

This information pack has been created to explain what Northumbria Squash Rackets Association ('the Association') does and how it operates.

Mission and vision statement

According to its constitution, the Association's object is 'the promotion of community participation in healthy recreation for the public benefit by the provision of facilities for playing the sports of squash and squash 57 (previously known as racketball) in the county of Northumbria'.

Background

The Association is one of 38 counties affiliated to England Squash ('ES'), the national governing body for squash in England. ES was originally known as the Squash Rackets Association ('SRA'), founded in 1928 to take over the administration of the game in Britain from the Tennis and Rackets Association. The SRA was the recognised world authority for squash until 1967, when the International Squash Rackets Federation (which later became the World Squash Federation) took over the world governance of squash. In 1980, the responsibility for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales was devolved to autonomous national associations and the SRA was relaunched as ES in 2001.

The Association itself was formed during the 1960s as the Northumberland Squash Rackets Association to serve the interests of clubs and players in the county of Northumberland, and following local government boundary changes in 1974 was renamed the Northumbria Squash Rackets Association covering Northumberland and the newly-formed metropolitan borough of Tyne and Wear. The Association remained unincorporated until 2018 when it became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation ('CIO') with a new constitution ([attachment 1](#)).

Membership

Membership of the Association is open to anyone interested in furthering its purposes, whether an individual or a corporate or unincorporated body. Currently all ES-affiliated clubs competing in the Northumbria Leagues are members of the Association, a current total of 15 clubs ([attachment 2](#)). There are no individual members. A quorum at general meetings of members such as the AGM (normally held in June) is 10 representatives of 5 member clubs.

The Association's member clubs make an annual declaration to ES of their number of courts and the names of their individual members who wish to be ES members, and are invoiced accordingly by ES at the rate of £55 per court (up to a maximum of 4 courts), £12.50 per adult member and £10 per junior member. The Association receives a rebate from ES of £11 per court and £4 per member. In addition member clubs pay annual League fees to the Association at the rate of £45 per team entered in the winter leagues (there is no extra fee for the summer league). Only current valid ES members may represent their club in the Northumbria Leagues.

Trustees and Committee

The Association's affairs are managed by a minimum of three and a maximum of six charity trustees ('the Trustees'), appointed by the members. The current five Trustees (and their voluntary roles) are John Thompson (chair / ES funding), Dave Barnett (tournaments / ICC), Colin McNestrie (governance / ES CPM / website / calendar of events), Simon Long (treasurer) and Joe Witherspoon (league secretary / safeguarding / refereeing). Dave North is secretary to the Trustees. The Trustees meet at least quarterly and each Trustee serves a three-year term of office and may be re-appointed until they have served a maximum of 9 years.

The Trustees have formed a sub-committee ('the Committee') to manage the Association's day-to-day operations. The Committee meets usually every six or seven weeks within an agreed timetable. All the Trustees serve on the Committee, and additional Committee members (and their voluntary roles) are Dave North (secretary / equality, diversity & inclusion), David Brocklehurst (fundraising), Adam Coates (publicity), Ryan Doran (presentation evening / racketball), Emma Gregson (fundraising), Liam Gutcher (coach & junior development), Karen Heron (inclusion - women & girls), David Jackson (inclusion - smaller clubs) and Mike Paul (coaching / racketball). Additional volunteers are Richard Vitty (junior development) and Steve Cubbins (county closed tournament).

Trustee and Committee meetings typically last around an hour and a half. Attendance is expected whenever possible, otherwise apologies should be given to the secretary in advance. A meeting agenda will be circulated and attendees should read any papers circulated in advance of the meeting and are encouraged to participate fully in the meeting.

CIO status

Since 2018, the Association has been regulated by the Charity Commission as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation ('CIO'), charity registration

number 1180804, and as such is required to make an annual return to the Charity Commission through its website confirming details of the current Trustees as well as filing an annual Trustee report and accounts. Current and previous filings may be found [here](#).

In addition, CIO status means that if the Association is wound up, the members of the CIO have no liability to contribute to its assets and no personal responsibility for settling its debts and liabilities.

Financial matters

The Association's financial year runs from 1 May to 30 April. All income and expenditure is recorded through the Association's charity bank account at NatWest and its charity notice account held with Virgin Money. The accounts are controlled by the Association's treasurer through online banking and the bank mandates require two signatories to authorise each payment. Any two from a panel of four Trustees are able to authorise payments.

The main sources of income are ES affiliation fee rebates and League fees from member clubs (as described in the **Membership** section above), tournament entry fees and sponsorship, and fundraising activities (as described in the **Fundraising** section below). From time to time, applications for 'restricted' ES funding are made on behalf of member clubs for various initiatives such as junior beginners ('Squash Stars'); participation and inclusion; and talent programmes – this funding if successful must be distributed to the applicant clubs once the designated programmes for which the applications were made have been completed to ES's satisfaction. Tournament income is designed to match or exceed expenditure, with any surplus or deficit accruing to / borne by the Association.

The main area of expenditure is on county representative teams in the ES inter-county competitions - men's and women's seniors, masters and junior boys and girls at various age groups. This expenditure covers team entry fees, county t-shirts and travel and accommodation expenses incurred.

The treasurer updates the Trustees on the financial position at each meeting and prepares the Trustees' annual report and accounts for approval by the Trustees, independent examination and submission to the members at the AGM before filing with the Charity Commission. An annual budget is also prepared for Trustees' approval, and variances highlighted and investigated. The aim is to raise sufficient income to cover expenditure on an annual basis, thereby maintaining a healthy funding position.

The latest and previous Trustees' reports and accounts are available on the Charity Commission website at [here](#).

Main activities

ES Inter County Competitions

The Association enters teams in the following ES Inter County Competition (ICC) events: Senior (men's and ladies) and Masters (men's over 65), co-ordinated by Dave Barnett, and Junior boys and girls (U11, U13, U15, U17 and U19 age groups), co-ordinated by Liam Gutcher.

The men's team are in the Premier group and play an annual national knockout. The format for the other teams is normally a stage one regional group followed by a stage two national final knockout or monrad event. We will be hosting the Junior ICC Stage One North event on 11/12 November 2023 across four venues – Newcastle University, Northern, the Northumberland Club and Tynemouth.

Two county-logo t-shirts are provided to all players representing the county. Travel and accommodation expenses are reimbursed based on the following guidelines:

- Fuel - 15p per mile for max two cars per 3-player team and max three cars per 5-player team.
- Accommodation – if over two hours' travel time to venue, overnight stay permitted on middle night of two-day events, and on night before event if very early start; reimbursement of expenditure (based on receipts) of up to £50 per player for one night, and up to £75 per player for two consecutive nights.

Team League and Cup competitions

The Association invites member clubs to enter teams in the Northumbria Winter and Summer Leagues. There are 56 men's teams and 12 ladies' teams in the Winter 2023/24 Leagues (co-ordinated by Joe Witherspoon) and 15 teams entered the Summer 2023 League (co-ordinated by Colin McNestrie).

An innovation in the men's winter league last season was the introduction of end-of-season divisional playoffs pitting each team finishing third-bottom of their division against the team finishing third-top of the division below, with a third promotion / relegation place at stake in addition to the two automatic places. The playoffs were hosted successfully by Northern. This will be repeated for the 2023/24 season with the addition of a ladies' winter league

playoff between the teams just outside the automatic promotion and relegation places.

There are also various cup competitions running during the second half of the winter season leading to cup finals and the annual presentation evening, held this year at the Northumberland Club.

More information on the team leagues and cups may be found [here](#).

County tournaments

The Association runs a number of graded tournaments within the County throughout the year, the main ones being the Northumbria Junior Closed in late September at Northern, the Senior Closed (including men's and women's graded, masters, racketball and doubles events) in January at Tynemouth, the Senior Open in March at the Northumberland Club, and the Junior Open.

The Junior Open is normally a silver or bronze tournament on the ES calendar, and a silver tournament was held in July 2023 at three venues across the County (Newcastle University, Northern and the Northumberland Club) with around 110 participants. A further silver tournament will take place in April 2024.

The Senior Open (held at the Northumberland Club) includes Men's and Women's PSA satellite events, each with \$1,000 prizemoney requiring sponsorship to be sought, along with graded events. In addition, the Association provides financial support to the Gosforth Classic tournament (held at Northern in December).

Coaching

Coaching for county junior squads is co-ordinated by Liam Gutcher with support from Richard Vitty and Dave Barnett. At grassroots level, this is generally left to individual clubs / coaches throughout the county, with funding opportunities provided either directly by ES or through the Association. Boldon, Hexham and now Sunderland are running Squash Stars courses aimed at junior beginners, and Hexham have developed a successful local school programme.

Beginner squash courses (some aimed mainly at women) have been introduced successfully at Northern, the Northumberland Club, Tynemouth and several other clubs around the county.

A coach forum has been set up by Liam Gutcher and Mike Paul for all currently active qualified Northumbria coaches, who are invited to expert-led sessions to share national best practice which may be applied across the county.

Racketball

Racketball, also known as Squash 57, is growing in popularity across the county and Mike Paul assisted by Ryan Doran is developing initiatives to support this trend. A number of clubs have their own racketball introductory sessions, leagues and championships, and the annual Racketball County Closed tournament is now well established, running in parallel with the Senior County Closed every January.

Doubles

A number of clubs have thriving doubles groups and several clubs can provide full-size doubles courts through the use of moveable sidewalls. Again the annual Doubles County Closed tournament is held during the Senior County Closed in January.

Refereeing

The Association supports the World Squash Officiating (WSO) vision to professionalise and standardise squash officiating at all levels. Our aim is for all member clubs to have at least one Level 1 (Club) referee, and for the county to have at least four Level 2 (Tournament) referees, by 2024. Further information on refereeing opportunities, becoming qualified or enhancing an existing qualification is available from Joe Witherspoon (refereeing co-ordinator) or online at worldsquashofficiating.com.

Fundraising

We are always looking for fundraising opportunities to improve county funds, such as charitable giving. We currently have a junior 'one million skips' fundraising challenge for which we are seeking support [here](#).

In addition, Emma Gregson and Dave Brocklehurst are focused on private sector fundraising and sponsorship opportunities. Another initiative is to

encourage supporters to sign up to easyfundraising.org.uk and nominate the Association as their preferred charity to receive donations from many favourite brands every time they make a purchase.

Recognition

An annual Presentation Night is held in April at which individual and team achievement across the county is recognised and celebrated. This includes individual success at county and national level, county teams' achievement at regional / national level, and club team and individual success in the county league and cup competitions. Ryan Doran is our 'master of ceremonies' for this event, which this year took place at the Northumberland Club on 22nd April. The John Dale Trophy is also presented annually to the most promising junior in the county.

Communication / publicity

Colin McNestrie maintains the county website (northumbriasquash.co.uk), and Adam Coates publishes a county newsletter ([sign up here](#)) in addition to updating the county Twitter feed ([@NbriaSquash](#)) and the Newcastle Chronicle with the latest news and information. In addition, league-related news is posted to League Master (northumbriasquash.leaguemaster.co.uk).

Safeguarding

Joe Witherspoon (jgw2010@me.com) is the Association's county welfare officer to whom any safeguarding issues should be addressed in the first instance. The ES code of conduct has been issued to all member clubs, and any reported breaches of the code are dealt with by a county conduct committee consisting of Joe Witherspoon, John Thompson and Dave Barnett. Fortunately this committee has needed to meet on only very rare occasions since its inception. More details and links may be found [here](#).

Equality, diversity and inclusion

The Trustees are working with ES to develop an equality, diversity and inclusion policy appropriate to the Association's needs, at both Trustee board and Committee level, which reflects and represents the current and potential squash community in Northumbria.

Governance

The Trustees have set up a working group co-ordinated by Colin McNestrie which has assessed the Association's compliance with the twelve governance standards set out by ES. We are already fully compliant with eight of the standards, partly compliant with a further one and currently non-compliant with the remaining three. We have set out an action plan to meet all the ES standards by August 2024.

In addition, we have ensured that every Trustee and Committee member has lead or support responsibility for at least one role, that all roles are covered by a lead person with back-up support from at least one other person, and that these roles are understood (through training and experience) and carried out to expected levels (through performance assessment and feedback).

In conclusion

We hope that you have found this information pack interesting and informative. If you would like to be considered for a role as a Trustee, a Committee member or simply a volunteer, please contact Dave North (Secretary) at dandjnorth@talktalk.net or any other Trustee or Committee member.