

# Swim England Sport Operations Committee

Minutes of the meeting held 9 February 2021, via Zoom

**Draft minutes subject to approval at the next meeting**

<b>Present:</b>	Neil Booth Joan Wheeler (JW) Ian Mackenzie (IM) Jim Boucher (JB) Pippa Jones (PJ) John Hidle (JH) Emma Griffin(EG) George Wood (GW) Jon Glenn (JG)	Chairman Swim England Board Member Swim England Member Swim England Member Swim England Member Regional Chairs Representative MARCOMS and Operations Director Sports Development Director Learn to Swim and Workforce Director
<b>Staff:</b>	Ali Sibcy-Allen (AS-A)	Operations Administration Manager
<b>Invited:</b>	Ben Gregory (BG) Martin Lees (ML) Ekaterina Boyd (EB) Claire Coleman (CC)	Chair of Youth Advisory Panel Para-Swimming Development Manager Head of Events Head of Development

## **Min No:**

### **1. Standing Items**

#### **1.1 Chairman's welcome**

The Chair welcomed all members, The Chair reminded all members of the need to ensure respect to all members at all times during our meetings

#### **1.2 Apologies**

Alex Harrison (Independent Member)

#### **1.3 Declarations of Interest**

5.1 – Ian Mackenzie

#### **1.4 Declarations of AoB**

##### **1.4.1 Frequency of meetings**

#### **1.5 Minutes from previous meetings:**

1.5.1 19 January 2021: The minutes were accepted.

#### **1.6 Actions from previous meetings**

1.6.1 Item 1.7: Club merger documents sent to clubs and regions but are not public on website.

1.6.2 Item 3.2: Agreed wording as:

“The Swim England Sport Operations Committee (SOC), recognises the importance of a strong and consistent education to the young people involved in

our sports. Unless agreed by the SOC, Swim England Leadership Groups should avoid booking competitions for school time during the academic year, and should, under no circumstances, book competitions during school time across the national exam season in the Summer. Affiliated associations are requested to adopt the same policy.”

**Action: NB Form of words to be sent to all Discipline Leadership Group Chairs and to regions**

The benefit of the YAP looking at the wider issue of barriers for 15 – 18 year olds was also discussed, with consideration to be given to whether the competition schedule is the main issue.

**Action: BG to submit an outline of the main aim of the YAP proposal to NB**

**1.7 Leadership Group Updates**

**Club:** The merger document is completed and available to Clubs on application. SwimMark accreditation is to be discussed with regard to clubs who haven’t achieved Stronger Affiliation or engaged to re-accredit. It is believed there is a perception that all activity has stopped as there is no pool access. The group are considering the request for an appeal process in respect of new club affiliation.

**Artistic Swimming:** The disappointment with the lack of UK Sport funding received is tangible with questions asked over a potential British Swimming 2020 underspend and whether this could support Artistic Swimming. It was agreed to query if there is additional funding available from BS. It was noted that BS have signed letters of representation to the UK Sport Board to appeal the decision. There was a request for 2021 meeting dates to be confirmed.

**Water Polo:** Discussing the possibility of further sponsorship following that from the Swimming Trust. A deposit has been paid to enable participation in the BUCS World University Games by team members. A number of other competitions are being considered with athlete and workforce safety the paramount consideration.

**Diving:** Meeting dates have been set for 2021. Level X land competition being launched.

**YAP:** First phase of recommitment based on new TORs completed, next stage to recruit vacant roles. Discussing how to make the panel more inclusive and cross-discipline.

**2. Items for Decision**

**3. Items for Discussion**  
**3.1 Open Water**

An overview of the outdoor swimming community membership offer that is under development was provided. Research is being completed alongside engagement with other organisations to determine the areas of focus.

As a growing participation area, which has seen significant growth due to facilities being closed during 2020, there are a lot of opportunities but the engagement and direction have to be correct.

It was noted that a strategic approach will be taken to develop and refresh what is already available as well as new content before launching in April 2021. The approach will ensure that there is engagement, partnership and collaboration with

already established organisations and participants to develop mutually beneficial relationships.

Two key target audiences have been identified; outdoor swimmers who are already frequently participating, and those who are relatively new to the concept, potentially as a result of facilities being closed.

The offers are still being worked on with rewards and partner deals currently being negotiated. The website landing page will use the current framework which will be adapted for both open water swimmers and supporters

As the offer is still in development there are decision yet to be made and it was suggested that Gaby Hay (Head of Membership Development) could attend the March meeting to provide an update.

**Action: GH to be invited to March meeting**

As the project is being completed internally there are no additional costs above staff time. While a level of open water swimming information will remain on the website, some existing and new content may be made accessible in the paid for membership area.

It was agreed that this is a positive move and the inclusion of political lobbying for Open Water, which has already begun, adds to the value.

SOC members conveyed their thanks to GH for work completed so far.

### 3.2 **Paraswimming Classification**

Martin Lees joined the meeting and was introduced to SOC members.

An overview of the current classification position with regards to the roles and responsibilities of both British Swimming and the three Home Nations was provided alongside the background of recent changes to the process.

As a result of the changes made in 2018, all swimmers had to be reassessed which, coupled with a more time-consuming process, caused a back-log of assessments to be completed.

During 2020, additional classifiers have been recruited in an attempt to address the back-log who will commence their theory training shortly. The practical training was recognised as being more challenging due to the range of impairments needing to be observed before sign-off can be achieved. It is hoped that this can be expedited once a level of normality is achieved following the pandemic.

Questions were asked as to the possibility of streamlining the process and reviewing facility requirements but as the process mirrors that of the international process.

It was noted that, based on the current numbers, once classification is permitted again it will take a significant amount of time to clear the back-log and there are fears that this could result in swimmers being lost and Paralympic and Commonwealth Games competition standards not being achieved.

Work needs to be completed to address the delivery of classification to increase the available slots whilst maintaining the quality. GW is to discuss options to push the programme forward with ML.

**Action: GW to liaise with ML to develop a plan on how to progress.**

ML was thanked for his time.

### 3.3 **Volunteer Awards 2021**

Ekaterina Boyd and Claire Coleman were welcomed to the meeting.

Following the lack of awards in 2020, support to explore the potential of hosting an event in 2021 was requested noting that it will likely be virtual. Agreement that recognising, rewarding and thanking the aquatics community for their contribution was given and the proposal was supported.

IM, JW and BG agreed to sit on a working group alongside EB and CC to consider formats and categories before returning to SOC.

### 3.4 **Membership**

At the time of the meeting, membership income was down 49% on the same period in 2020. It was advised that this is just a snapshot and it may be more telling to review the membership of the clubs who have renewed, which are down c. 20%.

## 4. **Items to Note**

### 4.1 **Stronger Affiliation**

CC updated members that there are currently 48 clubs who are yet to complete, affecting c.2000 members. The next communication to remind clubs of the deadline and implications of not completing, specifically the loss of insurance, alongside the support they can access to complete, is being drafted. Following this, members of the affected clubs will be contacted directly to advise the status of their club and provide support in moving clubs where required.

## 5. **AOB**

### 5.1 **IOS Training Costs**

It was questioned whether the fees for IOS courses were accessible and if there is scope for payment plans or reducing the costs of the courses.

JG advised that fees have been reduced and an easy payment option is available, with the theory element being charged for now and the practical element to payable once it is available. Payment plans are available if requested but are not currently advertised.

### 5.2 **Meeting Frequency**

Members were asked to consider whether interim meetings are required along with the frequency of future meetings and the day they are held.

**Action: add meeting frequency to March agenda**

### 5.3 **MWG TORs**

Following discussion, it was proposed that SOC would support the implementation of the TORs following a revision of the group name to 'Masters Swimming Sub-Group' and the removal of a sentence imposing a veto in paragraph A1.1. i.e. *No candidate shall be appointed if not considered appointable by the representative of the regions*

Following a vote, members accepted the TOR providing the amendments are made.

**Action: NB to advise the SLG that the TOR are accepted.**

The work of JH and others to get to this point was noted.

**6.**

**2021 Meeting Dates**

- Tuesday 16 March
- Tuesday 13 April
- Tuesday 18 May
- Tuesday 13 July
- Tuesday 14 September
- Tuesday 16 November