TRAM LINES

YORKSHIRE TENNIS **NEWSLETTER** DECEMBER 2025
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STELLAR YEAR FOR PADEL IN YORKSHIRE

INSIDE LEXUS IKLEY OPEN COUNTY CUP HIGHLIGHTS PLAYER & COACH DEVELOPMENT MEET PAUL BILLINGTON COUNTY TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS

PLUS **TENNIS IN THE COMMUNITY**

LTA | YORKSHIRE TENNIS

Year of significant progress for tennis and padel in Yorkshire

Message from Chris Day, Interim Chair, Yorkshire Tennis

As we approach the year end, I reflect on what has been a year of significant progress for tennis and padel in Yorkshire.

The foundations are strong with financial support from our partners and sponsors and a superb team of volunteers and administrators helping to deliver our core responsibilities.

Our relationship with clubs continues to grow and this year we have helped clubs by providing information and webinars on a range of issues and by providing interest free loans and grants aimed at improving club facilities and operations. Alison Steel is our club engagement lead and stands ready to help with any queries clubs may have.

We are committed to 'opening up' the sports of tennis and padel, with ambitious plans to increase participation by investing further in our open court programme. I wish to thank our sponsors Redmayne Bentley for their generous contribution in supporting club projects and initiatives that have inclusivity at their core, and NIC Services Group for their generous support in sponsoring the Yorkshire Visually Impaired Tennis League, which we believe is the first in the country.

Performance is always high on our agenda, and this year saw the introduction of Yorkshire Player Development Centres, working with our performance team to ensure the county has a constant supply of performance players.

The scheme provides incentives to achieve key targets and, at the end of 2025, **the top three centres were Thongsbridge, Graves/ NexGen and Ilkley**. Well done to them all, Thongsbridge in particular, on topping our inaugural leaderboard.

There have been many on-court highlights this year with Yorkshire players being crowned national champions at individual and team level whilst several players have also represented Great Britain in both tennis and padel.

Our tennis county championships remain a work in progress as we look to increase the quantity and quality of entrants. **Finals day produced some fantastic matches**, with a superb men's singles final which featured Jordan Reed-Thomas and Scott Hillerby in a contest showcasing county tennis at its best.

I would like to end with the **fantastic news that Paul Billington has been appointed as our new Chair**. Paul brings with him the drive, knowledge, skills and experience to lead Yorkshire going forward and I wish him the very best in his role. These are exciting times for Yorkshire Tennis, and I am sure that with Paul at the helm we are in very good hands.

WE'RE HIRING DIRECTORS OF THE COMPANY

Yorkshire Tennis is looking to strengthen its board of directors by recruiting talented and experienced individuals who can bring fresh perspectives and energy to the team.

We are committed to opening up tennis and padel to make our sports truly inclusive. We therefore welcome candidates from as broad a range of backgrounds as possible.

So, tell us about you and what you can offer that will help develop the sports of tennis and padel in Yorkshire. For more information about the role and how to apply, visit: yorkshiretennis.org.uk

Closing date for applications is Monday 19/1/26.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

New partnership with NIC Services Group announced

A three-year partnership has been announced between Yorkshire Tennis and NIC Services Group, one of the UK's leading facilities management providers, which will become the headline sponsor of three major county tennis events over the next three years: the NIC Yorkshire Visually Impaired Tennis League; the NIC Yorkshire County Tennis Championships; and the NIC Yorkshire County Padel Championships.

Chris Day, Interim Chair of Yorkshire Tennis said: "We are delighted to announce the partnership and look forward to working with NIC Services Group to promote these events and to make them the best they can be. We greatly value this partnership and wish to thank NIC for their generous support."

The collaboration will provide vital support to grow participation, enhance player experience, and strengthen the profile of these prestigious competitions within the Yorkshire sporting calendar.

John Spencer, Group Chairman of NIC Services Group, added: "We are proud to announce NIC Services Group as the headline sponsor of these three prestigious events in the Yorkshire Tennis sporting calendar.

"At NIC, we believe our responsibility goes beyond business. Supporting these events reflects our commitment to investing in our communities, promoting inclusivity, and creating opportunities for people of all abilities to enjoy sport at every level.

"By lending our name to these competitions, we are not only helping to raise their profile but also reinforcing the values that guide our business: responsibility, inclusivity, and community."

NIC Services Group delivers a full range of services to organisations across the public and private sectors, working in partnership with clients to create safe, clean, and well-maintained environments that support productivity and wellbeing.

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WHAT A YEAR!

Nicky Horn rounds up the padel action in Yorkshire over the last 12 months.

With a change of format so that matches were all played over four match weekends at a central venue, the **Dunlop Yorkshire Padel League** expanded in its second year to include teams from Harrogate, Ripon and David Lloyd York.

The **UK Padel County Championships** saw Yorkshire enter teams in every age group from the open to 060, and Angela Wood is co ordinating the first Yorkshire junior team. Competition is getting harder but Yorkshire made the semi-finals in both women's and mixed across the board.

New organisations have also been set up to help feed the Yorkshire love of padel including: a new league, in which individuals can sign up to play other players anywhere in Yorkshire; the **Padel Network**, a women's networking group run from Leeds aiming to empower women to play, have coaching and enter tournaments.

There's also a lot going on locally in the Leeds area with women's teams from Rawdon, Ilkley, Skipton, Chapel A, Ripon, Wetherby and Harrogate regularly organising friendly matches.

LTA tournaments, run so well by Mark Hinchliffe and Vanessa Cameron, have significantly increased in numbers, while **Britain Padel Tour** has chosen Padel Shed Huddersfield as its new hub. The new venue hosted the 2025 NIC Yorkshire Padel Championships and the BPT Finals will now be stageds there.

Yorkshire-based, but run nationally, **Legends Padel** focuses on players over 60, with the first Legends 4 Nations tournament hosted at Strike Padel, Bradford, in November.

Last but by no means least, a significant number of GB senior players this year hailed from Yorkshire: Susie Azoulay, Sally Fisher, Nicky Horn, Gilly Smailes, Angela Wood, Sophie Cousins, Helen Cowlrich, Johns Dunsneath.

While USA won the first ever **Anglo-American Cup** at North London's Padel Hub, Sally Bickerton and Audrey Henderson represented Team GB, winning every match!

National titles for Dunseath, Baglin and Fisher in Bristol

A stellar year for Yorkshire Padel continued in December when Nick Baglin and John Dunseath (pictured right) claimed the O50 men's title at the first ever **LTA National Padel Championships** taking place at Rocket Padel, Bristol. Their achievement was matched by Yorkshire's Sally Fisher who took the women's O50 crown with partner Teresa Catlin. The championships bring together GB's top open, junior and senior padel players to compete for national titles, prize money and LTA ranking points.

■ Team England celebrate Legends 4 Nations title win

■ Teresa Catlin and Sally Fisher

Team England take Legends title

Yorkshire's Sally Bickerton and captain Rosie Connell took to the court as Team England won the women's title at the inaugural **Legends 4 Nations** tournament staged this week at **Strike Padel in Bradford**.

Scotland were winners of the men's title at the two-day tournament, which brought together the top 'super senior' players (60+, 65+ and 70+) from all four corners of the UK, to battle it out for their countries in a spirit of friendly national rivalry.

Yorkshire Tennis president Karen Mitchell joined padel fans to watch the showdown, with Neil Baldwin flying the flag for Yorkshire in the men's team. The tournament took place just months after the opening of the **indoor padel centre** founded by health care professionals Fahad Qureshi, Mohammed Rashad and Mohammed Usman.

Championships cap off "stellar year" for padel in Yorkshire

"The level of play was exceptional, and the atmosphere fantastic."

■ Pictured right, county padel championships competitor Sebastian Carole; cover photo, Travis Barber winner of the Boys U14 title with partner James Dong.

ROLL OF HONOUR

Winners at the 2025 NIC Yorkshire Padel County Championships:

MEN'S OPEN
Alberto Crespo Casal & Gavin Davison

MEN'S O40
John Dunseath & Michael Tolman

WOMEN'S O50
Gillian Smail & Helen Cowlrick

MEN'S O50
Simon Dickinson & John Dunseath

BOY'S U14
Travis Barber & James Dong

WOMEN'S O60
Sally Bickerton & Audrey Henderson

MEN'S O60
Nick Holloway & Peter Vann

YORKSHIRE PADEL

Padel Shed Huddersfield was host for the fantastically competitive 2025 NIC Yorkshire County Padel Championships, played over the weekend of 8-9th November.

Delivered in partnership with Yorkshire Tennis partner **NIC Services Group**, the second annual championships attracted over 160 entries, with seven competitions, including the Men's Open, Men's O40, Men's O50 and Women's O50 played on the Saturday, followed by the Boys U14, Men's O60 and Women's O60 played on the Sunday.

Peter Vann, Yorkshire's head of padel, paid tribute to the superb work of **tournament organisers Vanessa Cameron and Mark Hinchcliffe** and said the championships capped off a stellar year for the sport in the county and the UK.

"Just one year ago there were 700 courts in the country and now there are over 1,600. Meanwhile, here in Yorkshire, padel has continued to grow. We've provided players at county and international level and achieved a tremendous amount of success."

Opening only a month before the championships, **Padel Shed Huddersfield** provided a state-of-the-art venue for the tournament, offering a purpose-built facility featuring nine premium courts, viewing areas and panoramic show courts.

Speaking to **BBC Sport West Yorkshire** ahead of the championships, LTA National Performance Pathway Manager Libby Fletcher paid tribute to the ambition of Padel Shed Huddersfield, which aims to develop a pro-academy equipped with the facilities and coaching expertise that can produce players able to compete at elite levels of the sport.

Paul Faulkner, group marketing director of NIC Services Group, said: "The NIC Yorkshire County Padel Championships was a brilliant celebration of sport and community.

"The level of play was exceptional, and the atmosphere was fantastic. NIC Services Group is proud to headline sponsor an event that connects players, fans, and local communities while promoting the growth of padel in Yorkshire."

■ Women's O50 champions Gilly Smail and Helen Cowlrick

"Just one year ago there were 700 courts in the country and now there are over 1,600. Meanwhile, here in Yorkshire, padel has continued to grow. We've provided players at county and international level and achieved a tremendous amount of success."

■ Competitor Jo Geary

■ Men's O50 champions Simon Dickinson and John Dunseath with NIC Services Group marketing director Paul Faulkner

■ Boys' U14 competitors

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New format for Dunlop Yorkshire Padel League

Chapel A were Division 1 winners of this year's Dunlop Yorkshire Padel League, claiming the title after a three-way shoot out against Harrogate Sports & Fitness Club, Rawdon.

The league moved to a new format this year, with eleven clubs and 44 teams competing across six divisions and matches taking place over four match weekends, finishing 24th August. By that time, over 200 matches had been played.

The mixed division was the closest of all, with a games count back required after the top three clubs finished on the same points total.

The top three spots in each, with winners highlighted in bold, were:

- Open Div 1: **Chapel A**, Harrogate Sports & Fitness Club, Rawdon.
- Open Div 2: **Eccleshall**, David Lloyd York, Chapel A
- Ladies Div 1: **Huddersfield**, Harrogate Sports & Fitness Club, David Lloyd York
- Ladies Div 2: **Harrogate Spa**, Rawdon, Chapel A
- 110+ Div: **Harrogate Sports & Fitness Club**, Rawdon, Chapel A
- Mixed Division: **Rawdon**, David Lloyd York, Chapel A.

League organiser Simon Bickerton said: "The match weekend format proved popular, but next year there will be a maximum of four teams at each two-court venue. We hope to include juniors, and further expand the competition for senior players too. Thank you to all the host clubs, the players and the Yorkshire Padel Committee for their help and support, a great season!"

Fantastic performance by Yorkshire at UK Padel County Championships

What a weekend for Yorkshire's county padel teams at the UK Padel County Championship in Bristol.

With over 300 players representing 34 counties, Yorkshire's mixed team came in as runners up, losing eventually to Surrey in a tie break shoot out.

Surrey struck again to beat the women's team in the semi-finals and the men missed out on a place in the quarters.

Nevertheless, a great event and some fantastic performances from the Yorkshire teams throughout the weekend.

Big thanks to men's and women's captains Mike Tolman and Angela Wood.

Strong Yorkshire contingent at FIP European Seniors

Valencia hosted the FIP European Seniors Padel competition, with national teams from across Europe competing in age groups from O35 to O55, all vying to become champions of Europe. Team GB's women finished 8th overall and the men in 11th place, with a strong Yorkshire contingent featuring Angela Wood, Sophie Cousins, Suzy Azoulay, Sally Fisher, Nicky Horn, Helen Cowlrick and Gilly Smail for the women and Mike Tolman, Ben Gudzelak and John Dunseath for the men.

Schoolkate & Jovic crowned champions

Australian seventh seed Tristan Schoolkate and 17-year-old Iva Jovic became the new singles champion at the 2025 Lexus Ilkley Open.

Schoolkate came back from a set and a break down to defeat Britain's Jack Pinnington Jones 6-7(8), 6-4, 6-3, clinching his third Challenger title.

Rising American star Jovic sealed her first WTA 125 title after a dominant 6-1, 6-3 win over defending champion Rebecca Marino.

It was the biggest win of Jovic's career and her first title on grass, taking her into the top 100 in the WTA live rankings for the first time.

The Lexus Ilkley Open continues to attract top tennis stars eager to sharpen their skills on the grass.

This year's draw included former US Open champion Marin Cilic, who went on to end Jack Draper's hopes at Wimbledon, along with GB's Harriet Dart and Billy Harris.

Six British player progressed to the second round of the tournament, including Yorkshire's Johannus Monday, while six British players also made it to the semi-finals of the doubles.

Wild cards Charles Broom and Ben Jones went on to reach the final of the men's doubles, losing out to Deigo Hidalgo and Patrik Trhac in a champion's tie-break.

Britain's Eden Silva and her partner Vitalia Diatchenko also lost out in the final of the women's doubles.

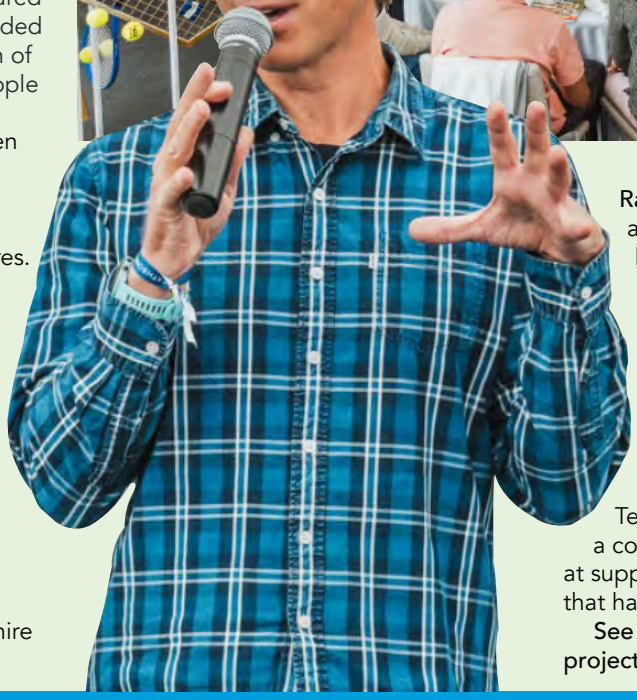
Inclusion focus at Redmayne Bentley Yorkshire Tennis Day

A highlight of the Redmayne Bentley Yorkshire Tennis Day, which took place on the opening day of the tournament, was the presentation by Ben Howarth (pictured right) on the **Open Court initiative**, funded by Yorkshire Tennis to extend the reach of tennis and padel and involve more people in the sports.

Yorkshire has one of the largest Open Court programmes in the country with hundreds of disabled people playing tennis across 40 different venues, including tennis clubs and leisure centres.

Participation levels are strongest in South Yorkshire but the success of the **NIC Yorkshire Visually Impaired Tennis League** and initiatives to engage new and lapsed players, as well as train up coaches and create a network of 'hub' sites, provides a model for growing disability tennis across the county.

Ben was joined on stage by Nat Wright, the county's community engagement lead, who outlined the commitment of Yorkshire Tennis to promoting inclusion, and former Yorkshire Tennis president Geoff Newton OBE.



Geoff highlighted the role of **Rackets Cubed**, a charity which offers a combination of tennis activities, hot meals and STEM-based education for school children in some of the UK's most disadvantaged communities.

Yorkshire Tennis is a charitable partner of Rackets Cubed, funding the schools coaching element of the programme in Yorkshire.

Redmayne Bentley and Yorkshire Tennis have also teamed up to create a community engagement fund aimed at supporting club projects and initiatives that have inclusivity at their core.

See P20 for more information about projects supported by the fund.

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12&U boys crowned national champions

Yorkshire's boys and girls County Cup teams were in action at Nottingham Tennis Centre at the end of September, competing in the 12&U national finals.

Led by captain Ben Crichton and vice captain Patrick Di Maio, the boys' team – Max Hodkinson, Seb Beetlestone, George He, Harrison McHugh, Luca Vladea-Holden, Oliver Beddall – finished the weekend as champions.

After convincing wins against Sussex, Kent and Middlesex, they overcome West of Scotland in the final in a tense shootout.

Two years ago, the same group of boys were national champions at 10&U and Ben Crichton described their win at 12&U as a very special moment, both for him and all his players.

The girls' team – Alessia Piani, Isabella Egglestone, Evie Capewell, Emmanuella Idemudia, Natalia McSherry, led by captain Nic Tweedy and vice captain Eleanor Dean – also put in a great effort.

They finished fourth overall, following up a good win against Derbyshire by beating Lancashire in a shootout after recovering from 1-3 down!

Special thanks go to head coach Joe Gill for his hard work up to and during the event, setting excellent standards that all players rose to!

Clean sweep for 11&U boys

It was a clean sweep for Yorkshire 11&U Boys at the County Cup finals in July were they posted 6-0 wins over Kent and Nottingham, a hard fought 4-2 win over Surrey and then held their nerve to take a shootout when the tie against Middlesex finished 3-3. Congratulations to the players – George He, Sammy Goldthorpe, Seb Brock, Will Grundy, Joel Morton – who brought their 'A' game and left everything out on the court. Great credit also to captain Reuben Newman-Billington and vice captain Pablo Mills for supporting the team throughout the weekend.

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Jubb seals win in Winter County Cup

Paul Jubb completed a three sets win to wrap up a 6-1 victory for Yorkshire's Men over Kent on the final day of the Winter County Cup weekend.

It was a clean sweep for Yorkshire, playing at Newport Tennis Centre in what looks set to be the last Winter County Cup. The victory over Kent backed up wins on day one against South Wales and Buckinghamshire on day two.

The victory in Group 2A, represented a superb return from the weekend for captain Joe Gill and and a great team effort from Paul Jubb, Finn Murgett, Jordan Reed-Thomas, Scott Hillerby, Louis Hull, JB Pickard, Kouros Anssarizadeh, Joseph Newman-Billington and Sean Hodkin.

Paul won the M25 Champaign tennis tournament in Illinois, one of multiple ITF titles he has taken this year in a strong run, also taking titles in Aldershot and Santa Margherita di Pula, Italy.

Playing in Group 1, Yorkshire's women – Ava Moss, Beth Pratt, Emi Linley, Orla Cooper, Rebecca Hill, Liana Sharrat-Blanksby, Lidia Burrows, Serena Nash and Sofie Woon – come away from a hard fought weekend at Bath University with heads held high.

A tough 4-5 loss to Kent on the final day saw Yorkshire finish third in the group but the scorecard shows just how hard player-captain Eleanor Dean, assisted by Elena Bompieri, and her young team battled throughout the three day contest.

Loads to be proud of and build on as a young squad builds toward the 18&U County Cup in March.

Brave fight from Yorkshire Seniors teams

Yorkshire's Senior County Cup teams put up a brave fight in the **national finals at David Lloyd Southampton** over the weekend of 27-29th October.

The **O45 men** came agonisingly close in their tie against Kent. Two magnificent singles wins from Tomas David and Simon Frieze to put Yorkshire 2-1 up, before Kent came from behind to take the title 3-2.

The **O50 women's team** also lost out, this time to a very strong Middlesex team. Captain Becky Lee put Yorkshire's women 1-0 up after a two-and-a-half hour singles battle against Suzy Dart, before Barbara Griffiths overcame Karen Mitchell in another incredibly close match.

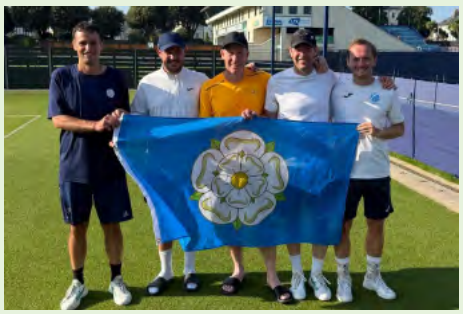
The doubles went against Yorkshire pair Katie Charnock and Sarah Thomas. And although up in their doubles, Becky and Karen conceded when the reverse doubles went against Yorkshire.

Men's O75 captain Wilf Jessop arrived back in the UK, having won a bronze medal with mixed doubles partner Marjory Love at the **World Championships in Croatia**, and took the train straight to Southampton for the finals.

However, Kent were a much stronger team than last year when Yorkshire took the national title, and went on to claim the title with a convincing win.

Despite victory eluding Yorkshire this year, it was a magnificent season and achievement to reach the finals for all three teams.

Congratulations go to Yorkshire **O35 women's** County Cup team who were promoted to Group 1 for next year after beating Cheshire 3-2, Nottinghamshire 4-1 and Lancashire 2-1 (shortened format). It was a brilliant weekend for players Danielle Brown, Carina May, Louise Evans, Kim Holland and Nicola Mooney. Kim and Louise clinched the deciding rubber, while Nicola went unbeaten in five matches!



Captained by Ben Gudzelak, Yorkshire's **O35 men** came away from Eastbourne as runners up in Division 1 of the Seniors County Cup. The title went to Derbyshire but a much-needed 3-2 win over Surrey on the final day means the players – Richard Crabtree, Joe Gill, Ben Gudzelak, Peter Hall, Mike Tolman – have the opportunity to fight for the title again next year.

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NIC Yorkshire Tennis County Championships

Friends, rivals and doubles partners Jordan Reed-Thomas and Scott Hillerby contested the outstanding match at this year's NIC Yorkshire Tennis County Championships.

Jordan took the men's singles title from Scott, winner in 2024, before the pair then teamed up to take the men's doubles crown.

Joining them as multiple-winners at the championships were Emmanuella Idemudia, Roberta Gaskill, Sabeehah Khan, Hugo Asmussen and Isabella Egglestone.

Emmanuella took the 12&U girls singles title, backing up wins at the 2024 championships, before teaming up with partner Natalia McSherry to take the 12&U girls doubles title.

Runner up in the girls 14&U singles, Emmanuella lost out to winner Roberta Gaskell, who also claimed multiple titles at this year's championships.

Her trophy haul included the 14&U mixed doubles title alongside Neo Hodkinson and the women's doubles title with partner Sabeehah Khan, who also won the 18&U girls trophy.

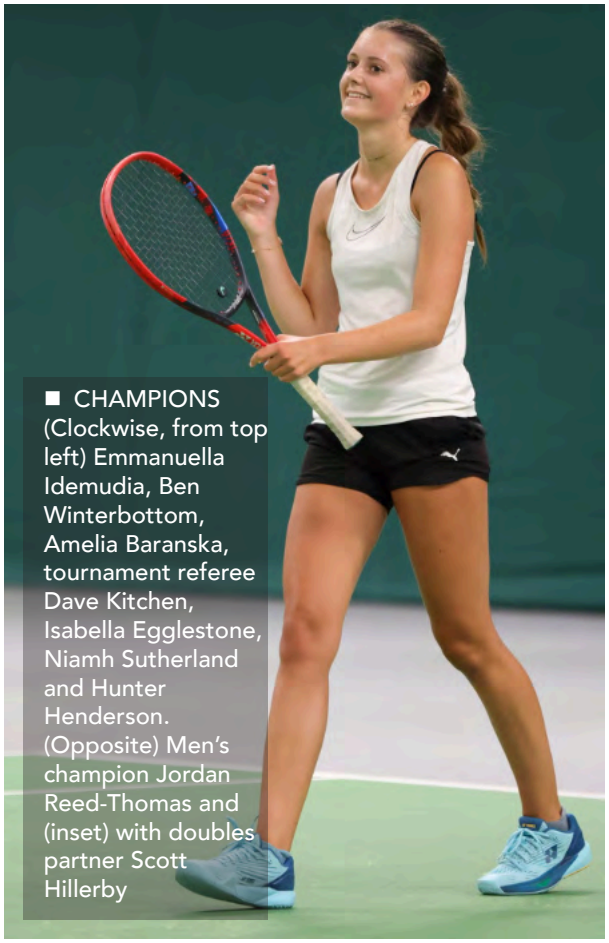
Niamh Sutherland took the women's title. Other first-time girls' singles winners included Sabeehah Khan (18&U), Amelia Baranska (16&U).

Boys' singles winners were Sebastian Wraith-Lobley (16&U), Ben Winterbottom (14&U), Harrison McHugh (12&U), Reggie Ennis-Hill (11&U) and Hugo Asmussen at (10&U).

Isabella Egglestone took the title in the 11&U girls, while Ella-Grace Chan came out on top in the 10&U girls.

Tournament referee Dave Kitchen deserves huge congratulations for organising an outstanding championship, which featured 424 entries across all age categories.

To view the full roll of honour visit: www.yorkshiretennis.org.uk/2025-yorkshire-tennis-county-champsionships/



■ CHAMPIONS (Clockwise, from top left) Emmanuella Idemudia, Ben Winterbottom, Amelia Baranska, tournament referee Dave Kitchen, Isabella Egglestone, Niamh Sutherland and Hunter Henderson. (Opposite) Men's champion Jordan Reed-Thomas and (inset) with doubles partner Scott Hillerby

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YORKSHIRE CHAMPIONS

Thrilling conclusion to NIC 2025 Yorkshire Visually Impaired Tennis League

After four inspiring stages across Hull, York, Leeds and Sheffield, the NIC Yorkshire Visually Impaired Tennis League came to a thrilling conclusion on Saturday 27th September. Played at Sheffield, the season finale was tense, exciting, and full of surprises.

South Yorkshire's Ameen Memon and Fiona Hodgson were new winners in the B2+ category, while Sandra Thorpe and and Gav Griffiths – also from South Yorkshire – reclaimed the B1 crown.

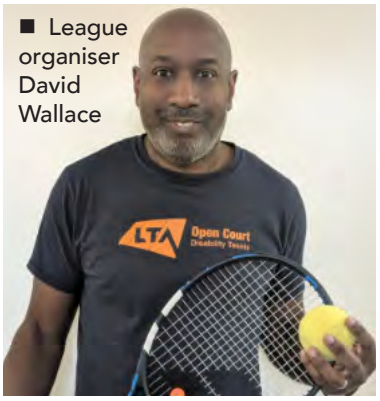
Meanwhile, Ed Hastings and Guy Keating from West Yorkshire stepped up to the Open category and left with the winners medals.

Despite South Yorkshire's impressive last day efforts, claiming 14 out of a possible 18 points, it was North Yorkshire who become the first NIC Yorkshire Visually Impaired Tennis League champions. Ten players proudly represented the region throughout the season:

Graham Robson, Robert Hanson, Tony Harrison, Bilaal Ali, Linsay Dutch, Rachel Abel, Jayanti Mistry, Ann Jenner, Paul Hotchkiss and Dave Green — each playing a vital role in securing the crown.

League organiser David Wallace said: "A huge shout out goes to our volunteers – from umpiring to ball collection, to stepping onto court to support matchplay, the league simply wouldn't exist without the dedication of our volunteers.

"Your energy and commitment are the backbone of this competition. Thank you for making VI tennis in Yorkshire so inclusive, welcoming, and inspiring."



■ League organiser David Wallace

■ Huddersfield women, Division 1 winners

Every set and every game matters in new format Dunlop Yorkshire Doubles League

Huddersfield were winners of the women's division one title and **Skipton** won the men's title in this year's new format **Dunlop Yorkshire Tennis Doubles League**.

The new format of two pairs per team proved popular, along with the new scoring system which awards three points for a match win and two points for the team winning a 2-2 draw, based on sets then games count back on the day.

Teams on the losing end of a 2-2 draw still gains a point, the idea being to create a competitive sense that every set and game could matter.

A total of 23 clubs and 36 teams entered, playing across three women's and two men's divisions, and 312 players took part.

Dunlop is the official ball sponsor for the league and clubs buying Dunlop balls from listed retailers were reimbursed by Yorkshire Tennis.

Entries open soon for next year and all associate member clubs have been contacted to encourage them to participate for 2026.

Top spots in each division, with winners highlighted in bold, were:

- Women's Div1: **Huddersfield**, Roundhay
- Women's Div 2: **Roundhay** (2nds), Beauchief, both promoted
- Women's Div 3: **Whitkirk**, York (2nds), both promoted
- Men's Div 1: **Skipton**, Thongsbridge
- Men's Div 2: **Queens,** Heaton, both promoted

Max ends hugely successful year with Mallorca win

Yorkshire's own Max Hodkinson triumphed as boys champion at the Carlos Moyà 12&U Festival, the season-ending invitational event for Europe's top players in this age group.

Now in its fifth year, the festival was hosted by the **Rafa Nadal Academy** in Mallorca, welcoming 64 competitors from 22 nations.

It's a very special event where young players enjoy memorable moments on and off court, including a tour of the Spanish legend's trophy collection. Some were also lucky enouigh to bump into Rafa himself, who was onsite during the week.

Max has won a string of titles this year, including the 12U Boys' singles and doubles titles at the **Lexus Junior National Championships**, which took place at Nottingham Tennis Centre in August.

Congratulations to Max and coach Richard Crabtree on a hugely successful tournament and year. For the full write-up, visit Tennis Europe: https://shorturl.at/UzI7N

■ Joining Max in the winners' circle at the Lexus Junior National Championships in Nottingham were Hunter Henderson (pictured right), who claimed the U10 boys' singles title, and Sammy Goldthorpe (far right), winner of the U11 boys doubles with partner Louis Taylor.

■ **Three of Yorkshire's up and coming tennis players enjoyed the unique experience of playing on Wimbledon's iconic grass courts this summer.**

Pictured left, Thea Hodkinson, who plays at the Yorkshire Regional Player Development Centre, Joseph Holliday from Harrogate David Lloyd and Isabella Asmussen from Ilkley Tennis Club, took part in the national finals of **Play Your Way To Wimbledon** in August.

The annual competition is the largest grassroots tennis event of its kind in the UK, with thousands of players taking part.

Joseph made it through to the second round of the U14 Boys main draw, losing out to overall winner Mayr Brown-Devall.

Isabella also made it through the group stage to the main draw, losing a tight second round match to Kensi White who went on to reach the semi-finals.

All three came back with amazing memories, with players and their parents visiting Wimbledon's centre court, the media area, the players lounge and dressing room.

Venue sign up for Play Your Way to Wimbledon 2026 is now open at: https://www.lta.org.uk/compete/play-your-way-to-wimbledon/

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LTA | YORKSHIRE TENNIS

Awesome winter youth league underway

The first matches have taken place in the new Yorkshire Winter Youth League, designed to give juniors the opportunity to play singles and doubles against each other in a fun, competitive team environment.

An amazing 94 teams have signed up to compete across 11 divisions, with 10&U through to 18&U girls and boys teams playing home and away fixtures over the winter months.

A huge shout out goes to the central venues hosting 8&U and 9&U matches and to the organisers collaborating on the initiative – Steve Holmes and Joseph Newman-Billington at Graves, Kyle Brassington and Pedram Zadeh at Ilkley, Becky Lee at Huddersfield, Lucy Dean at Queens, Nicola Tweedy and Jayden Hobbs at Leeds Beckett. One more venue is still to be arranged.

8&U and 9&U competitors all receive a certificate of participation presented on the day of the competition, with six awards for **Super Server, Awesome Attacker, Magnificent Mover, Super Score Caller, Terrific Team Player** and **Awesome Attitude**, as well as gold and silver medals for winners and runners up on the day.

So far, events at Graves and Ilkley have been a great success and there's much more to come this winter and beyond, with entries for the **LTA Youth Summer League** open soon.

The season will run April to September 2026 and will provide more opportunities to play fun, competitive matches.

League organiser and head coach at Skipton Tennis Centre Jonny Moore said: "We believe in a positive experience for players and parents at the beginning of the journey in team Tennis to inspire and motivate them into further competitions and development."

Contact: competitions@yorkshiretennis.org.uk to find out more.

'Grand slam' tennis in Bradford & District

To stimulate competition and provide opportunities for juniors to play competitively, Bradford & District Tennis League organised an inaugural 'Grand Slam' tournament this summer.

Players competed on the clay at **Beckfoot, Bingley** (Roland Garros), where Tanish Rokade won the singles and doubles titles with partner, George Finlay (both pictured right).

On to the grass at Gargrave's **Craven Lawn Tennis Club** (Wimbledon, above left), the tournament featured five singles and six doubles matches for each player, with Joshua Bailey winning the singles. George Finlay won again in the doubles with partner Matthew Alexander.

The hard courts of **Salts Tennis Club** in Saltaire (above right) were host to the US Open stage of the tournament, which took place over two weekends due to weather, with thunder, lightning and very heavy rain halting play in true New York style.

Winner of the singles tournament was Sami Qadar, who also triumphed in doubles with partner Mohammed Darak.

They teamed up to win again in the final slam of the season, which took place indoors at Heaton Tennis Club, where players showcased their skills in a highly competitive yet friendly atmosphere.

In the singles competition, Deen Malik emerged as the winner after a series of impressive performances.

Fair play, respect, and sportsmanship were evident throughout four 'slams', providing an enjoyable and positive experience for everyone.

Graeme Southam, chair of Bradford & District Tennis League, said that the initiative had been welcomed by parents and participants, providing the opportunity to enjoy competitive tennis in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

"This was a new venture for the league and the tournaments have been a great success. They will certainly be repeated in 2026."

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Win for Finn with Team GB at Master'U

Yorkshire's Finn Murgett took to the court with Team GB at Cormontreuil Tennis Club in Reims in December, competing in **Master'U BNP Paribas**, the world event for university tennis. Now in its 18th edition, the tournament featured eight teams from Great Britain, Ireland, Switzerland, USA, Germany, Belgium, France and Australia. Wins over Switzerland and Australia saw Great Britain set up a rematch in the final against last year's winners Team USA. GB came through with a 4-3 victory, Finn winning both his singles and doubles with partner Oliver Okwondo in the final. It's the second time Great Britain has had its name engraved on the competition's honours list, after their 2017 victory in Lille.

■ Congratulations to Poppleton Tennis Club head coach Belinda Turnbull and doubles partner Wendy Slater-Johnson on winning the **O60 ITF women's doubles** at La Manga Racquets Club in November. Belinda also reached the quarter finals in the O60 women's singles event. Earlier this year she was selected to represent Team GB at the **ITF World Tennis Masters Tour Championships in Florida**, playing with partner Cath Davies. Team GB finished fourth overall in the event featuring teams from 28 countries.

Ranson makes Portugal debut for Team GB

Yorkshire's Paul Ranson was selected to represent Team GB at the World Team & Individual Championships in Lisbon this August, playing for the O55s in a competition involving 22 teams from as far away as Australia, Argentina and Chile.

After a couple of days' practice on the clay and the opening ceremony on centre court, the Brits were drawn in a group of four to play Australia, Argentina and Ireland.

The first match against Australia bought 39-degree temperatures but Matt Coombes and Colin Beecher secured singles wins before Paul made his debut in the doubles with Charles Durham, winning 6-3 6-1 against the Aussie pair.

Next came Argentina and some tough losses in the singles, before Charles and Paul salvaged the doubles rubber.

Paul made his singles debut against Ireland, with GB winning the match 3-0 and going through to play Chile in the quarter finals. Chile played really well to win both singles and despite Paul and partner Charles taking the doubles rubber, the match was lost 2-1.

Team USA won the title, beating an excellent German team in the final, with GB finishing in eighth place overall. "The whole week was very competitive," says Paul, "played in a great spirit and was a lot of fun!"

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Thongsbridge tops player development centre leaderboard

Eight clubs – Thongsbridge, Graves, Ilkley, Nuffield, Yorks St John, David Lloyd Harrogate, Roundhay and Bradford Grammar – were selected to take part in an initiative launched earlier this year designed to boost the number of junior players capable of competing at county, regional and national level.

■ TOP SPOT: members of the Thongsbridge coaching team (LtoR) Rob Jackson, Nick Fitzpatrick, Matt Wesley, Paul Hull and Craig Jarrom

The new **Yorkshire Player Development Centres (YPDCs)** were tasked with providing a clear pathway for young players over the age of seven to reach their full potential, with the more talented players progressing to the **Regional Player Development Centre** at Leeds Beckett.

Each club receives a retainer from Yorkshire Tennis in return for delivering against key performance indicators, including LTA and Yorkshire Tennis priorities for junior coaching, coach development, community outreach, developing links with schools and maintaining high safeguarding standards.

They are also measured on the number of junior players who enter the County Championships, with extra financial rewards if players represent Yorkshire in County Cup competitions or progress to the Regional Player Development Centre at Leeds Beckett University.

There's also an opportunity to claim a share of an end-of-year bonus pot based on overall performance. But clubs falling short of the required standard can lose their YPDC status, providing an opportunity for new YPDCs to be selected, and a cohort of 'aspiring' development centres has been identified to keep the eight YPDCs on their toes!

At the end of the first year of the initiative, Thongsbridge came top of the leaderboard.

General manager and head coach Nick Fitzpatrick said: "It's a tribute to the hard work of the whole coaching team and the achievements of our young players that we've come out top but there's no room for complacency as the initiative continues to push clubs to achieve higher standards."

Tennis leadership course helps young players think about careers on and off-court

Players and parents were given the chance to find out more about career pathways and options available on and off the court through a three-day tennis leadership course organised by volunteer Zsuzsi Puskas with support from CV8 Tennis Academy and NexGen.

The aim of the course, funded by Yorkshire Tennis, was to help parents and players to learn more about careers in tennis and associated fields.

"Parents and players need more information about career pathways and options available to players, including opportunities to engage with coaching, refereeing, running tennis programmes and tennis events. But they are often unsure where to find the information they need," said Zsuzsi.

Young tennis players aged 11 to 14 were able to learn about coaching and how to plan their own sessions, working in groups to design their own games, activities and drills.

They were also introduced to inclusive tennis and experienced first-hand blindfolded tennis and playing with rattle balls. In the process they learned how coaches and leaders can make tennis accessible to all.

Laura Crabtree CV8 sport psychologist said: "The leadership programme provided an excellent framework for players to develop their communication skills, build their confidence speaking in groups and challenging themselves and each other to explore new ideas and put things into practice."

Richard Crabtree CV8 head coach added: "Players showed great creativity in designing fantastic drills on the court. They also really worked hard to understand how to structure a good coaching session and worked well within their groups to reflect on what was delivered.

"The players showed some real individual and collective strengths both in the on and off court activities. It was a great project and one that I'm sure the players benefitted from greatly."

The Tennis Leadership course ended with the young leaders scoring at the NIC Yorkshire Tennis County Championships in the 8&U competition.

Zsuzsi said: "The course was really successful, with 23 young tennis players completing the course. We hope that many of them will think about future career options in tennis as they get older, whether that be coaching, refereeing, volunteering or working within the wider tennis industry.

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Court Craft appointed as LTA Workforce Development Centre for North of England

Led by Jo Cunliffe and Angela Wood, Court Craft is the new LTA Workforce Development Centre for the North of England and an experienced and expert team has been assembled to deliver tennis, padel and officiating courses from January 2026.

With years of on-court and coaching experience, the team is committed to raising the game for players, coaches, and officials alike across Yorkshire, Cheshire, Cumbria, Durham & Cleveland, Northumberland, Isle of Man and Lancashire.

"We bring a wealth of industry experience, insight and energy and are looking forward to engaging with coaches, venues, county officials and partners to bring the highest quality education provision to Yorkshire," said Angela Wood.

"We're taking over from Leeds Beckett University, which has done an amazing job of looking after the county over the last decade. We have very big boots to fill but are excited for the challenge. We've been busy pulling together the calendar from January onwards. The qualifications are all finalised now up to August, with the CPD calendar still evolving."

The first edition of the calendar for 2026 with dates and bookings links is now live at **court-craft.co.uk/courses/** offering a range of CPD courses and qualifications for aspiring coaches or any currrent tennis or padel coach looking to take their next level of qualification. First aid and safeguarding courses are also available.

Jo Cunliffe said: "Once officiating courses have been updated by the LTA and we have more information, we will send out the details of our provision for 2026. There are some exciting changes coming in this space and we look forward to growing the officiating workforce in Yorkshire.

"We are also looking to grow our network of venues for running first aid courses and also our on court qualification and CPD courses. If you are interested in being a partner venue, please get in touch."

- **View the calendar of courses and qualifications and book your place via: court-craft.co.uk/courses/**

PERFORMANCE, PARTICIPATION AND PRIDE

Those are the watchwords of the new Chair of Yorkshire Tennis Paul Billington who took up the role at the beginning of December – performing at the highest levels, opening up tennis to give everyone the opportunity to participate and taking deserved pride in the achievements of everyone involved in Yorkshire Tennis.

Paul brings with him a great deal of knowledge, skills and experience in sports and facilities development, previously working for Sheffield City Council.

The role included leading on the redevelopment of Graves Sports & Health Centre and pioneering the first 'parks tennis' initiative in partnership with the LTA.

> "Opening up tennis isn't easy of course – if it was, then it would have been done years ago."

"I've been involved in sport all my life from school onwards, studying sport and leisure management at Loughborough University, and worked in sport for 25 years with Sheffield City Council."

Ten years as Director of Culture & Environment followed, with a wide portfolio of responsibilities including parks, sports, arts, major events and highways.

That's given Paul experience of building and leading great teams, delivering change and making things happen. "Leadership is about inspiring pace, commitment and focus, but it's also about seeking creative solutions and partnerships."

As a tennis parent, with two sons working in the sport, who have both coached and played for county teams, Paul has lived and breathed tennis.

Youngest son Reuben works for Courtside, promoting and delivering parks tennis in Sheffield, and was recently involved in opening the Hillsborough Hub, a multi-sports facility including tennis, padel and pickleball as well as netball, football and basketball.

Older brother Joe is tennis manager at Graves and was named coach of the year for 2025 at the Sheffield & District LTA annual awards evening.

He recently featured at the Winter County Cup, playing for Yorkshire in a clean sweep of wins for the men's team, defeating South Wales, Kent and Buckinghamshire over the course of the weekend.

"I've seen and know first-hand the level of commitment and investment it takes to progress young people to performance levels in sport," says Paul. "Yorkshire needs to be up there with the very best and it's vital that the county continues to punch its weight in terms of performance."

But Paul recognises that kind of financial investment and time commitment isn't available to many parents. He is therefore passionate about taking tennis and padel to people and the places it doesn't normally reach, having seen the huge difference participation in sport can make to people's lives.

"Opening up tennis isn't easy of course – if it was, then it would have been done years ago. But it's about having the right facilities in the right places at the right price, together with the people and the programmes to help players progress."

He points to Freddie Flintoff's *Field of Dreams* as an example of how sport can inspire young people in particular and give them a sense of achievement and belonging.

"The difference is that cricket is a team sport, whereas tennis at the highest level is essentially a solo endeavour. That said, for most players, team tennis is an essential part of the sport."

That's even truer of padel, which Paul has recently started to play and sees as a great opportunity for the county. "It's great fun and, on the whole, is played in pairs, which makes it more accessible.

"I'd like Yorkshire Tennis to continue its embrace of padel as its popularity continues to grow and it is clearly reaching people who have never played tennis or racket sports of any kind before."

Looking to the future, the priorities for Yorkshire Tennis have to be that the county has a sound and improving financial base.

"That's the foundation that makes everything possible. I also want to build on our relationship with the LTA and encourage everyone involved in Yorkshire Tennis to take great and deserved pride in the work they do."

"I'm already massively impressed and appreciative of the excellent work of Yorkshire Tennis and I'm looking forward to meeting and working with the players, parents, coaches, volunteers and clubs to open up tennis and padel, promoting participation at all levels and in all places."

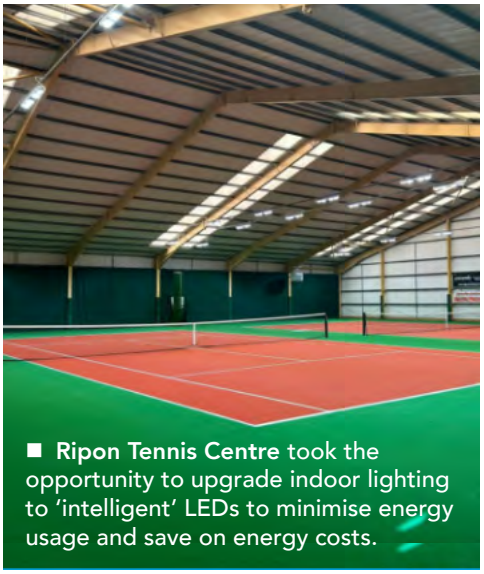
> “Yorkshire needs to be up there with the very best and it’s vital that the county continues to punch its weight in terms of performance.”

TRAMLINES talks to **Paul Billington**, newly appointed chair of Yorkshire Tennis.

The **Yorkshire Tennis Small Grants Fund**, which offers associate member clubs grants of up to £1,000, has supported a wide range of initiatives in 2025 to increase participation, boost competition, improve facilities and sustainability, introduce pay and play and develop new coaching initiatives.

The fund is now closed while a second wave of applications is being assessed, but it's hoped it will reopen to new applications next year. Until then, here's a round up of projects supported through the fund:

■ Wheldrake Tennis Club held an open day to celebrate the opening of its newly resurfaced courts.



■ **Ripon Tennis Centre** took the opportunity to upgrade indoor lighting to 'intelligent' LEDs to minimise energy usage and save on energy costs.

■ **Bubwith Tennis Club** in Selby received a grant to improve lighting to make the club feel more welcoming and safer in the evenings.

■ **York Tennis Club** received funding from the LTA for installation of gate access technology to introduce a 'pay and play' option for non-members. As part of the funding agreement, the club had to sign a contract to cover maintenance, support and servicing, and the grant from Yorkshire Tennis helped cover the cost.

■ **Crosshills Tennis Club** in Keighley used a grant to fund an open day and a promotional drive to increase membership, which resulted in new juniors, adults and families joining the club.

Funding for clubs and engaging local communities

Generous support from the **Redmayne Bentley and Yorkshire Tennis Community Engagement Fund** has allowed clubs in Ripon, Withernsea, Roundhay, St Peter's in Bradford and Westfields in Ripon to fund a range of community engagement projects.

■ **Ripon Tennis Centre:** opening padel up to a local group supporting people with Alzheimer's, along with outreach for primary schools.

■ **Withernsea Tennis Club:** delivering a comprehensive programme of tennis coaching, schools outreach and inclusive community sessions, with focus on supporting low-income families.

■ **Roundhay Lawn Tennis Club:** support for running a School Roadshow in June 2025 with a plan to see 1,000 children of school age take part in free school sessions, inviting them all to club open days, and a follow-on offer for all the kids on the programme.

■ **St Peter's Tennis Club:** (pictured above) located in an underserved area of Bradford, the clubhouse had a cement asbestos roof which needed to be removed and replaced before the clubhouse could be refurbished.

■ **Westfields Tennis Club:** procurement and installation of a smart access gate on court; free junior and adult coaching and taster sessions; open days for Richmond and surrounding areas to introduce people to tennis and pickleball; purchase of equipment; and improving the club website to promote inclusivity.

James Andrews, Partner & Director of Investment Management, said: "Redmayne Bentley has been proudly part of Yorkshire for over 150 years; we are delighted to support Yorkshire Tennis in its mission to make tennis and padel accessible to all.

"Through our community engagement grants, designed to open up the game and champion projects with inclusivity at their core; we've helped clubs reach new players, improve facilities, and create opportunities.

"This includes introducing children to tennis and supporting outreach for those living with Alzheimer's. These initiatives help to strengthen communities, and we look forward to continuing this work with Yorkshire Tennis."

PROMOTING WELLBEING AND UNLOCKING POTENTIAL WITH **RACKETS CUBED**

Rackets Cubed is a charity that runs after-school programmes, offering children from disadvantaged communities an integrated programme centred around sport, education, and nutrition.

Yorkshire Tennis president Karen Mitchell recently joined children from **Haxby Road Primary Academy**, who were taking part in a Rackets Cubed session hosted by **Down the Line Tennis Academy** at York St John.

During the session, Karen saw pupils enjoying a dynamic mix of tennis activities designed to build confidence and physical literacy. The session also included a hot meal and a classroom-based STEM session, based on designing a new high-tech outfit for Santa using smart materials and wearable technology.

"It was invaluable watching the programme in action and the children clearly love their tennis lesson, the Santa-based STEM project as well as the food," said Karen.

"The children don't take part in any extra clubs and the Rackets Cubed programme is their only PE class at school. Funding from Yorkshire Tennis is making a big difference for them all."

Jules Abbas-Silvera, programme manager for Rackets Cubed, said the partnership with Yorkshire Tennis demonstrates a shared commitment to supporting the wellbeing of schoolchildren both on and off the court.

"It was wonderful to have Karen Mitchell, the president of Yorkshire Tennis, visit the Rackets Cubed programme in York this week to see first hand the impact of the initiative they have supported for pupils from Haxby Road Primary Academy.

"Rackets Cubed operates in some of the most deprived communities across the UK, partnering with local schools and organisations.

"The Haxby Road programme continues to demonstrate the value of our model, with strong attendance, positive engagement, and visible benefits to pupils' confidence and wellbeing."

A new partnership was announced this summer between Rackets Cubed and Yorkshire Tennis aimed at opening up access to tennis for primary school children across the county.

Redmayne Bentley Yorkshire Tennis and Padel awards, 19/3/26

Yorkshire Tennis returns to Tankersley Manor, Barnsley, for its annual awards presentation evening in March. A highlight of the Yorkshire Tennis calendar and sponsored by Redmayne Bentley, the awards are a celebration of individual and team achievements and successes in 2025 and it has been an outstanding year for both tennis and padel in Yorkshire.

The evening will see the presentation of the LTA regional awards and the Yorkshire Tennis and Padel Awards.

Redmayne Bentley