NSCBA Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: 16th November 2025
Location: 11 Hunsbury Close, Northants, NN4 9UE
Time: 8:00 PM

Attendance

Melissa Gentle (MG) (Chair) Jermaine Lovelock (JL), Rob Cunliffe (RC), Sally Hains (SH), Stephen Willis (SW), Katie Applin (KA) (Secretary-Minute taker)

Chair welcomed all attendees and confirmed quorum.

Not in Attendance

Zach Sturgess (ZS), Simon Sturgess (SS)

Approval of Previous Minutes

Minutes from 7th September 2025 reviewed.

Amendment noted: SS comment regarding LS comment at previous meeting that KA was not voted in by committee. KA apologised for omission.

Chair's Opening Remarks

MG, as Chair, thanked members for attending and stated intention to bring clarity and resolve ongoing issues.

Conflict of Interest

MG, as Chair, highlighted duty to manage conflicts fairly. SS and ZS were asked not to attend the meeting due to the number of agenda items relating either directly to them, or family members. No other conflicts declared.

Matters Arising

None reported.

GDPR Breach & ICO Response

Incident: Contact details of all in attendance at the County Junior Trials were shared on a spreadsheet within the County Committee WhatsApp group - potential data breach due to this being "Need to Know" information, which should not have been shared with the whole coaching group/committee.

Actions taken:

- MG shared details of situation with BE who advised her to report to ICO.
- MG did so on 23rd September.
- MG was advised to contact all those whose data had been shared on the WhatsApp to inform them. MG received responses relating to inappropriate use of data from three

families, two of whom were new to the County and whose information had not been previously shared by the county with committee members outside of the breach
- MG contacted individuals it was reported had used the data inappropriately, instructed deletion- response letters from those parties were shared with the committee
- ICO response on 4th November: No further action required as County had reacted appropriately.

Decisions on prevention of any future breaches:

- *MG to draft onboarding doc for all Committee members to complete, to be approved at the next Meeting.*
- *Document to relate to expected behaviours of all committee members and will cover GDPR. It was agreed that this should be signed each year after the AGM.*
- *All committee members to complete an online GDPR training course.*

Grievances

Ahead of the Grievances being heard, MG shared a timeline of events:

- *7th September committee meeting*
- *7th September, post meeting, it was determined that the booking for the County Junior Training on the Tuesday had been reassigned to PJBA. LS resigned.*
- *23rd September a data breach was reported to ICO*
- *21st September Restricted U19 was held*
- *27th September Restricted Senior was held*
- *8th October letter issued to parties under investigation with ICO*
- *12th October Restricted U15 was held*
- *15th October Grievance received from ZS, LS & MI*
- *25th October – Masters restricted*
- *4th November response received from ICO*
- *6th November initiation of committee meeting date*
- *16th November committee meeting held*

MG noted that it was left to her to manage the organization of the restricted tournaments with support from JL, due to lack of offers of support from other committee members.

At the Seniors Restricted event, the perspective of MG as Chair, was as follows:

- *Very low attendance meant that junior players were relied upon to ensure that a competition could take place. Despite sending a record number of emails*
- *Despite being asked to play WD, due to only one pair entering, LS refused to pair with a younger player. This was not in the spirit of supporting the success of the County competition.*
- *During the tournament ZS and LS appeared to be rude and dismissive of MG, as Chair of the County and as the organiser and volunteer running the restricted, despite various opportunities to communicate*

Outside of these tournaments and taken into consideration when selecting:

- *MG was on all three SCC WhatsApp groups- despite LS asking people in July and August* to play this season, very little response.
- Following LS's resignation, no handover of the senior team role occurred, as LS did not offer to pass responsibilities to any committee members.
- MG assumed responsibility for team selection in accordance with the constitution, as no other committee members volunteered to support or form a new subcommittee.

- *In this role, MG reached out to various other people who had previously been Northants players or had attended the restricted*
- *MG made decision to select team as she felt best in terms of the whole team and creating a team atmosphere.*

Matt Ireland grievance, Resolved and closed;

- MG offered MI a place in the first team when she became aware that he wished to play.
- MI later refused that place
- It was noted that MI refused place while ZS and LS grievances were heard by the committee.
- Summary response to Grievance, committee agreed (APPENDIX 1a)

Actions:

- MI to be informed of Committee decision
- MI to be offered a position on SCC squads going forward

Lucy Sturgess grievance; Grievance not upheld; Selection stands

- Following LS's resignation, no handover of the senior team role took place, as LS did not pass on responsibilities to any committee members. As well as the points noted below, the committee agreed that this, as well as her behaviour at the Senior Restricted event, was relevant to selection decisions.

At the Seniors Restricted event:

- LS declined to partner a younger player in Women's Doubles despite only one pair having entered. This was viewed as unsupportive of the County competition and contrary to the cooperative spirit normally expected at Restricted events.
- LS and ZS appeared dismissive and rude towards the Chair during the event, despite several opportunities for constructive communication.
- The committee noted that this behaviour contributed to the atmosphere at the Restricted and was a legitimate factor when considering selection.
- JL noted that in previous years under earlier committees, the Restricted had reportedly been a compulsory selection component; MG confirmed that no such rule appears in the archived documents handed down by former Chairs. The committee agreed it would be helpful to review any evidence of such a written rule if produced.
- The committee also reviewed the document referenced by SS (Appendix 2), which states that: "The restricted competition helps county committees to select their teams for the Senior County Championships the following season."
- Given extremely low entry numbers at this year's Restricted—particularly on the women's side—it was not possible or reasonable to treat attendance as an essential selection criterion.
- MG reiterated that SCC uptake has been low in recent seasons. The County was fined £200 last season for being unable to field a 3rd team, and her priority this year was to broaden selection to bring renewed enthusiasm and opportunity into the squad.
- The committee agreed that a formal, written SCC Selection Process is required going forward.
- The Chair read the proposed summary response to the grievance, which the committee unanimously endorsed (APPENDIX 1b).

Actions:

- LS to be informed of the Committee decision
- LS to be offered a place on the senior squads going forward, subject to agreement to the Behavioural Expectations document (Appendix 3), which applies to all players.

Zach Sturgess grievance; Grievance not upheld; Selection stands

- As above – selection for team based not only on Restricted results, but whole approach outlined in constitution
- RC queried whether, as MG was aware that ZS and LS did want to play in the team, did she communicate the reasons for their non selection with them at all?
- MG felt it would have been good to have been able to do this but didn't feel it would have been received well at the time.
- The committee noted that ZS and LS are two of the best Northants players and a way to include them in future fixtures has the potential to be beneficial to the results of the teams
- At the committee meeting on 7th September, ZS confirmed that he would be able to support SW with Junior training at EWS on Tuesday evenings. However, within hours it was discovered that PJBA intended to use the booking for their own academy session. This resulted in delays to the start of Junior training and an urgent search for an alternative venue for the Elite squad. As a committee member, ZS could have been more transparent at the time, which would have prevented operational difficulties.
- It was acknowledged that this situation negatively impacted the Junior training programme, but this related to the venue conflict and lack of transparency, not behaviour during Junior training sessions themselves. The minutes have been amended to accurately reflect this.
- It was further acknowledged that ZS was in a difficult position and that a conflict of interest existed, which contributed to the challenge.
- It was noted that this was poor management from the Venue, given that the booking had, for the last year been under the County and the MG had written confirmation that the booking was in the County's name

- JL agreed with MG decision at the time of the selection of the first team and was supportive of finding a way to offer position in the team going forward
- It was agreed that MG decision not to include ZS in the team due to the impending ICO investigation at the time, was a valid reason for the non-section
- The ICO have confirmed that they are happy with the response of the County in relation to the potential breach and that no further action is necessary
- It was noted that the ICO decision being returned far sooner than the originally anticipated 28-week timeframe has allowed this matter to conclude more easily and in a more timely manner
- Chair read suggested summary response to Grievance, committee agreed (APPENDIX 1c)

Actions:

- ZS to be informed of Committee decision
- ZS to be offered position on County Squad going forward, subject to agreement to Chair's behavioural expectations document

Moving Forwards with Committee members/players

- Now that grievances have been heard, all committee members acknowledge commitment to resolving the situation for the better of the County
- MG has spoken to BE County Relationship Officer regarding the current situation and asked if he would support Mediation with those who have raised grievances to support bringing the situation to a conclusion and moving forwards with them remaining a part of the County – whether it be committee or players
- The BE relationship manager will confirm whether he is able to support this once he has spoken with his manager
- If not, an external company may be engaged if ZS and LS would like to attend the mediation
- It was agreed by the Committee that "one to one" would be appropriate if ZS and LS agreed. With RC supporting the meeting with LS, alongside MG and JL doing the same with ZS
- MG read the expectations that she would like to put to ZS and LS for them to rejoin the team
- The committee acknowledged and agreed. These behavioural expectations will be included in the document that all committee members and SCC Players will sign on an annual basis – APPENDIX 3 (to be formalised and presented for adoption at the next committee meeting)
- It was raised whether the rest of the committee could have done more to support MG and SW so that all decisions did not need to come down to them (especially as they were dealing with the data breach issues and venue issues), which could have made it feel less personal
- It was acknowledged that the committee has fewer members than has previously been the case, which may have highlighted the situation
- SW raised that, on top of the other issues, the bank accounts were also due to a lack of signatories (Treasurer and Secretary resigned in succession) – MG and SW were left to cover many costs themselves

Selection Process

- Committee agreed to implement a formal selection process: There was no selection committee for the Selection of the November match (raised by SS)
- In these exceptional circumstances, responsibility fell to the Chair to make selection as LS resigned and no other committee members came forward to offer to take over and form a Selection Committee.
- It was noted that new members of the committee were not aware of the previously agreed selection committee's existence, and would have looked to long standing committee members with experience of the Senior Set up to support this
- The team selection subcommittee section of constitution was read (APPENDIX 4)
- It was noted that the NCBA Constitution is BE template and should, therefore, be fit for purpose to cover circumstances such as the current situation, as they arise
- For clarity to all committee members, the reasoning behind the past decision to create a sub-committee was outlined.
- MG paper on Selection criteria going forward is read (APPENDIX 5):
    - Point 1 – agreed
    - Point 2 – agreed
    - Point 3 – agreed
    - Point 4 – agreed
    - Point 5 – agreed
    - Point 6 – agreed
- In addition to the points outlined in APPENDIX 5, the selection process document will cover the following:

        - A commitment to clear Communication is required- if you don't respond to requests for availability, you will not be considered.
        - At the start of the season, commitment to availability for the whole season should be outlined (MS form to be considered)
        - Acknowledgement that attendance at the restricted tournament supports the county and is strongly advised to aid the team selection process (U19, Seniors and Masters)
        - Recognition that the Selection Sub Committee has a level of discretion when the selection process is being followed
- MG will create document to be approved by committee at the next meeting
- It was felt that opportunities to train together as a Senior County team would be beneficial, especially ahead of Match weekends.
- Seniors have been offered the opportunity to train with the Elite juniors, this has been taken up by several players, on an adhoc basis. This will be formalized and offered to all senior players, Senior only training sessions to be investigated.

Other Business

Sponsorship and Conflict of Interest

- MG and SW are currently sponsoring Northants County under their business Li-Ning Shop, which has been beneficial to the County in giving a sense of identity.
- It was agreed that a formal contract should be drafted by MG for next meeting to offer protection against conflict of interest to all involved.

Following Items to be noted and discussed at next committee meeting – advised to the committee for diary purposes.

National Schools Championships

- County Round - Scheduled for 20th January 2026 at Oundle
- RC has contacted SGO's and has already had some schools come back with positive responses.
- County to pay for schools to enter to support the event
- RC to share posters with SGO's and county committee to share

Junior Competitions

- ICT – team has been announced. Due to small pool of players this has been announced to focus the team.
- There is no space for Northants at the Rio tournament this year.
- MG has offered to support the Herts challenge

Chair thanks the committee for attending and discussing difficult matter.

Next Meeting

Friday, 9th January 2026 at 6:30 PM. Meeting concluded at 10:38 PM.

Action Tracker

Action Item	Owner	Deadline
Draft onboarding document covering GDPR and expected behaviours	MG	By 2nd January 2026 for agenda
Explore and share GDPR training options with the committee	MG	ASAP
Complete online GDPR training course	All Committee Members	ASAP
Inform MI of decision and offer County Squad inclusion	MG	18th November
Inform LS of decision and offer County Squad inclusion (subject to behavioural expectations)	MG	18th November
Inform ZS of decision and offer County Squad inclusion (subject to behavioural expectations)	MG	18th November
Engage BE County Relationship Officer for mediation support	MG	When meeting agreed
Support LS mediation (RC) and ZS mediation (MG & JL)	RC / MG / JL	When meeting agreed
Include behavioural expectations in annual committee document	MG	By 2nd January 2026 for agenda
Create formal selection process document	MG	By 2nd January 2026 for agenda
Formalise a Selection Sub-Committee	All Committee	9th January 2026
Implement MS Form for season availability and communication commitment	Selection Sub-Committee	Within 14 days of set-up - tbc
Investigate formal Senior-only training sessions	Selection Sub-Committee	Within 14 days of set-up - tbc
Draft formal sponsorship contract	MG / SW	By 2nd January 2026
Share posters for National Schools Championships	RC	ASAP – completed 17th November 2025

Appendix 1

Committee summary and findings:

a) Matt Ireland

Summary of Complaint

Matt expressed disappointment and concern at his non-selection for the Senior County Championship (SCC) fixture on 8 November 2025. Having represented the County for 24 years and won the County Restricted Tournament (September 2025), he requested clarity on selection criteria and reassurance of fairness.

Requested / Implied Outcome

- Explanation of selection criteria
- Confirmation of fairness
- Possible reconsideration for inclusion

Findings

- Selection undertaken by the Chair under Rule 11 (Team Selection Sub-Committee) as no formal sub-committee was in place.
- Standard selection criteria (commitment, availability, performance, balance, behaviour) applied consistently.
- Matt was offered a place in the First Team but later declined.

Conclusion

No procedural fault occurred; concern resolved when a place was offered.
Outcome: Grievance not upheld; closed.

Constitution & BE Policy Reference

- Rule 11 – Chair may act in absence of selection sub-committee
- Rule 18 – BE Codes of Conduct adopted
- BE fair selection principles upheld.

b) Lucy Sturgess

Summary of Complaint

Lucy objected to her non-selection and lack of consultation. She felt disregarded after her resignation as SCC organiser and noted that she won Mixed Doubles at the Restricted Tournament.

Requested / Implied Outcome

- Explanation of selection criteria and process
- Recognition of past role
- Possible reinstatement or inclusion

Findings

- Lucy resigned before selection; authority reverted to Chair (Rule 11).
- Criteria applied fairly and consistently; Restricted participation not required.
- Behaviour at resignation meeting was disrespectful; relevant under Rule 18 (BE Codes).

Conclusion

Non-selection was valid; behavioural concerns were legitimate.
Outcome: Grievance not upheld; selection stands.

Constitution & BE Policy Reference

- Rule 11 – Chair responsible in absence of selection sub-committee
- Rule 16 – behaviour may be disciplinary
- Rule 18 – BE Codes of Conduct adopted.

c) Zach Sturgess

Summary of Complaint

Zach challenged his non-selection, questioning criteria and inclusion of an out-of-county player. He also referenced prior involvement in team selection.

Requested / Implied Outcome

- Clarification of criteria and decision-makers
- Reinstatement
- Recognition of historic role in selection decisions

Findings

- No formal sub-committee appointed; Chair acted under Rule 11.
- Out-of-county representation permitted under SCC rules.
- Restricted participation not mandatory.
- Zach responsible for GDPR breach requiring ICO notification; falls under Rule 16 (Disciplinary Action).

Conclusion

Selection process valid; conduct issues relevant.
Outcome: Grievance not upheld; disciplinary review for GDPR breach to proceed.

Constitution & BE Policy Reference

- Rule 11 – Chair empowered for team selection
- Rule 16 – Disciplinary powers
- Rule 18 – BE Codes adopted.

Appendix 2

https://www.badmintonengland.co.uk/competition/adult-competition/county-competition

County Restricted Competitions Completed

Each County runs their own County Restricted Tournament (normally in September) for players that are eligible to represent the county. The restricted competition helps county committees to select their teams for the Senior County Championships in the following season.

See link below to find your local County Restricted Competition results.

Counties have now submitted their squads and nominations for the upcoming season. More information on these to come ahead of the first Competition Weekend (8th and 9th November 2025).

County Restricted Competitions Completed

(see also our "The Counties" section below for more information for your county)

Appendix 3 - Behavioural Expectations

The committee further clarified that the Behavioural Expectations document (Appendix 3) applies to all SCC players, not only committee members. This is consistent with the expectations included in the conclusion letters for both LS and ZS. Committee members will sign the governance section annually, while players will sign the behavioural expectations when selected.

Agree to:

1. Behaviour & Communication

- communicate respectfully with Committee members, volunteers, officials and players.
- follow the Badminton England Codes of Conduct.
- raise concerns through the correct channels, not via informal groups or third parties.
- understand that behaviour and communication form part of the SCC selection process.
- contribute positively to team morale and culture.

2. Respect for NCBA Governance

- accept that SCC selection is overseen by the NCBA Committee (Rule 11).
- accept that selection decisions are made collectively and are final.
- understand that past involvement or seniority does not guarantee selection.
- acknowledge that Restricted results may be considered but are not compulsory.

3. Data Protection & Confidentiality

- respect confidentiality within the County setup.
- follow basic data protection expectations, including GDPR.
- not share confidential information outside the County environment.
- complete GDPR awareness training if requested.

4. Participation & Visibility

- attend at least one county training session unless excused for valid reasons.
- respond promptly to SCC availability messages.

5. Team Culture Expectations

- prioritise a team-first mindset.
- treat all volunteers, coaches, officials and players with respect.
- not use third parties (including family) to challenge decisions.
- raise questions and concerns directly and appropriately.
- represent NCBA with professionalism on and off court.

6. Eligibility During Ongoing Issues

- understand that any grievance or disciplinary matter must be resolved before SCC consideration.
- accept Committee decisions and complete any required actions.

7. Selection Consideration

- understand that meeting these expectations allows consideration but does not guarantee selection.
- accept that selection depends on team balance, form, availability, behaviour and overall squad needs.

Player Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 4

11. TEAM SELECTION SUB-COMMITTEE

1. Composition: The team selection sub-committee shall consist of two or three, (depending on the number of teams, to make sure there is an odd number) members who shall be appointed by the committee. These 2/3 members will select county team captains for the season who will be co-opted onto this sub-committee with full voting powers.
2. Powers: The sub-committee will have the power to (a) select the teams to represent the county; (b) appoint an acting captain for any county match when the captain will not be available; (c) arrange trials and practices for the county teams;
3. award colours to such of the players that have played for the county, and such persons as have rendered outstanding service to the county as they think proper and in any event those players who have played regularly for the county for two consecutive seasons.

Appendix 5 – Proposed Selection criteria

1 Season Commitment and confirmed availability

2 Recent performance and form

3 Squad and pairing balance

4 Behaviour and contribution to team culture

5 To attend monthly training if offered by the county, unless otherwise agreed with the selection committee

6 Attendance to the Restricted is strongly advised (U19, Senior and/or masters)