

## Minutes of AGM of pickleballEngland (pbE) held at 18.30 on 4 January 2026 by Zoom

Present: There were 46 on the zoom call, of whom 44 are identified below (region/country and pbE roles shown in brackets):

Karen Mitchell (National Director pbE [ND], SES) in the Chair, Martin Smith (ND, SES), Kelly Olsen (ND, EM), Ian Banks (ND, SEN), James Chaudry (Co-opted Director, SES), Michael de Groot (Regional Director [RD WM), Christine Neyndorff (RD SEN), David Hughes (RD SES), Ryan Amos (RD NE), Tim Spurway (RD, SW), Kate Vincent (RD, EM), Richard Thoms (SW), Peps Giuliano (EM), Frank Arico (SES), Kelly Dawson (SES), Debby Porsz (EM), Ruth Tomlinson (SEN), Mark Meagrow (EM), John Bownlie (WM), Trevor Robinson (NW), Chris Mitchell (SES), Sandra Ashcroft (EM), Boon Yeng (WM), Claudia Fivaz (SES), Gill Hogan (WM), Jason Cole (SES), Trudie Ellis (EM), Thaddea Locke (SEN), Emma Owen (EM), Kallum Hoy (EM), John Gouldson (EM), Clare McKnight (SES), Scott Tift (SES), Benjamin Zwahlen (SES), Jane Strachan (EM), Jane Bridge (NW), Gary Briggs (SEN), Jackie Arico (SES), Neill Lawson-Smith (SW), EN), John Brownlie (WM), David Stoten (SES), Pam Stoten (SES), Evan Small (SW), Guy Herzmark (NE, Secretary).

### 1 Introduction and votes needed (Karen Mitchell)

**1.1 Welcome** - Karen welcomed everyone and outlined the agenda. The meeting was quorate (more than 25 pbE members). She highlighted three documents requiring approval from members: the minutes of the last AGM (18 February 2024), the minutes of the last SGM (4 May 2025) and the changes to the Articles of Association, approved in principle by the SGM. These include changes to the governance of pbE, establishing a national board and a separate regional steering committee, reducing the time required for the director elections, clarifying who can vote and delaying the 2025 AGM for a period of up to six months. These have previously been shown on the pbE website.

### 1.2 Voting

- (a) the minutes of AGM on 24 February 2024 were approved (79% in favour; 21% abstaining)
- (b) the minutes of SGM on 4 May 2025 were approved (81% in favour; 19% abstaining)
- (c) the changes to the Articles of Association were approved (85% in favour, 15% abstaining)

### 2 The new directors

**2.1 The new national directors** There were six candidates for the three new National Director posts. Of these, Ian Banks (Hertfordshire), Kelly Olsen (Peterborough) and Sue Sutton (Rugby) were successful. The other three candidates had many strengths and support and we hope that they will help pbE in other ways. This means the new National Board will comprise Karen Mitchell, Martin Smith, James Chaudry, Ian Banks, Kelly Olsen and Sue Sutton, together with chair of the Regional Steering Committee.

**2.2 The new regional directors** The Regional Directors in the North East (Val Vlaldea), South West (Richard Toms) and East Midlands (Peps Giuliano) have stepped down and in their places have been elected Ryan Amos (Sheffield, North East), Tim Spurway (Exeter, South West) and Kate Vincent (Northamptonshire, East Midlands). Together with Elaine Shallcross (North West), Michael de Groot (West Midlands), David Hughes (South East South) and Christine Neyndorf (South East North), they will form the Regional Steering Committee which will elect its chair to sit also on the National Board. pbE is very grateful to Val, Peps and Richard for all their work and achievements over the last few years and hopes that they will continue to work for the benefit of pbE in other capacities.

### 3 Achievements since the last AGM (Karen Mitchell)

**3.1 In 2024** Membership of pbE increased by 80% (individuals) and 60% (clubs). We gained recognition from Sport England as the national governing body (NGB) for pickleball, overcoming a competing bid from the LTA thanks in part to the lobbying of members of pbE. Sam Basford and Rob Williams created the L1 club coaching curriculum. Team England won the inaugural European Pickleball Cup (EPC) in Southampton. Martin Smith built a five year financial model to guide our development. We adopted an effective safeguarding plan. Trevor Robbins joined as a self-employed contractor and will become our first employee this month. The Deaf Pickleball Action Group was formed and led us forward in adaptive pickleball. The English Nationals (EN) and English Open (EO) became even more popular.

**3.2 In 2025** We decided to use PickleBook as our CRM platform. We are very grateful to Frank Arico for helping to manage the transition and cleansing the data from our previous system. We agreed a new governance structure as previously outlined. We developed a template for a County Association pilot in conjunction with the County Representative for Derbyshire. We ran a separate singles Tournament for the English Nationals in addition to the usual doubles events due to the large number of people who wanted to take part. Scott Tift was appointed as the Director of Schools Development. The L2 curriculum was developed and implemented on EtrainU. Team England were second in the EPC in Rome. We have created an adaptive pickleball guide. We have good relationships with other organisations (eg GLL, Everyone Active). We owe a huge debt of gratitude to all our amazing volunteers without whom we could not have come so far.

### 4 More details (Karen Mitchell - and Martin Smith for Item 4.9)

**4.1 Grass roots** Thanks to the initial work of Elaine Shallcross in 2020, the Pickleball Leaders Course has been rolled out across the country since 2021 with increased demand. There were 46 workshops in 2024 and 109 in 2025. We hope that Scott Tift will develop a young leaders course for use in schools. Steve Pisano and Emanuel Otu have shown how much can be achieved at a local level, developing pickleball in Lambeth as a case study.

**4.2 Curriculum** Thanks to Sam Basford and Rob Williams, the L1 course was rolled out (17 workshops in 2024 and 45 in 2025) whilst developing L2. 2 pilot workshops were conducted in the first half of the year and the EtrainU platform was implemented just before the 3<sup>rd</sup> L2 workshop of the year.

**4.3 Competition** We estimate around 30% of pbE members want to play competitively. The English Pickleball League is already on PickleBook and the regional doubles leagues will be added this month. This will reduce the manual interventions needed to load details onto pbE website and DUPR (the ratings system). We are grateful to the league directors who make this work. There have also been many more events run by other operators.

**4.4 Clubs** Nearly 400 more clubs registered with pbE in 2025, twice as many as in 2024. Growth was fairly even across the regions.

**4.5 Dedicated indoor pickleball facilities** These have grown steadily from just one in 2023, three in 2024, 7 in 2025 and an expected 14 in 2026.

**4.6 pbE membership** Individual membership of pbE grew by 56% in 2025. New registrations doubled in 2024 and increased by another 27% in 2025. The share of membership held by the South East and South

West has gone down as growth in other regions outstripped that in the south. The detailed analyses from PickleBook show spikes in membership are associated with events and league participation.

**4.7 Age, gender, skill level** There is a fairly even spilt by gender but new members are on average younger (53) than existing ones (56). The vast majority declare their own skill level at registration in the 2.5 to 3.5 range.

**4.8 Road to one million players** Using Sport England estimates of the numbers playing pickleball suggests figures of 40,000 in 2024 and 55,000 in 2025. Assuming that numbers increase at the same run rate in future years we would expect to reach one million by the middle of 2030. This remains our ambition.

**4.9 Financial review (Martin Smith)** Figures are available for 2024 and 2025 though those for 2025 were still incomplete. In 2024 pbE made a small loss (£9,000) with income of £570,000, direct costs of £501,000 and indirect costs of £78,000. However in 2025 we expect this to be reversed. Income has increased significantly to £747,000 due mainly to the popularity of the events run by pbE. Costs also increased but by less. Direct costs were £543,000 and indirect costs £93,000. This is likely to lead to a surplus of around £111,000 when the figures are finalised. Karen thanked Martin for all his work.

**4.10 The English Open** The English Open is now the largest indoor event in the world. In 2025 there were 2350 players and 330 spectators. There were 115 hours of live stream broadcast, with some 172,000 views. The numbers and the number of different nationalities participating have steadily increased since 2019 when there were 305 players from 17 countries playing on 20 courts in 36 brackets to 2025 with 2350 players from 45 countries, using 40 courts with 115 brackets.

**4.11 The English Nationals** Participation in the English Nationals has also grown to such an extent that in 2025 the singles event was run separately. In 2021 there were 237 players playing 633 matches on 16 courts. In 2025 there were 1375 players, playing 1939 doubles matches on 24 courts and 373 singles players in a separate event. We expect to run regional qualifiers for the English Nationals in due course but the details have yet to be decided.

**4.12 Media coverage** Photography, livestream, video and PR all play a part and help us to secure sponsorship. We have tried a number of different companies which helps us to find which best suit. Paul Currie is our favourite photographer and Amy at 2Tone is also excellent at managing our publicity.

## **8 Goal (Karen Mitchell)**

Our goal remains to grow pickleball in England with the ambition to reach one million players by 2030. We aim to create a well connected pickleball community with a joined up ecosystem. We aim to transform the way we handle data using PickleBook as our partner. This will reduce the work involved and enable clubs and individuals to keep their own details up to date. It will provide much more sophisticated analyses and facilitate smarter engagement with our members. Many thanks to Benjamin Zwahlen and Claudia Fivaz for making it work so well.

## **9 PickleBook (Karen Mitchell)**

**9.1 Its facilities** PickleBook already supports various functions which are useful to clubs including the club locator, membership administration, session scheduling, payments and invoicing.

**9.2 Early wins** The data transfer from our old systems has enabled data cleaning. There is a dashboard of analytic facilities which support the overall management of pbE. There has been a 70% reduction in

manual processing load – vital as we continue to expand. And it permits us to set up higher levels of service for those who require more and thus to support a fee structure for membership. There is and always will be a free level of club membership. For an extra payment of either £100 or £200 more services are provided such as session management and multiple teams in the English League.

**9.3 League Management** PickleBook supports the England team league already. It will also support the regional doubles leagues and enable results to be posted automatically to pbE website and to DUPR.

**9.4 Event registration** PickleBook replaces ERS and already has 17 events set up on it. 3175 members have already integrated their DUPR ID with PickleBook. PickleBook will be used in February for the registration of players for the English Open.

**9.5 Future developments** We want to use the agile process provided by PickleBook to support an individual member value proposition that will enable differential individual tiers of membership, though there will always be a free tier. PickleBook will help us better manage emails to members and enable permission based access at regional and county levels. This will support our professionalization, automating manual processes, reducing licence costs, integrating with the Xero accounts package and demonstrating value for clubs.

#### **10 International federation update (Karen Mitchell)**

pbE is a member of the European Pickleball Federation, the World Pickleball Federation (WPF) and the Global Pickleball Alliance in association with APP. The Alliance aims to co-ordinate events worldwide to reduce clashes. It also helps manage player ranking. This helps us stay one of the top national governing bodies in the world. The WPF has formed a taskforce with the Global Pickleball Federation with the aim of creating a single International Federation which is a prerequisite for entry to the Olympics.

#### **11 AOB**

There was no other business though many took the chance to thank Karen Mitchell for all her work for pbE.

**This note of the pbE SGM was prepared by Guy Herzmark  
Secretary to the pbE Board  
7 January 2026**