

Swim England Sport Operations Committee

Minutes of the meeting held 8 September 2020, via Zoom

Draft minutes subject to approval at the next meeting

Present:

Neil Booth	Chairman
Joan Wheeler	Swim England Board Member
Ian Mackenzie	Swim England Member
Alex Harrison	Swim England Member
Jim Boucher	Swim England Member
John Hidle	Regional Chairs Representative
Emma Griffin	Operations Director
George Wood	Sports Development Director
Jon Glenn	Learn to Swim & Workforce

Staff: Ali Sibcy-Allen Operations Administration Manager

Min No:

1. Standing Items

1.1 Chairman's welcome

The Chair welcomed the group.

1.2 Apologies

Pippa Jones (Swim England Member)

1.3 Declarations of Interest

Jim Boucher – masters, item 2.1

Joan – Regional Chair

1.4 Declarations of AoB

Poaching – athletes from club to club

1.5 Minutes from the meeting held 14 July 2020

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

1.6 Actions from the meeting held 14 July 2020

1.6.1 It was noted that the actions relating to items 3.2 and 5 had been delayed due to other priorities for the LG's

1.6.2 An update was provided on older action points:

- Club and leisure operator relationships: ongoing project being worked on across Sport Development and the new Business Engagement team. Details being finalised due to changes required to respond to the Covid-19 situation. Members of the Operators Group have requested details to assist with ongoing work with clubs.
- Overseas membership: has been put on hold at present due to the current situation.

1.7

Leadership Group Updates

Artistic Swimming: The Leadership Group have been focussed on completing the required tasks. A number of clubs are back training in line with the guidance as is the GB duet, who will not be taking part in international competition until the Olympic qualifiers scheduled for March. Some Leadership Group activity has been delayed due to other tasks being a priority.

Water Polo: The Leadership Group have been having regular meetings to discuss return to competition with the formal documentation now submitted to DCMS. A number of players have been training in the sea which was a challenge and progress has been made in now being able to use goals. Regional meetings are being held to disseminate information.

Swimming: Talent athlete selections have been released. Counties and Regions have expressed some concerns over the length of the associated online camps which has been echoed by the SLG. Leeway has been agreed by the Talent Team to ensure that the programme can run effectively and meet local need.

Diving: Similar to other groups, they have been focussed on return to competition documentation. There is a challenge for diving in particular with centres not re-opening, due to both COVID and non-COVID reasons. In common with other disciplines diving are considering a form of licensing in order to structure different levels of competition.

Club Management: Looking to review their TORs and reform membership if required. Prior to the SE restructure paid staff members were precluded due to having their own forum but this has now changed and regions will be given the opportunity to revise their representative. It was agreed that formal revised TORs will be circulated to SOC members for agreement. The next meeting is scheduled to be 30th September where it is hoped any regional changes will be implemented.

2.

Items for Decision

2.1

Definition of Low Level Competition

The discipline groups reviewed their definitions to determine if they are fit for purpose in the modern world. Water polo and diving identified considerable changes, with those proposed by water polo needing to go to the SE Board to be approved.

Concerns were raised that the changes proposed by water polo could lead to a reduction in SE membership. It was noted that the changes would allow for greater levels of competition for both SE members and school team players and that in the short term membership would likely be unaffected and the expectation that it would increase longer term.

The proposal would enable school teams to join in with SE clubs at development competitions up to regional level, increasing competition and boosting talent identification. The current requirements are prohibitive to schools as the associated costs are a big deterrent.

It was agreed that a minor amendment was required to the submission before it was approved by members.

Action: Updated document to be circulated to SOC members for agreement before being taken by NB to the SE Board meeting on 15 September.

It was requested that the SLG are asked the question over Cat 1 members competing at the Masters Inter Counties and the opportunity given to the chair of the Masters Working Group to discuss with the regional representatives. The SLG has been provided with data over the past three years regarding the competition activities of Category 1 Masters swimmers.

Action: AH to liaise with the SLG re: Masters Intercounty Championships and membership categories.

2.2 **National Youth Advisory Panel**

A summary of the role of the panel was provided and the question asked as to whether a representative should sit on SOC. A discussion continued to consider whether the panel would be best represented on SOC or on the Leadership Groups, as well as the importance of having the discipline specific knowledge to support any group appointment.

It was agreed that it would be beneficial for current/recent participants to contribute to the running of the sport and the different perspective they could offer was acknowledged. Support was given to investigate how this could work and enable input at an appropriate level. The potential of a presentation being delivered by the Youth Advisory Panel at the November SOC meeting was put forward and agreed in principle.

Action: NB to work with Claire Coleman to arrange for the Youth Advisory Panel to present at the November SOC meeting.

3. **Items for Discussion**

3.1 **Competition planning by Discipline Leadership Groups**

Recognition was given for the huge level of information provided across the Leadership Groups and the amount of time that had been dedicated to producing the documentation. SOC members conveyed their gratitude to the Leadership Groups, recognising the commitment shown.

Action: NB to precis the documents and present at the SE Board meeting on 15 September.

3.1.1 **Swimming:**

Details of varying concepts and stages were provided with a recognition of members' desire to return to competition as soon as possible while ensuring that compliance with regulations, health requirements and social distancing is maintained.

It was agreed that if a return to competition is not outlined to the membership then there is a risk members leaving the sport and potentially not returning. Having a roadmap of what the plan is will help to reassure members even if dates are unavailable.

The proposed virtual competition format for swimming was agreed with the initial supporting communications to be developed prior to the Board meeting, enabling a quicker dissemination of information if approved. This would then be followed by greater details of the longer term return to competition plan, although this may not include dates.

The importance of the county championships was discussed and their significance to the membership.

3.1.2 Diving:

The main focus centred on delivering national competitions and the possibilities for 2021 as well as getting back into the sport and the difficulties over venue closures.

Agreement was given that there is mileage in exploring virtual competitions further and how they could be delivered.

It was acknowledged that the leadership group would welcome assistance from the Head of Events when she is back in post.

3.1.3 Artistic Swimming:

The group had discussed proposed competition layouts, recognising team events will be more challenging than those for individuals. The paper identified how grading could be completed and noted that it's not necessarily the number of swimmers in the pool that would provide an issue, more the pool deck activity alongside the wider centre capacity.

3.1.4 Water Polo:

The predominant focus was on regional and inter-regional competitions, providing a change of format for these events and recognising that the host would need to be able to deliver at minimal cost.

National events:

Cost neutral delivery is key, historically the sport has enhanced event delivery and this will need to be stripped back. Current major losses are centred on volunteer costs. JW has been asked to lead a working group to consider all costs associated with volunteers and make recommendations.

Action – SOC members to highlight if they would like to be part of the group.

3.2 **Insight on return to pools update**

SOC members were given an overview of the insight that has been collected from clubs since 12 August on their return to the water and advised that details are likely to have changed as more pools have opened and accessibility has increased. It was noted that the survey findings give an objective view of the current position.

The details of the survey are also accessible at a regional level which enables a local picture to be presented and enables the most relevant support to be provided.

3.3 **Membership Update**

As anticipated the number of membership upgrades has been significantly lower than previous years and new memberships are down c. 5%. A project group with representation from Communications and Sport Development has been convened to develop the messaging for renewals with different messaging being developed for the varied target audiences.

National level marketing and influencing is also being developed to support the sector opening up and help in securing funding to support this. Targeted work at key venues is being completed, identifying the ones with the biggest issue

and deploying the Clubs and Business Engagement teams to work with clubs and operators.

The launch and current impact of the new membership categories was highlighted along with the confirmation that Category 1 – 3 memberships are being refreshed in their look and how communications with members are managed.

4. Items to note

4.1 Stronger Affiliation update

Nothing further to add to the supplied paper.

4.2 Regional Agreements

GW reported that a working group with a number of regional chairs and Sport Development staff is meeting to shape an agreement to support effective collaboration and work between Swim England National and the Swim England Regions.

5. Any Other Business

5.1 Poaching of club members: following a discussion it was agreed that club membership is down to market forces and personal choice and that SOC should not intervene on this.

5.2 Interim meeting: it was agreed an interim meeting would be beneficial, with a provisional meeting date of 6 October scheduled.

6.1 Future Meeting Dates

Tuesday 6 October 2020

Tuesday 17 November 2020