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MEDIA INFORMATION

AELTC SHARES EXCITEMENT FOR THE RETURN OF THE CHAMPIONSHIPS IN 2021 ALONGSIDE ADDITION OF MIDDLE SUNDAY FROM 2022

London, UK, Tuesday 27 April 2021: The All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) today outlined our aspiration to kick off the British summer of sport in style with the return of The Championships in 2021.

Chairman Ian Hewitt commented: "I would like to say how excited we are that Wimbledon will be back this summer, with the best tennis players in the world competing on our grass courts, in front of our passionate spectators. While it will, necessarily, be different from Wimbledon as we know it, we are full of enthusiasm and totally committed to our return following last year's cancellation."

Chief Executive Sally Bolton added: "We would like to thank all those with whom we continue to work across government, public health and other sporting bodies for their support to make this a reality, to bring back sporting events in the way that we all recognise. Our priority has and will always be to do this safely, with the support and trust of all our stakeholders."

We are currently working to a spectator capacity position of around 25%, based on the current Sports Grounds Safety Authority guidance, but we will remain flexible as we await the outcome of the government's Event Research Programme and clarity on the likelihood of restrictions relaxing beyond 21 June.

Bolton added: "We very much hope 25% is a minimum position from which we can build - it is our absolute desire to enable as many people as possible to safely attend The Championships this year. At the heart of our thinking is the intention to create the mix of spectators for which Wimbledon is known, while also working hard to protect the financial performance of The Championships, including the surplus that we deliver for the benefit of British tennis."

Looking beyond 2021, the AELTC also announced a significant development to enhance The Championships, and open up tennis, for the future. From 2022, to coincide with the centenary of Centre Court, Middle Sunday will become a permanent part of the tournament schedule, turning The Championships into a 14-day event.

Hewitt commented: "Thanks to improved grass court technology and maintenance over the past five years or so and other measures, we are comfortable that we are able to look after the courts, most particularly Centre Court, without a full day of rest."

"This provides us with the opportunity, at an important time, to enhance the accessibility, reach and fanbase of Wimbledon, and tennis, both in the UK and globally. It will also ensure greater resilience and fairness of the tournament programme for our competitors, and enable us to create a different kind of atmosphere on the Middle Sunday, with a strong focus on the local community in particular. To be able to launch this new tradition at the same time as celebrating the history of Centre Court in 2022 is something we look forward to immensely."

On the longer-term horizon, the AELTC shared an update on the public consultation process for the AELTC Wimbledon Park Project, which aspires to unite our landholdings either side of Church Road to deliver a beautiful venue that pays tribute to the heritage of the landscape, provides significant benefit to the local community, and enables The Championships to remain at the pinnacle of the sport.

Hewitt commented: "We believe these proposals represent an enormous opportunity for The Championships and will be of great benefit to our two local boroughs, and generally to London, the UK, and beyond."

The AELTC will be seeking the views of all those who wish to share their feedback on the future of Wimbledon through a [survey](#), launched today, to ensure that those who have an interest in, and are passionate about The Championships, are helping to shape our future.

FURTHER INFORMATION

1. THE 134th CHAMPIONSHIPS - AN EXCITING EVENT, THAT REMAINS SAFE AND TRUSTED

What is our aspiration for this year's Championships?

We want to deliver the best Championships possible this year. We want all who visit Wimbledon to feel excited and joyful, but also well looked after. We want our local communities to feel safe, and that they can trust us. And we want the government and public health authorities to feel confident in the measures we have put in place.

What measures will we have in place to keep spectators safe?

- We will be following the Sports Grounds Safety Authority guidance in respect of social distancing requirements and other recommendations. At this point in time, we expect there to be a form of social distancing throughout the Grounds, but we are remaining flexible should this change.
- In addition to Centre, No.1 and No.2, we will be ticketing No.3 Court, and Courts 12 and 18.
- Tickets for the public will be sold exclusively online and all tickets will be distributed via the official Wimbledon mobile app.
- The AELTC Grounds will be a cashless site.

What is the reasoning for the Minimised Risk Environments?

- The creation of Minimised Risk Environments for players and their support teams, officials, and key player-facing staff, both on our Grounds and through official accommodation, is a critical requirement to enable us to welcome players from around the world safely into the country without the need to quarantine.

What is our position on testing and vaccination?

- We will have robust testing and track and trace programmes in place for those within the Minimised Risk Environments.
- We await the outcomes of the Event Research Programme and the government's review into COVID-status certification before making any decisions on any requirement for vaccines or negative tests for spectators to attend The Championships, but we are supportive of the government's ongoing discussions on this topic.

Will you be providing tickets for key workers?

- Saying thank you to those people and organisations who contributed so much during the pandemic will be a focus this year throughout The Championships, including within the Chairman's invitations to the Royal Box. Among the initiatives will be the 'Thank you key workers hospitality programme' run by evian, Official Water of The Championships. This will see front line workers who were nominated and selected in last year's ticket giveaway enjoy a once-in-a-lifetime experience at Wimbledon as a gesture of thanks for their amazing work.

Who else will get tickets and when will they go on sale?

- We are working hard to be as fair to all our spectator groups as possible, and to create the mix for which we are known and proud of. But this is a difficult year with difficult decisions, and no-one is more conscious than we are of the impact of the likely reduced capacity.
- For this reason, we are leaving it as late as possible to finalise our ticketing allocations. We hope to have a better idea of the government's approach to any restrictions post 21 June in early June, and at that point in time, will communicate further details. We recommend that anyone interested in tickets for this year's Championships signs up to *myWIMBLEDON* to ensure they are kept abreast of any updates.
- All tickets available to the public will be sold online, and delivered via the official Wimbledon mobile app.
- Tickets will be available for Centre, No.1, No.2 and No.3 Courts, Courts 12 and 18, and Grounds Passes.

Why are you not yet announcing prize money?

- Given that we are not able to fully understand what the financial performance of The Championships will be, we are not yet able to decide on our prize money levels for our competitors. We expect to announce this at some point in June.

What else is new this year?

- 2021 will be the first Championships for a number of key roles: Chairman Ian Hewitt, Chief Executive Sally Bolton, Operations Director Michelle Dite, Head of Professional Tennis and Tournament Director Jamie Baker and Referee Gerry Armstrong.

- Our campaign for The Championships 2021 will launch in the week after Roland-Garros, and will celebrate the passion of our fans, thank those who have gone above and beyond in supporting us through the pandemic, and create a spotlight for tennis, and for sport, as we begin to embrace a return towards normality. We are also exploring collaborations with other sporting events and organisations, including UEFA, on celebrating the summer of sport.
- All Championships Courts will feature electronic player challenges, with Courts 4-11 being installed with the technology this year. Please note, this technology will not replace linespeople, who remain an important element of our officiating set-up.
- The introduction of a shot/serve clock at both The Championships and Qualifying Competition.
- The pre-match warm-up will be 1-4-1: one minute after walk-on to be ready for the pre-match meeting, followed by the four-minute warm-up, then one minute to be ready to start the match (revised from 1-5-1 in 2019).
- A reminder that the decision was taken to discontinue the use of a grass court seeding formula for the men and that going forward seedings will follow the Tour rankings for both men and women.
- Environmental sustainability remains a priority for the AELTC, with our development plans guided by our published commitment to deliver a positive environmental impact by 2030. Among the initiatives for this year are measures to enhance our circular resource model and the continued reduction of single-use plastic, including a new sustainably sourced card container for the traditional Wimbledon strawberries and cream, and, with the outstanding support from the official food and drink partners of The Championships, the introduction of a reusable cup for cold drinks.
- All ticketholders will receive free entry into the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum where they will be able to view the newly-installed portrait of Andy Murray, painted by Maggi Hambling CBE and originally unveiled in 2020, which is on temporary loan from the National Portrait Gallery to the Museum. The loan is part of the National Portrait Gallery's *COMING HOME* project, which sees portraits of iconic individuals being installed in significant places with which they are closely associated.
- The Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum will also feature a special exhibition on the centenary of Centre Court, taking place in 2022. The exhibition explores the role that Centre Court has played as a witness to a period of considerable social and cultural progress, and the platform that the court, and The Championships, has provided for that change.
- The Wimbledon Foundation continues to provide support to communities across our two local boroughs, London, and the UK, through its Coronavirus Fund, which has distributed £1.5m to local and national charities. You can find out more in the Foundation's [Annual Review](#) for 2020.

What are the key dates?

- Wednesday 16 June: Further updates on The Championships including wild cards
- Monday 21-Thursday 24 June: Qualifying Competition, Bank of England Sports Club
- Wednesday 23 June: Seeds announced
- Friday 25 June: Official Draw
- Saturday 26 June and Sunday 27 June: Player Media Availabilities (players and times TBC)
- Monday 28 June-Sunday 11 July: The Championships 2021
- Monday 5-Sunday 11 July: The Junior Championships (18&U)
- Thursday 8-Sunday 11 July: The Wheelchair and Quad Wheelchair Championships

2. MIDDLE SUNDAY – A NEW TRADITION FROM 2022

From 2022, we intend to make Middle Sunday a permanent part of our event schedule, thus expanding The Championships to a 14-day tournament.

Why are you choosing to make this change?

- It has never been more important for sports events to be proactively taking steps to enhance their accessibility, in order to reach broader and more diverse audiences. Introducing an extra day to our schedule, on a Sunday, will enable us to do this at this important time.
- It will also enable us to provide greater resilience to the tournament programme for the benefit of our competitors. By adding the Middle Sunday, and being able to spread the fourth round over two days as the other Grand Slams do, we will be able to improve the programme and do justice to the second Monday. While much-loved as 'Manic Monday', the current staging of the entire fourth round on one day brings many significant player and spectator challenges.
- It also offers an opportunity to create a different kind of atmosphere and tradition on the Middle Sunday through an additional day of ticket distribution, with our desire to focus on the local community in particular.

Why 2022?

- In 2022, we will celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the AELTC's move to the Church Road Grounds, and 100 years of Centre Court. This centenary will be the theme of The Championships 2022 and will be celebrated throughout the Fortnight. It felt like the perfect opportunity to pay tribute to Centre Court through a new tradition for the future while celebrating our heritage at the same time.

What about the grass courts?

- Traditionally, Middle Sunday has provided a vital opportunity to water the courts, particularly Centre Court, which is the most heavily used.
- With thanks to improved grass court technology and maintenance over the past five years or so and other measures, we are now comfortable that the courts, most particularly Centre Court, can be maintained without a full day of rest.
- Across the 14 days, we will be maximising all windows to provide additional water to the courts to keep the grass plant in good condition, in particular on Centre Court, and we will also take minimising wear into account in our scheduling decisions.
- The steaming process that we have introduced has seen better wear tolerance in the grass plant and will be something we continue to invest in.
- Ultimately, grass remains a living, natural surface which is susceptible to fluctuations in weather and temperature, and so the measures we need to take will adapt accordingly to best maintain the courts.

What will the impact be on the local community and how will we address this?

- We recognise that adding an additional day to the tournament programme will not be without impact on our local community. That is why we want to work in collaboration with our key local stakeholders to discuss and agree how the Middle Sunday will come to fruition. We also want to make this very much a day for the local community, and will look forward to discussing how we deliver on that aspiration, through ticketing allocations and other activation opportunities.

Has play on Middle Sunday happened before?

- Play on Middle Sunday has previously taken place at The Championships in 1991, 1997, 2004 and 2016.

3. THE FUTURE OF WIMBLEDON

Investing and developing for the long term remain key priorities for the AELTC, and the past year has provided us with the opportunity to consider and invest time in looking to the future.

What is The AELTC Wimbledon Park Project?

- A hundred years ago, in 1921, our predecessors were advancing plans and designs for the move of the All England Club from Worple Road to our present Church Road Grounds. Now, a century later, we are developing proposals for our landholding in Wimbledon Park, currently the Wimbledon Park Golf Club.
- We are in active public consultation on these proposals, our two guiding objectives being to maintain the position of The Championships at the pinnacle of the sport (including moving Qualifying into our Estate by 2028), and to enhance the benefit we provide for our community, in particular the local community. We believe these proposals represent an enormous opportunity and will be of great benefit not just to The Championships, but to our two local boroughs, to London, and beyond. Our five core principles are:
 - First, to create an unparalleled, beautiful setting, that pays tribute to the heritage of the landscape.
 - Second, to deliver a memorable experience, of the highest quality, for every guest – Championships and year-round. This includes bringing our Qualifying event onsite, and, most notably, creating a new Parkland show court, a beautiful structure that will be sensitively integrated into the landscape.
 - Third, to nurture and restore the heritage landscape and to support our environment positive objectives. Playing our part in the global climate challenge remains extremely important to us.
 - Fourth is to deliver a year-round experience that will provide community benefit.
 - And finally, to deliver an experience that will enhance the economic impact of The Championships, for the benefit of British tennis, for our local boroughs, London and the UK.

More detail on the process, including the consultation materials, is available on wimbledon.com.

Where does this fit in the creation of a new Master Plan?

- The AELTC Estate Master Plan is an evolving vision for the future of the AELTC Estate, and aims to provide a framework against which new development will be assessed in order to meet the AELTC's objectives to maintain Wimbledon's position at the pinnacle of the sport, to act as a guardian of tennis, and to be a force for good in society. The AELTC Wimbledon Park Project is a core component of this vision.

How can we share our thoughts?

- The AELTC Wimbledon Park Project, and the introduction of Middle Sunday next year, remain developing proposals, and we recognise that a great many people will have thoughts, ideas and feedback on these two areas of opportunity for our future, and we are very keen to hear these.
- We are launching a survey to collect and listen to your feedback, most particularly for those who live locally, but also nationally and internationally, so that those who are interested in and care passionately about The Championships are helping to shape our future.
- [Please click here to access the survey.](#)

- ENDS -

For further information please contact:

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