

A report commissioned by the DSTC council to evaluate squash membership and court utilisation between 2014 to 2024 and make recommendations on future court requirement.

3rd January 2025

The report is in four sections.

- 1. Squash membership (as a club) over the past 10 years (2014 to 2024)**
- 2. A review of squash court bookings over the last 10 years, excluding COVID19 and the flood.**
- 3. Squash court bookings over the last 2 years post the flood.**
- 4. Conclusions and recommendations**

Section 1: Club membership 2014 to 2024, viewed pre & post COVID19, pre and post the flood

Background.

Duffield Squash and Tennis Club (DSTC) currently has 5 courts, 4 in use and a fifth still under repair after the flood of October 2023.

- Prior to the merger of the Duffield squash club and tennis club the squash community were totally responsible for the squash club as a standalone entity. Therefore, it was a squash club first and last that catered for and was only responsible to its membership, as was the tennis club.
- After the vote by the two clubs' membership on the 6th February 2024 the two clubs amalgamated and became the Duffield Squash and Tennis Club on the 1st April 2024 and post this date there is now an entity (DSTC) that happens to provide tennis and squash and other related sport & fitness offerings.
- This is a subtle distinction, but a very important one when the club needs to consider its future for at least the next 5 years or so.
- DSTC is a member's club and although not entirely driven by the profit motive it must still ensure it meets its legal and financial obligations to its creditors when their debts fall due. The new entity is a CASC registered unincorporated organisation and is exempt from corporation tax.

The club sport picture in England.

Register membership numbers for England 2016 to 2023

	2016	2023	Change
Rugby	270000	220000	-18.5%
Football	2299000	2135500	-7.1%
Tennis	889300	861000	-3.2%
Squash & racketball	450000	250000	-44.4%
Cricket	364000	340000	-6.6%
Badminton	950000	725000	-23.7%

Source: Stastta

- Squash nationally has declined substantially over the last 25 years from c3.5m registered club players to c450k in 2014, to c250k today.
- These figures now also include racketball players, so the "pure squash" players are less than recorded.
- However, this is not a trend limited to squash as the table below shows as interests, even society, has changed in the intervening period..
- Indoor sports have particularly suffered a steep decline.

Section 1: Club membership 2014 to 2024, viewed pre & post COVID19, pre and post the flood

- It is worth noting that the two indoor sports (squash and badminton) have suffered the most in the last 10 years as recreational sport has changed nationally.
- It would also be wrong to blame this on the recent issues of COVID19 as both squash and badminton were on the decline well before 2020, and COVID19. Their recovery has been substantially worse than other sports since 2021.
- As a result, there is an uncomfortable, inevitable reality that DSTC needs to face, understand and deal with.
- Notwithstanding that squash will become an Olympic sport in 2028, it is difficult to perceive participation will return to the heights of participation of around 2000, 2014 or even pre COVID19 in 2020. However, it is also unclear where the decline will 'bottom / plateau out'.

Looking at squash and the Duffield participation from 2014, through COVID19 and pre and post the flood.

It is worth looking at the squash membership in several ways:

- 2014 to 2024
- 2014 to 2020 (pre COVID19)
- Post COVID19, 2021 to 2024 pre and post the flood
- Split: Full, restricted and junior membership

Base figures.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2014 to 2024 comparison	
												Number	Percentage
Full	342	324	345	316	318	310	298	223	272	269	224	-118	-34.5%
Restricted	128	125	106	65	60	57	70	41	51	44	41	-87	-68.0%
Junior	56	43	39	42	41	37	43	43	68	71	58	2	3.6%
Total	526	492	490	423	419	404	411	307	391	384	323	-203	-38.6%

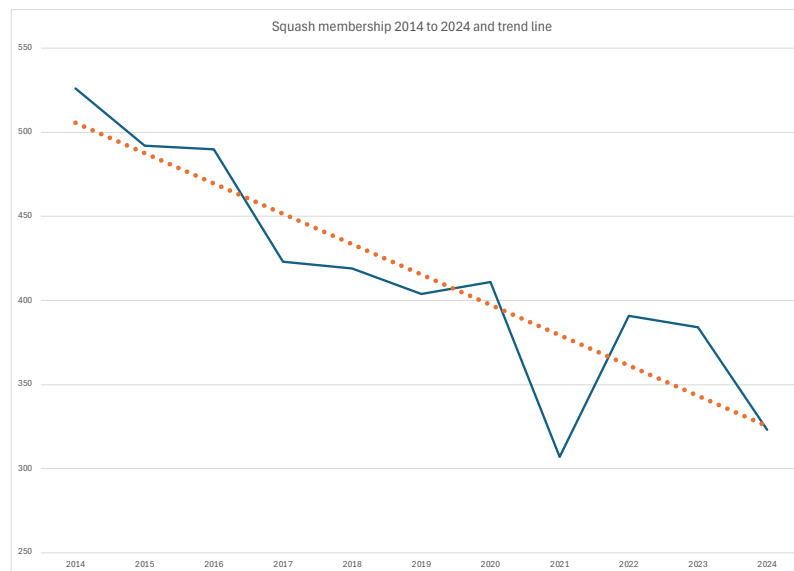
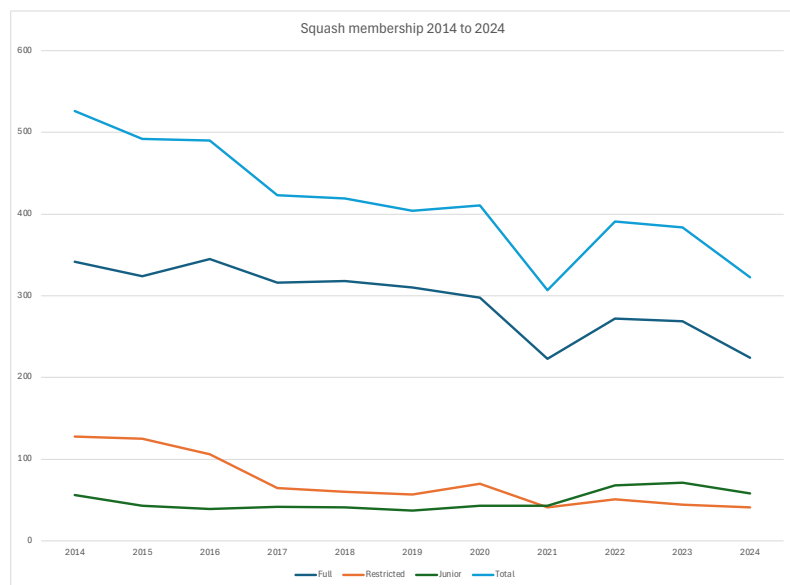
Section 1: Club membership 2014 to 2024, viewed pre & post COVID19, pre and post the flood

As can be seen, since 2014, squash membership has reduced by over 200 members across the three categories, but on a less decline than the national average.

- Junior numbers have remained flat over the 10 years.
- However, the largest drop is in restricted members by 68%. This isn't altogether surprising as full members tend to be "hard core competitive" players whereas the restricted are more likely recreational / social players.
- This is reflected in the internal leagues at the club, that now number c50+ members but 20 years ago were closer to 200.

Viewing the individual numbers graphically and then total numbers as a whole

Graphs 1 &2: Membership numbers 2014 to 2024

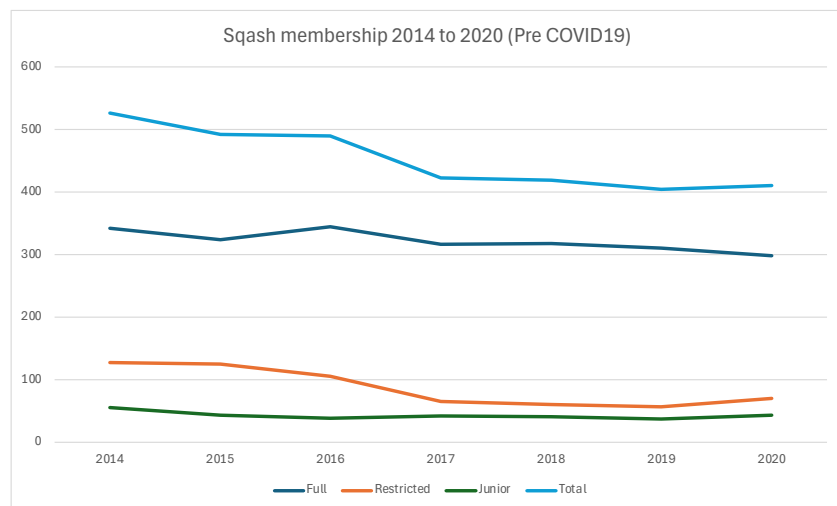


Section 1: Club membership 2014 to 2020, viewed pre & post COVID19 pre and post the flood

This doesn't tell the whole story because we need to look at the numbers 2014 up to the effect of COVID19.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Numbers	
Full	342	324	345	316	318	310	298	-44	-12.9%
Restricted	128	125	106	65	60	57	70	-58	-45.3%
Junior	56	43	39	42	41	37	43	-13	-23.2%
Total	526	492	490	423	419	404	411	-115	-21.9%

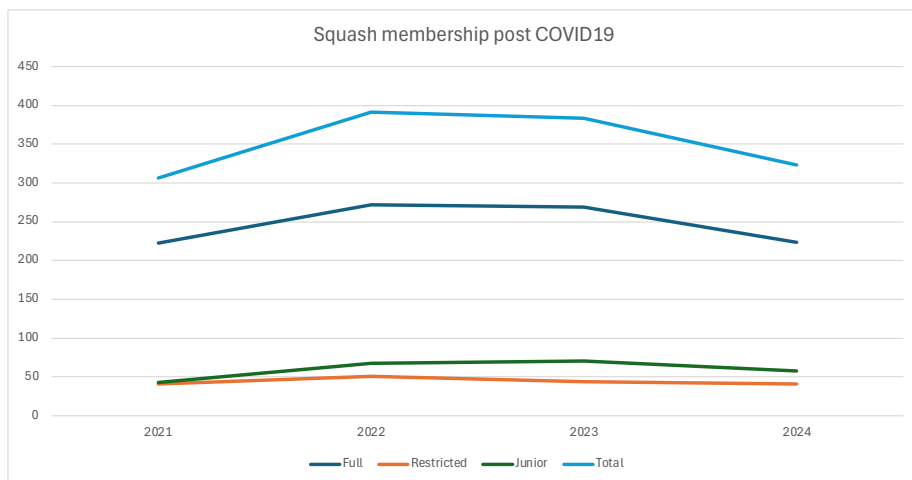
From 2014 and 2020 (pre COVID) the squash membership dropped by 22% or 115 members with the largest group being restricted members. In today's money, this represents around c£18,000 in annual fee revenue and an estimated further c£18,000K in court fee income.



Post COVID in comparing years 2021 to 2024 'appears' to be one of stability – see table below.

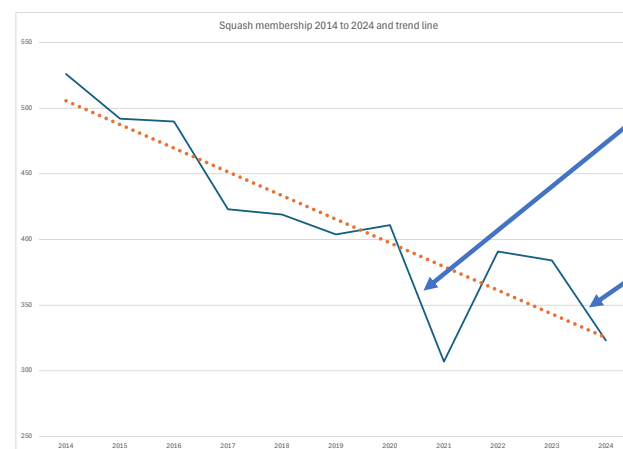
2021	2022	2023	2024
223	272	269	224
41	51	44	41
43	68	71	58
307	391	384	323

Section 1: Club membership 2021 to 2024, pre and post the flood



- After a recovery post COVID from 2021 to 2022 something has changed.
- There was an immediate uptake post COVID19 but within a year the membership numbers started to show signs of returning to around the trend line of the previous 10 years.
- However, the flood had a devastating 'stalling effect' on this membership recovery such that 2024 membership is now no better than just before COVID19.

	2023	2024	Numbers	
Full	269	224	-45	-16.7%
Restricted	44	41	-3	-6.8%
Junior	71	58	-13	-18.3%
Total	384	323	-61	-15.9%



Three questions:

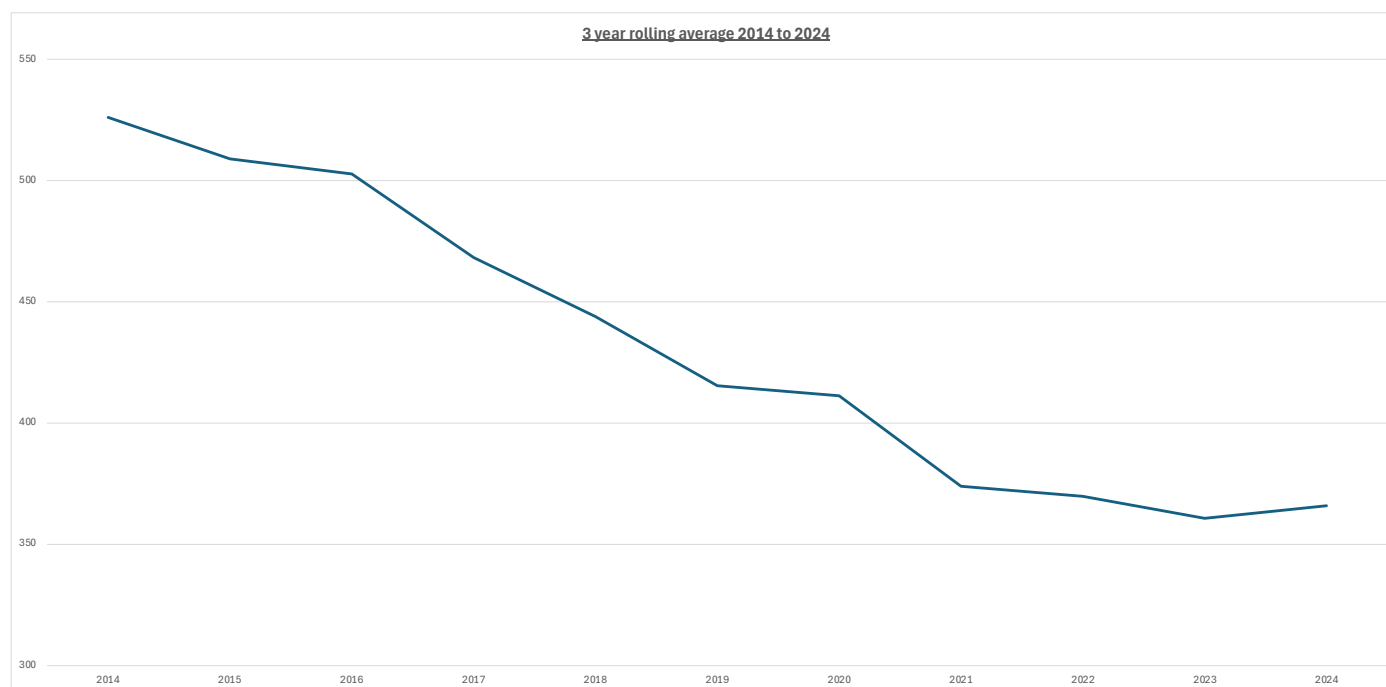
1. Did the last time of COVID19 & the flood 'just arrest' the decline or merely delayed it
2. if the latter what will the membership be when this decline flattens out
3. Is there local demand to get 200 new members into the club back to the 2014 level?

Section 1: 3 year rolling average club membership 2021 to 2024, pre and post the flood

Three questions: There is another way to look at the membership using a 3 year rolling average. It certainly looks to answer questions 1 & 2

1. Did the lost time of COVID19 & the flood 'just arrest' the decline or merely delayed it
2. if the latter what will the membership be when this decline flattens out
3. Is there local demand to get 200 new members into the club back to the 2014 level?

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total membership	526	492	490	423	419	404	411	307	391	384	323
3 year rolling average	526	509	503	468	444	415	411	374	370	361	366
Change Yr on Yr		-3.2%	-1.2%	-6.8%	-5.2%	-6.5%	-1.0%	-9.1%	-1.2%	-2.4%	1.5%



- Note: these figures are a 3 year rolling average and not the same as the actual membership numbers in any one year.
- By using a 3 year rolling average it smooths out the peaks and troughs of membership (particularly over the last 3 years of COVID19 and the flood) and “**implies**” that the membership decline is starting to “plateau out” between 2021 and 2024.
- This base level would indicate around a average of c360 members (actual 2024 at 323).
- The next question is: is there **latent demand to find c100+ new members** (growth including attrition in each year) to get the “pure squash / racketball” players up to c450 ish?

Section 2: Squash court utilisation.

There are three sayings / rules that can apply to the squash court utilisation analysis.

- Face reality as it is, not as it was or you wish it were:

Jack Welch...Fortune Magazine, January 1991

- You can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time:

John Lydgate...c15 Century monk and poet.

- There are lies, dammed lies and statistics:

Mark Twain...c1907

Section 2: Squash court utilisation.

- It is reasonable to expect with falling membership the court utilisation would also fall.
- Court utilisation has been reviewed over the last 10 years since the introduction of MyCourts

- Looking at straight utilisation as number of courts available to those being used in any week gives a distorted picture.
- Court usage at weekends is substantially lower than during the week and there are peak times in the week that distort the picture on any given weekday.

- We need to look at usage as: general usage, peak usage, off-peak usage, weekdays and weekends to get a fair and reasonable picture.

- The analysis is based on:
 - The number of court bookings (22 sessions each day) from 8.00am to c10.00pm.
 - All courts booked, by court session over a 52 week year.
 - The bookings have been analysed into Team + events sessions and individual court bookings.
 - The bookings have been split (and analysed) between Monday to Friday and the weekend.

NOTE: All the data used excludes the COVID19 period and the time of the flood as these 'no court time' would unreasonably distort what has been happening.

Section 2: Squash court utilisation.

There are some headline stats that are also useful that drive the various graphs that follow.

On any day at 8.00am to 10.00pm, over 10 years, Monday to Friday, with 5 courts available there are a possible 13,000 courts available and for weekends 5,200 calculated in the following way:

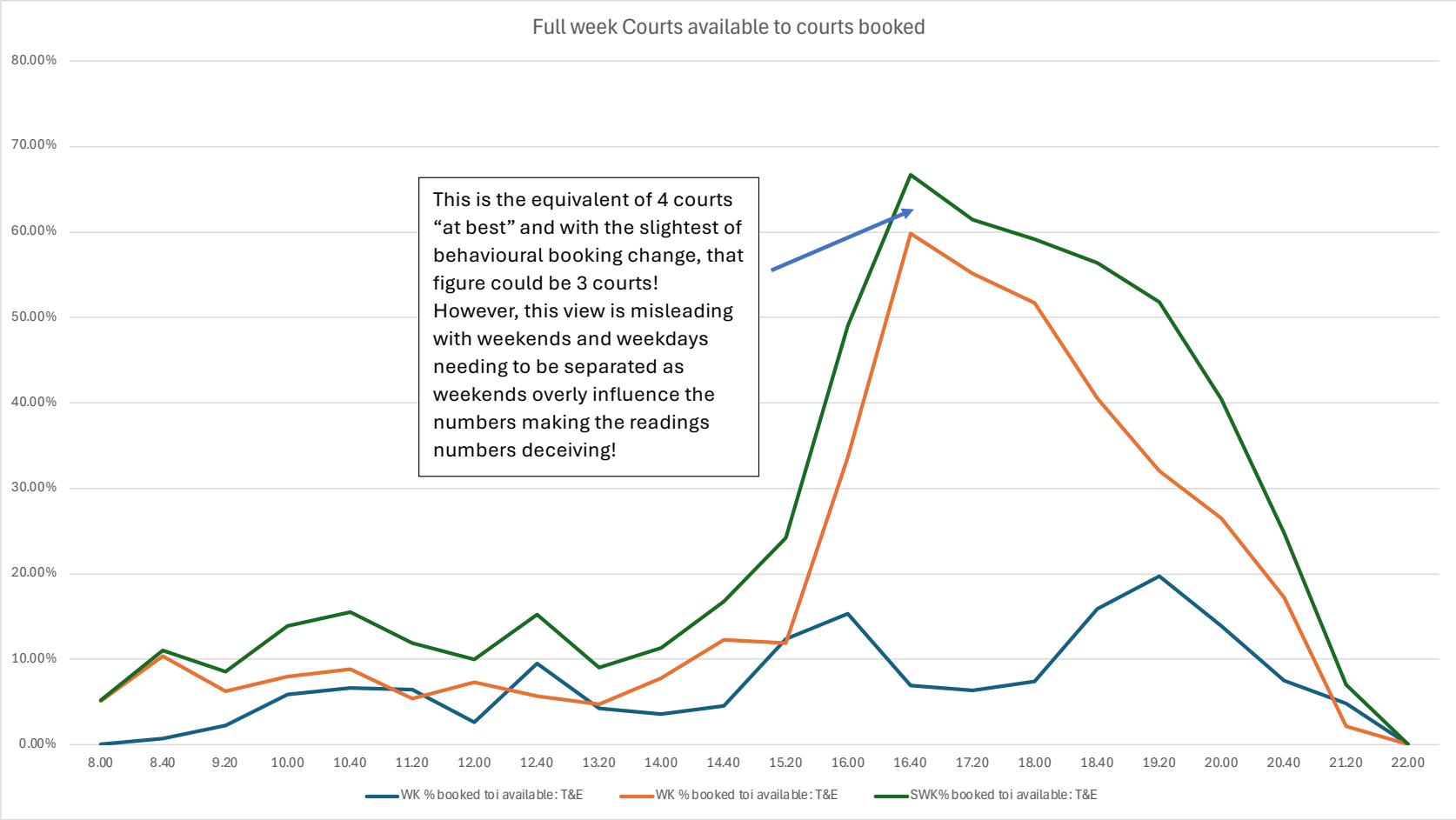
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • 5 courts | 5 courts |
| • 52 weeks | 52 weeks |
| • 10 years | 10 years |
| • Monday to Friday: 5 days | Saturday and Sunday: 2 days |
| • 13,000 court sessions available | 5,200 court sessions available |

Three base sets of data

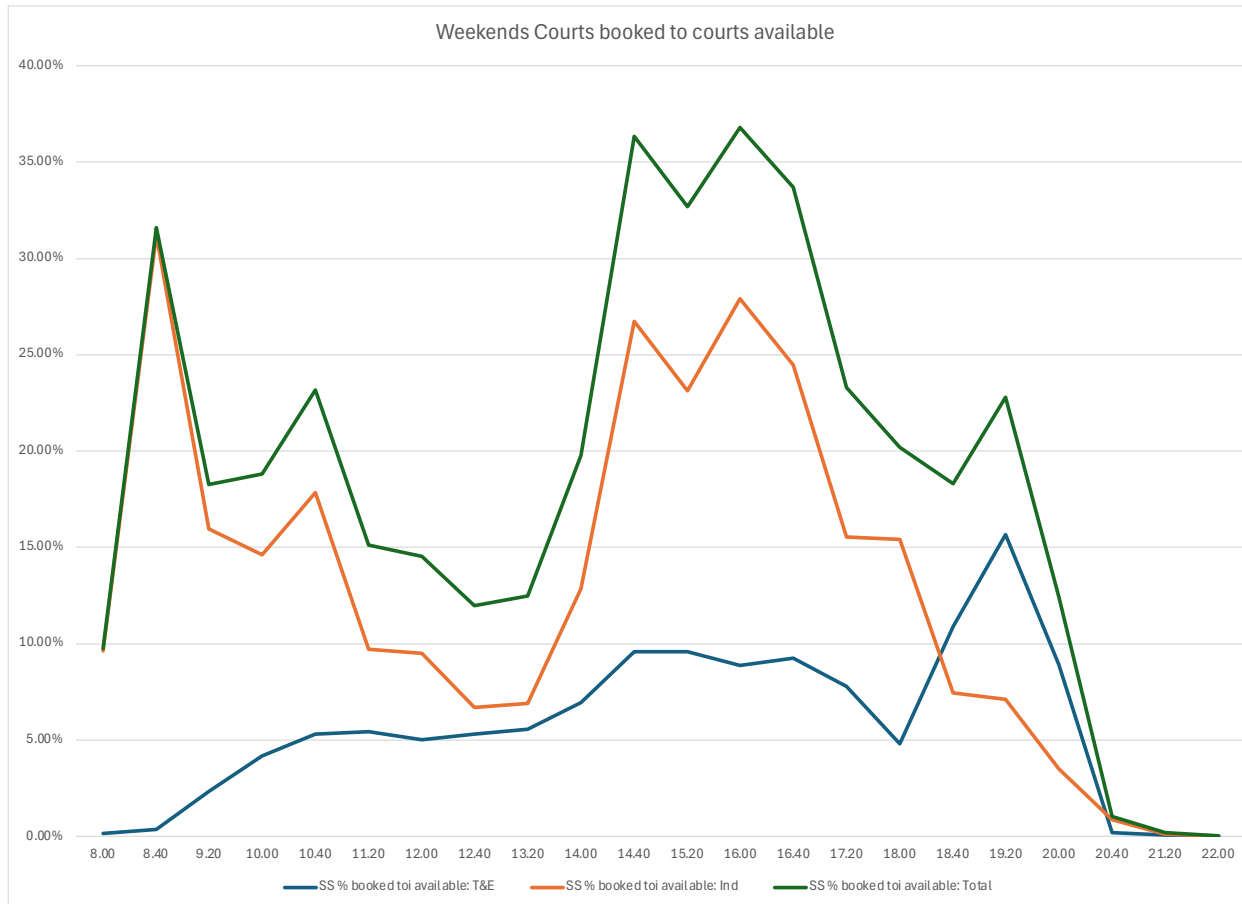
- The following three graphs show usage over the 7 days – Weekdays and weekends combined
- Monday to Friday usage, and
- Weekends

See appendix 1 for the full data set.

Section 2: Squash court utilisation: 2014 to 2024 (excluding COVID19 & the flood).



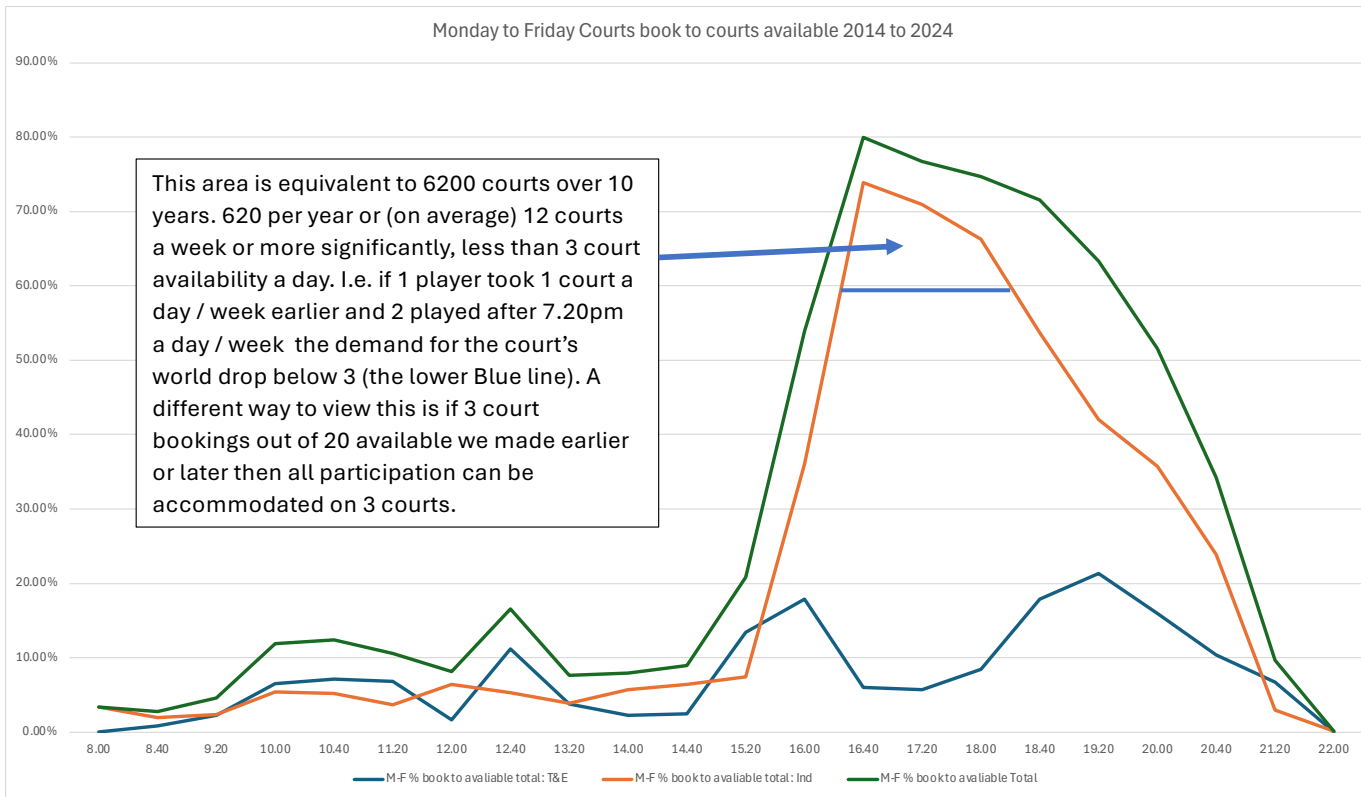
Section 2: Squash court utilisation: weekends.



Weekends comments.

- The average courts needed in any booked timeslot on a weekend never exceeds 2 (40%) for the last 10 years, bearing in mind there are 5 courts available.
- For individual members, there is a spike usage in the morning between 8.00am and 10.40am and again from c2.00pm to around 6.00pm.
- However, during this time the court demand is still well below 2 courts (40%) of all courts available.
- Team + events usage has an average demand between 8.00am and 6.40pm of (on average) 1 court in any timeslot. This is understandable for Team events or competitions as this is when latter rounds and finals are likely to be scheduled.
- When looked in the absolute the weekend squash and racketball usage is easily accommodated with (on average) 3 courts or less with substantial capacity if it were ever called upon.

Section 2: Squash court utilisation: weekends.



Weekend comments.

- For teams + events, it can be shown that the average need for courts never gets above the need for 2 courts (40%) **over the last 10 years**. Practically, a team will require 2 courts, and this tends to be courts 3 and 4.
- There are the rare times when 2 teams are at home but given the need then there is still more than enough court availability to accommodate them on these rare occasions.
- There is a peak demand between c4.20pm and 6.00pm when individual members book and play.
- At this time the demand peaks at just over 3 courts (when there are 5 available) for the (less than) two-hour block. **It could be argued that this is a behavioural pattern over many years and could be simply modified.**

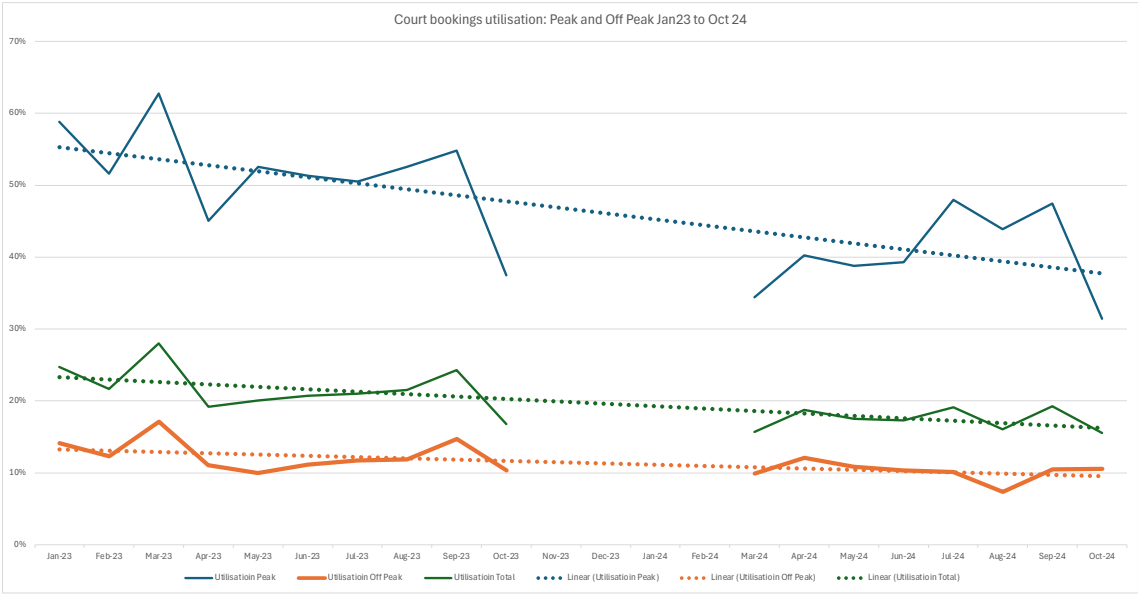
Section 3: Squash court bookings – Post COVID19 but taking into account the Flood.

The table below shows court bookings to courts available each month between January 2023 to end October 2023, then the courts out of action due to the flood and the uptake since courts 2 to 5 have been reinstated from March 2024 to end October 2024.

	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24
peak	441	387	471	338	394	385	379	394	411	281					258	302	291	295	360	329	356	236
off-peak	339	296	411	266	239	268	282	285	354	249					237	290	261	249	243	176	252	253
total	780	683	882	604	633	653	661	679	765	530					495	592	552	544	603	505	608	489
Difference compared with 2023															-387	-12	-81	-109	-58	-174	-157	-41

Peak courts available	750	750	750	750	750	750	750	750	750	750					750	750	750	750	750	750	750	750
Off peak courts available	2400	2400	2400	2400	2400	2400	2400	2400	2400	2400					2400	2400	2400	2400	2400	2400	2400	2400
Total courts available	3150	3150	3150	3150	3150	3150	3150	3150	3150	3150					3150	3150	3150	3150	3150	3150	3150	3150

Utilisatioin Peak	59%	52%	63%	45%	53%	51%	51%	53%	55%	37%					34%	40%	39%	39%	48%	44%	47%	31%
Utilisatioin Off Peak	14%	12%	17%	11%	10%	11%	12%	12%	15%	10%					10%	12%	11%	10%	10%	7%	11%	11%
Utilisatioin Total	25%	22%	28%	19%	20%	21%	21%	22%	24%	17%					16%	19%	18%	17%	19%	16%	19%	16%



- Every 20% represents 1 court.
- Bookings have been on a decline for the last two years...despite the flood.
- Given the context of between Weekends and Weekdays (Peak and Off peak) this still supports the previous comments in that to satisfy squash and racketball demand, the club, at present needs no more than 3 courts but 4 courts will allow for growth.

Section 3: Squash court bookings – Post COVID19 but taking into account the Flood.

- In any one month there are 3150 courts available at any time between 5.00pm to 10.00pm. There are:
 - 750 peak courts available in any month between 5.00am and 9.00pm.
 - 2400 off peak available courts in any month between 8.00am and 5.00pm and 9.00pm to 10.00pm.
 - Peak time average utilisation between January and end September 2023 was 400 / month or 53% (3 courts, but a 4th if needed) with January 2023 at 441 or 59% (3) of courts available
 - As of March to September 2024 it's 313 / month or 42% or 3 courts.
 - Off peak utilisation for both the same timeframes: 304 or 13% or 1 court.
 - As of March to September 2024 it's 244 / month or 10% or 1 court.
- This is despite **court 1 being out of commission** as it needed substantial concrete base rework.
- Between January to October 2023 (the flood), average court bookings were 687 / month, post (March to September) the flood they are 557 / month
- Although this reflects 4 courts available (not 5, post the flood) if demand was there then the booking since January 2023 would have gone up and the 4 court utilisation would have increased. **IT HASN'T, so this can only mean the demand is not there.**

Section 4: Conclusions and recommendations

- Sports (membership) clubs generally have been losing numbers for the last 10 years as social activities / behaviours have changed exacerbated by COVID19.
- Squash membership in England has declined 93% from c3.5m in 2000, to c450k in 2014 and currently around 250k today. This includes racketball that wasn't in the 2000 numbers.
- DSC squash membership **2014 to 2020** has dropped 22% (pre COVID19) a slower decline than the national average which was 44%.
- COVID19 and the flood membership has continued to decline and currently sits at 323 which is still 21% below pre COVID19 levels and 203 since 2014.
- Court booking followed the trend.
 - At weekends, the club demand is no higher than 2 courts per time slot, with 5 available irrespective of Teams + event plus individual requirements.
 - Court utilisation Monday to Friday is only affected at Peak times (between 5.00pm and 8.00pm) when 4 courts are sometimes needed.
 - Largely the numbers show the need for only 3 courts.
- On a 3-year average, squash membership appears to have plateaued at 370 (but 323 actual in 2024)
- The question for the squash committee is can they get the average back to c500 members (2014 figures)?
- Even if they do, the analysis shows that the club still only needs 4 courts to satisfy all demand, weekdays at peak time as it did in 2014.

- **Given the analysis above, DSTC is more than adequately provisioned in the need of courts, if limited to 4, even if membership was increased by 200 new members (the lever in 2014). In 2014, DSTC had 5 courts, when the demand could have been satisfied with 3, more than adequately with 4.**

- **This report recommends taking the current DSTC squash courts from 5 to 4 and it is the responsibility of the Council, with consultation of the membership, to lay out a plan for the clubs internal building redevelopment to propose what is done with the court that is removed, which ever that court is. A draft outline will be presented at the meeting on the 5th February 2025.**

Appendix 1: full court bookings data set

Sessions		8.00	8.40	9.20	10.00	10.40	11.20	12.00	12.40	13.20	14.00	14.40	15.20	16.00	16.40	17.20	18.00	18.40	19.20	20.00	20.40	21.20	22.00
Monday	Team + Events	0	3	18	40	94	93	38	346	51	48	50	131	173	32	55	172	489	591	725	283	81	0
	Individual	29	61	78	188	114	122	219	131	101	160	158	183	1135	2115	1992	1870	1557	1185	897	740	124	4
	Monday Total	29	64	96	228	208	215	257	477	152	208	208	314	1308	2147	2047	2042	2046	1776	1622	1023	205	4
Tuesday	Team + Events	0	2	21	48	54	48	45	126	138	74	111	1039	1110	169	150	131	123	159	137	135	116	0
	Individual	68	70	54	182	254	98	129	112	99	139	158	144	547	1791	1878	1955	1884	1715	1565	992	106	2
	Total	68	72	75	230	308	146	174	238	237	213	269	1183	1657	1960	2028	2086	2007	1874	1702	1127	222	2
Wednesday	Team + Events	0	0	45	67	114	126	80	509	191	128	102	179	462	260	190	386	392	571	193	62	47	0
	Individual	200	53	77	114	121	78	173	134	113	146	170	227	1022	1927	1884	1634	1557	1165	1198	858	68	3
	Total	200	53	122	181	235	204	253	643	304	274	272	406	1484	2187	2074	2020	1949	1736	1391	920	115	3
Thursday	Team + Events	0	84	137	178	184	160	30	37	36	19	31	293	355	97	86	68	645	876	879	841	618	3
	Individual	57	34	32	83	70	72	117	106	72	116	143	129	859	1888	1871	1890	1376	909	736	420	86	2
	Total	57	118	169	261	254	232	147	143	108	135	174	422	1214	1985	1957	1958	2021	1785	1615	1261	704	5
Friday	Team + Events	6	15	72	513	486	466	27	440	71	29	33	104	225	227	267	339	674	581	135	33	11	1
	Individual	82	37	70	130	124	114	199	210	115	180	210	278	1120	1888	1597	1268	608	486	244	88	5	0
	Total	88	52	142	643	610	580	226	650	186	209	243	382	1345	2115	1864	1607	1282	1067	379	121	16	1
Week day aver.	Team + Events	6	104	293	846	932	893	220	1458	487	298	327	1746	2325	785	748	1096	2323	2778	2069	1354	873	4
	Individual	436	255	311	697	683	494	837	693	500	741	839	961	4683	9609	9222	8617	6982	5460	4640	3098	389	11
	Total	442	359	604	1543	1615	1377	1057	2151	987	1039	1166	2707	7008	10394	9970	9713	9305	8238	6709	4452	1262	15
		13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000	13000
Courts availab 52 weeks x 5 days X 5 courts X 10 years = sessions available																							
M-F % book to :		0.05%	0.80%	2.25%	6.51%	7.17%	6.87%	1.69%	11.22%	3.75%	2.29%	2.52%	13.43%	17.88%	6.04%	5.75%	8.43%	17.87%	21.37%	15.92%	10.42%	6.72%	0.03%
M-F % book to :		3.35%	1.96%	2.39%	5.36%	5.25%	3.72%	6.44%	5.33%	3.85%	5.70%	6.45%	7.39%	36.02%	73.92%	70.94%	66.28%	53.71%	42.00%	35.69%	23.83%	2.99%	0.08%
M-F % book to :		3.40%	2.76%	4.65%	11.87%	12.42%	10.59%	8.13%	16.55%	7.59%	7.99%	8.97%	20.82%	53.91%	79.95%	76.69%	74.72%	71.58%	63.37%	51.61%	34.25%	9.71%	0.12%
		8.00	8.40	9.20	10.00	10.40	11.20	12.00	12.40	13.20	14.00	14.40	15.20	16.00	16.40	17.20	18.00	18.40	19.20	20.00	20.40	21.20	22.00
Saturday	Team + Events	7	18	65	91	119	119	113	138	164	251	418	426	416	402	292	112	43	22	5	4	4	0
	Individual	371	1122	604	479	572	294	205	170	217	433	1043	936	967	797	456	252	115	52	17	8	0	0
	Total	378	1140	669	570	691	413	318	308	381	684	1461	1362	1383	1199	748	364	158	74	22	12	4	0
Sunday	Team + Events	0	1	55	127	157	163	147	137	125	110	81	72	46	78	113	137	522	793	459	6	0	0
	Individual	129	502	226	282	356	210	290	178	142	235	348	266	484	475	351	549	272	318	165	36	5	2
	Total	129	503	281	409	513	373	437	315	267	345	429	338	530	553	464	686	794	1111	624	42	5	2
Weekends	Team + Events	7	19	120	218	276	282	260	275	289	361	499	498	462	480	405	249	565	815	464	10	4	0
	Individual	500	1624	830	761	928	504	495	348	359	668	1391	1202	1451	1272	807	801	387	370	182	44	5	2
	Total	507	1643	950	979	1204	786	755	623	648	1029	1890	1700	1913	1752	1212	1050	952	1185	646	54	9	2
Courts available		5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200	5200
This = 52 weeks x 2 days X 5 courts X 10 years = sessions available																							
SS % booked tc		0.13%	0.37%	2.31%	4.19%	5.31%	5.42%	5.00%	5.29%	5.56%	6.94%	9.60%	9.58%	8.88%	9.23%	7.79%	4.79%	10.87%	15.67%	8.92%	0.19%	0.08%	0.00%
SS % booked tc		9.62%	31.23%	15.96%	14.63%	17.85%	9.69%	9.52%	6.69%	6.90%	12.85%	26.75%	23.12%	27.90%	24.46%	15.52%	15.40%	7.44%	7.12%	3.50%	0.85%	0.10%	0.04%
SS % booked tc		9.75%	31.60%	18.27%	18.83%	23.15%	15.12%	14.52%	11.98%	12.46%	19.79%	36.35%	32.69%	36.79%	33.69%	23.31%	20.19%	18.31%	22.79%	12.42%	1.04%	0.17%	0.04%