person responsible at the LTA and see if anything can be done.
- North and Rosie have nominated the LTA for an RNIB award for their continued support in visually impaired tennis and continually driving opportunities, such as; camps, competitions, festivals and events.

## Midlands

- No update provided.

## South

- Positive interaction at the Sussex Open.
- Great engagement throughout the region with increased disability tennis activity.
- Great to see positive engagement on social media. LTA are looking to use the regional channels more often.
- Could media and promotion advice be included in the tournament info pack.

## Workforce and players feedback

- Coordinating a visually impaired coaching clinic with Matt and Dave. Content is being produced ahead of confirmed date. Will publicise once confirmed.
- Updating the content for coach education around disability. Currently engaging with Dave Hardman and Coach Education team at the LTA.





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- Create a database of coaches who deliver VI tennis as this will be good to communicate improved ways of working. As a result, we will hopefully be able to share ideas of best practice, improve the setup of sessions and create more VI sessions nationally.

## 5. International activity (30 mins)

### Performance

- Great Britain is leading the field in visually impaired tennis through our competition pathway. We need to keep developing through performance camps and coaching.
- ITF representatives attended the Blind International Tournament, with GB ending the tournament as the highest medalling country out of the 15 nations competing and achieving 3 x gold, 2 x silver, 2 x bronze.
- The vision for the LTA is aligning the performance camps across the board.

### IBTA

- No further update.
- No progress on new committee, with no finalisation of when this will happen.
- GB are applying to host the 2020 international tournament.

## 6. Any other business (10 mins)

- Rosie will be stepping down from her role as North and Scotland rep due to personal work commitments. The group





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thanked her for her contribution and wished Rosie the best of luck. A new successor will be communicated in due course.

- Matt Grover announced he is stepping down from the VI advisory group due to changes with his role at the LTA. Matt will still be an advocate and working on disability, but will now oversee other areas of the participation directorate.

### **Actions from meeting in table below:**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>Status?</b>
Louise to take conversations forward about developing VI ball	Louise	
Send Rosie VI statistics for RNIB award application	Matt	Completed
Update competitions page to align with BBS terminology and guidelines. Removing of CVI.	Claire	
Look into whether the LTA tournament results app can be made accessible	Claire	
Could media and promotion advice be included in the tournament info pack.	Claire	
Create a database of coaches who deliver VI tennis (Louise to draft email for coaches)	Dave/Louise With support from regions	