



## Election Statement for Sally Hughes

Based down in Brighton I have played every level of table tennis in every scout hut, school hall and major venue our country has to offer. Through the good wins and the bad losses, the trophies and the wooden spoons, dark winters and hot summers there has been one common trend over the years - the declining number of players.

There is no doubt of the physical benefits of exercise through Table Tennis but often the mental and emotional benefits can be forgotten. I have been very lucky to experience playing up and down the UK and across Europe, on my own and as part of a team, learning independence but also how to work with others. To motivate and support friends and teammates, to be resilient, the importance of sportsmanship, loyalty, training and hard work. These are skills that are not just important in sport but everyday whilst someone is at school, studying or in their careers to help them manage the trials and challenges they will face.

I believe it to be a great privilege for me to be able to support younger players to gain those same experiences and skills that I have had access to. By developing a clear pathway into our sport and enabling play either socially - ping pong once a week or to have access to the performance level training needed to achieve international success.

For me in particular there are too few women and girls playing table tennis and in 2023 it is now time for us to try something new to welcome a very much underrepresented group to our sport.

Having launched the Women and Girls 1\* tournament circuit in 2022 I have helped over 50 new names onto the TTE ranking list – players who have chosen not to compete in the events previously available to them. My 1st event saw 38 entries, a TTE record for the number of female entries in a singles event, only to be rapidly broken by the 2nd event seeing 61 entries and at the time of writing event no 3 is making its way close to 50 with a month to go.

5 locations (Inc Sussex, Chelmsford, Nottingham, Cippenham and St Neots) have now offered female only events each adding more players to the ranking list, giving opportunities for girls to compete in accessible and inclusive environments and demonstrating that the demand exists up and down the country.

What this activity has shown is what is possible.

Possible by working together, being creative and establishing clear goals with little resources.

What comes next?

With each event I take away new lessons learned and apply these to further improve the next, whilst thinking about how to push forward with new opportunities and new ways of working to enhance the gender diversity of our sport. Collaboration between like minded clubs, leagues and counties is key and I hope that by electing me for this role many will feel motivated and empowered to join a mission to bring enjoyable table tennis to all who wish to play.

Though I hope that you can feel my passion and drive for delivering meaningful change in our sport I would welcome any questions, queries or comments and my contact information is below:

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