

Government confirms support for tennis and athletics

The Sports Minister has confirmed that the governing bodies for tennis and athletics have been awarded funding to support the delivery of their calendars of summer events, whilst the phased return of spectators continues under the roadmap out of lockdown.

As part of the Government's Sport Survival Package, a loan of £14.3 million has been made available to the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), which meant that they could make a commitment at the beginning of the year to ensure that the grass court season could go ahead. The backing of the loan support allowed the LTA to host two events in Nottingham, and further events in Birmingham, Eastbourne and the Queen's Club, in the lead up to The Championships at Wimbledon.

All of these events had significantly reduced gate receipts and double the usual net costs due to restricted spectator capacities and COVID-19. The tournaments at Nottingham, Birmingham and Eastbourne were all elite women's events and helped to ensure that British and international players could prepare for The Championships whilst remaining in COVID safe environments.

Meanwhile UK Athletics has been offered £1.2 million in loans which has supported the delivery of the British Athletics Championships, the Olympic trial event, which took place in Manchester between 25-27 June, and therefore provided the platform to help a number of athletes to qualify for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. The funding will also help the Diamond League British Grand Prix, the final major warm-up event on home soil, to take place at Gateshead International Stadium on 13 July.

Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston said:

There was a genuine risk that our tennis and athletics talent would not have had the opportunity to properly prepare and compete ahead of major events, like the Olympics.

This funding has meant that tennis and athletics events could plan with confidence, supporting our sport stars and making sure that the Great British summer of sport goes on.

Scott Lloyd, Chief Executive of the Lawn Tennis Association, said:

We'd like to thank the Government and Sport England for their help over the past seven months. Knowing the loan support is available has allowed us to plan with a degree of certainty and commit to expenditure when faced with only being able to admit 25% of spectators to stage our early summer events safely and our

investment levels being double the normal cost.

Whilst we have reduced costs internally to manage through this period more generally, we can now plan ahead to 2022 and look to capitalise on increases in participation by supporting indoor community and public venues as they help recover from the aftermath of pandemic.

Joanna Coates, Chief Executive of UK Athletics, said:

We are delighted to have been offered funding from the Sport Survival Package from the DCMS. The reduction in permitted spectator numbers at events and the uncertain climate caused by COVID has challenged many sports over the last 15 months and such support makes a significant difference to athletics.

The funds have already helped to ensure we were able to deliver the Muller British Athletics Championships, our Olympic trial event, and will also ensure we are able to support the Muller British Grand Prix later this month.

These events are hugely significant competitive opportunities that prepare our athletes to be at their best when competing at the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, and we are grateful to be in receipt of the package at such a crucial point for our sport.

Chair of the independent Board, Sir Ian Cheshire said:

These loan funding awards to both the LTA and UK Athletics are another important step in the government's commitment to supporting spectator sports to continue operating through the pandemic.

Following March's Budget announcement confirming a £300 million extension to the Sport Survival Package, the Independent Board continues to work at pace to get appropriate support to sports who are in need.

The Sport Survival Package is the most generous bespoke support from any Government for its domestic sport sector in the world.

The [£300 million winter phase](#) has focused on helping those major spectator sports severely impacted by coronavirus restrictions survive the winter and cover essential costs. Over recent months funding has also been provided to rugby union, National League and women's football, horse racing, rugby league, badminton, basketball, netball, ice hockey, speedway and drag racing. Submissions for support were made by individual sports to an [independent decision-making Board](#), supported by Sport England.

In March [the Chancellor announced a further £300 million of support](#), expected to benefit major summer spectator sports, as the path out of lockdown continues and the majority of sports stadia open at reduced capacities, unless they host accredited pilot events under the Government's Events Research Programme.

Further details on the £300 million funding programme are available [online](#), with further announcements to follow as support is agreed.

In all, the sport and leisure sector has benefited from more than £1.5 billion worth of business support made available by the Government, including the furlough scheme, business rates relief and business interruption loan scheme that has helped many sports clubs and leisure businesses to survive.

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