

# Swim England Sport Operations Committee

Minutes of the meeting held 18 May 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) Alex Harrison (AH) John Hidle (JH) Ben Gregory (BG) George Wood (GW)	Chairman Swim England Board Member Swim England Member Swim England Member Swim England Member Swim England Member Regional Chairs Representative Chair of Youth Advisory Panel Sports Development Director
<b>Staff:</b>	Ali Sibcy-Allen (AS-A)	Operations Administration Manager
<b>Invited:</b>	Ekaterina Boyd (EB) Martin Lees (ML) Rachel Bayley (RB) Emma Langham (EL)	Head of Events Para-Swimming Development Manager Head of Performance Operations Membership Engagement Manager

## **Min No:**

### **1. Standing Items**

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

The Chair welcomed all members.

#### **1.2 Apologies**

Jon Glenn (Learn to Swim and Workforce Director)

Rebecca Cox (Swim England Business Engagement Director & Institute of Swimming Managing Director)

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

IM – Item 2.3

#### **1.4 Minutes from previous meetings:**

1.4.1 16 March 2021: The minutes were accepted.

#### **1.5 Actions from previous meetings**

1.5.1 Item 1.6: Implementation plans have now been completed by the organisation as a whole, the DisLGs will have sight of their disciplines.

1.5.2 Item 5.1: Gaby Hay to attend the July SOC meeting to present initial ideas for discussion.

## 1.6 Leadership Group Updates

**Club:** Following the completion of the Stronger Affiliation period 26 clubs did not complete the process with a further 23 advising that they were folding or choosing to no longer affiliate. NB advised he will confirm affected clubs have been suspended and their geography. Currently 62% of clubs have achieved SwimMark. The club affiliation process has been completed and circulated to regions to enable standardisation. Merger documentation is available on request to ensure staff can be aware of requests and support as needed.

Work is ongoing to develop a constitution template and a club and operator document has been released, aiming to help create productive working relationships.

**Action: NB to confirm suspensions and club geography.**

**Artistic Swimming:** PB's were achieved in all events during the European Championships. The Level X pool based competition has commenced and a virtual competition to be held in the Autumn has been developed. Planning for 2022 will commence shortly.

**Water Polo:** Lots of excitement for over 18 years being able to return to the water. Challenge with course cancellation and reinstatement has been dealt with. A competition review is ongoing, engaging with people involved across all levels and ensuring full representation of the sport. A membership review has been completed to ensure accuracy in club records and to assist with the competition review which is being supported by SE and Regional staff members.

**Diving:** Aiming to release Return to Competition information by the end of May, with competitions looking at returning from September. Level X dryside has been well received and is ongoing which will be replaced with pool based from 1 June. A working group has been comprised to consider the licensing of diving events. An online J1 course has been delivered, receiving positive feedback.

The leadership group terms of reference and inclusion of redundant job roles was highlighted. Agreement was given that liaisons would review any specific to their discipline and NB would review the generic roles descriptors.

**Action: DisLG role descriptions to be reviewed by liaisons and NB**

**Swimming:** Details of the Festival of Swimming were provided along with the challenges currently being experienced in organisation. It was noted that the provision for Masters swimmers is being looked at separately. Regional development camps have begun to be scheduled. Licensing for L4 meets has commenced, subject to further Government updates. EB is leading a group to start the development of an outline plan for an OW festival in September.

**YAP:** Work has started on the retention project and a report will be submitted to SOC in due course. Finalising skills matrix for recruitment to identify current holes.

## 2. Items for Decision

### 2.1 **SOC Meeting Matrix**

The proposed matrix is based on eight meetings per annum. Members were requested to send their comments on the day / time of the meetings alongside the content.

**Action: Members to provide any comments on day / time of meetings and the content of the meetings to NB**

## 2.2 Commonwealth water polo tournament

RB and EK joined the meeting.

A recap and overview of the paper was provided, highlighting the associated opportunities and risks. Following discussion agreement was provided to progress the project and look for support from a partner to deliver. Should discussions be successful, an experienced organising committee are in place. If a delivery partner willing to underwrite the event cannot be secured, a return to SOC to consider the cost implications of underwriting the event internally would be needed.

It was noted that historically a WP event linked to the Commonwealth Games has been delivered on a larger scale but there are both financial and water access challenges associated with a competition in 2022, hence the proposal for a smaller, more manageable event.

**Action: RB / EB to progress with the proposal**

## 2.3 2022 Membership Fees

EL Joined the meeting.

Details on the reasoning for the recommended increases in membership fees were provided and the two options were detailed.

The feasibility of combining options 1 and 2 was discussed, noting that the increase would be 1.45% which remains in line with the guidance. Agreement was received that combining the two options would be preferable.

Cat 1: £9.35

Cat 2: £28.15

Cat 3: £5.25

The fee increases for other membership / affiliation categories were accepted.

## 3. Items for Discussion

### 3.1 HF / AHT Awards

IM rectified an error in the paper regarding the award allocations.

There was support for the tidying of the award criteria and the recommendations within the report. IM to make the required amends and return the paper to NB for Board submission.

**Action: IM to amend the paper and return to NB for Board submission**

### 3.2 Inclusion

Inclusion is seen as a vital topic with a key part of the SE cause ensuring the sports are open to everyone. Sport England have incorporated inclusion as a key element of their strategy. It is noted that Sport England data highlights a variation in swimming participation rates by ethnicity, as an example, White British Adults are over-represented in comparison with the ethnic make-up of the general population whereas Black adults are under-represented. Swim England analysis shows that Swim England members tend to be in the least deprived areas of England with 49% being in the three least deprived deciles whereas 13% live in the three most deprived deciles. This imbalance is also reflected in the talent programmes.

Consideration is being given to how inclusion levels can be addressed and what tools are available to SE to address the disparity.

It was agreed it is important that inclusion is a high priority for the sport and the organisation and a working group to maintain visibility would be beneficial to hold the organisation accountable. The creation of a group would also provide an opportunity to shape what the organisation is working towards and ensure this remains in line with company values.

GW advised he would progress internally with SLT and develop as a paper for Board submission. Agreement was given that a key focus for the sport should be driving greater inclusion in terms of ethnicity. There should also be a push to support greater inclusion across all the protected characteristics and a commitment to reviewing barriers and identifying how to remove them.

**Action: GW to progress with SLT and develop a Board paper**

#### **4. Items to Note**

##### **4.1 Virtual Awards**

Ekaterina Boyd joined the meeting to provide an update on progress and provide operational detail.

Nominations are opening in line with the National Volunteer Week (1 June) remaining open until 15 August. Shortlisting will follow until 15 September with the live awards on 9 October, which are likely to be a hybrid combination of live and pre-recorded content.

Discussions with regions have been held to determine if they will be holding their own awards following the national framework and associated timescales.

##### **4.2 Classification Update**

Martin Lees joined the meeting to provide an update on the work completed since the February SOC meeting. The key action point from the previous meeting was to develop an action plan with British Swimming.

The plan has four key focus areas and increases the number of events and improves access to classification opportunities by 30%.

As part of the plan, BS are developing a robust training plan for classifiers to reduce waiting list times for both new athletes and those waiting to be re-classified. Classification being completed simultaneously across all three impairment groups will also be explored. Targeted recruitment will commence with engagement in the medical sector to recruit more classifiers, supported by greater efforts to recognise the importance of the role.

Efforts are being made to ensure the process is as efficient and effective as possible to enable more athletes to be classified during meets and reduce waiting times. It was noted the present geographical spread of classifiers does not cover the country but once the trainees are qualified this should be addressed, with events being planned for practical training completion.

Future planning in regards to events and resource implications is ongoing with plans to present to the SLG following which regions will be engaged with to discuss and develop plans further.

##### **4.3 Return to water update**

**Overview:** Training guidance for all disciplines has been issued as has competition guidance, excluding diving. As of 17 May 444 of the 973 accredited clubs had responded to the survey. Over 400 were back in a pool, 90% of which advised they were in their primary pool. From the responses 53% advised that they currently had less water time than pre-covid, which is supported by conversations with operators highlighting challenges with water access.

**Talent Funding:** A successful Sport England bid for the talent programme has provided an investment of £298,500 through to March 2022. The funding is ring-fenced for identified talent activity and talent staff to return to 80% of contracted hours. An overview of current activity was provided.

**DiSE:** While aquatic sport places are down by six for the next academic year following a significant oversubscription to the programme SE have retained 170 places for athletes to start the programme from September which is a positive outcome.

**Future Funding:** It was initially believed the Sport England funding process would begin in May but currently application details have not been provided. An update will be provided when available.

**Regional Agreements:** Progress is being made across the regions.

**Competition update:** Level X is open for swimming, dryside diving and WP, although WP uptake is currently slow in part due to the requirement for Category 2 membership and partly due to Water Polo matches now being able to recommence. AS will be starting imminently with wet-side diving scheduled to start in June, enabling prior training and reducing the risk of injuries.

**Festival of Swimming:** As previously discussed, some Regions are finding challenges and SE staff are supporting as requested.

**OW:** An event at the beginning of September is being scoped which would include a variety of distances and no enforced wetsuits. EB is leading a working group looking at the detail of the competition.

**Events:** Working on the costings of national events from September and their feasibility. The report is being developed and will be submitted to the Board to identify how this can be achieved. SOC are supportive of delivering national events from September.

**Stronger affiliation:** 22 clubs have been suspended for non-compliance with four advising that they are no longer affiliating / folding.

## 5. 2021 Meeting Dates

- Tuesday 13 July
- Tuesday 14 September
- Tuesday 16 November