

Swim England Sport Operations Committee

Minutes of the meeting held 29 March 2022, via Zoom

Draft minutes subject to approval at the next meeting

Present:	Neil Booth	Chairman
	Joan Wheeler (JW)	Swim England Board Member
	Ian Mackenzie (IM)	Swim England Member
	Jim Boucher (JB)	Swim England Member
	Alex Harrison (AH)	Swim England Member
	John Hidle (JH)	Regional Chairs Representative
	Ben Gregory (BG)	Youth Advisory Group Representative
	George Wood (GW)	Sports Development Director
	Jon Glenn (JG)	Learn to Swim and Workforce Director
	Rebecca Cox (RC)	Swim England Business Engagement Director & Institute of Swimming Managing Director
Staff:	Ali Sibcy-Allen (AS-A)	Operations Administration Manager
	Richard Lamburn (RL)	Head of Facilities

Min No:

1. Standing Items

1.1 Chairman's welcome

Members were welcomed to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies

Pippa Jones

1.3 Declarations of interest

JW and JH both declared item 2.1, Harold Fern and A.H. Turner awards.

1.4 Declarations of AoB

1.5 Minutes from previous meetings:

1.5.1 15 February 2022: The minutes were accepted.

1.6 Actions from previous meetings

1.6.1 Appeals – Amendments agreed by Board.

1.6.2 Regulation 6.8 removal agreed by board, to go to 2022 AGM.

1.6.3 Wording relating to L3 coaches course which excluded masters confirmed to have been updated.

1.6.4 Ref 22.9: Skills based member recruitment – ongoing, advert released with interviews scheduled to be held end of April.

1.7 Leadership Group Updates

Club: an oversight on the recording of conflicts of interest was highlighted along with a reminder that SOC representatives are to check on governance and guide as needed. Commercial conflicts (e.g. an employed role influencing decisions) need

to be recorded as opposed to sporting (e.g. regional member sitting on national committee).

Artistic Swimming: The NAGs are being held at the beginning of April with numbers lower than previous years but better than expected. Nationals have been scheduled for the end of April, again with lower entry numbers than previous years which were on an upward trajectory. The Combo Cup is scheduled to be held in London at the beginning of July with clubs being surveyed to determine entry numbers in advance. Recovery is ongoing and slow however coaching and officiating courses are increasing.

Water Polo: The new programme lead has been appointed, discussion is ongoing over a start date (now confirmed as July) which is resulting in delays to the competition review. The Inter-Regionals were successfully held and organised by an independent group of SE members. NAGs rounds are being held over the upcoming weeks with the final in April. A promotional video is currently being edited with an anticipated launch date at the end of April.

Dividing: Events are being held within the regions with all going well.

Swimming: The Certificate of Disability is to be replaced by the Certificate of Exception, which will be circulated to SOC members with feedback via email. It was agreed that items to be added to the handbook under regulations or guidance should be agreed by SOC followed by the SE Board.

Action: NB to circulate Certificate of Exception to SOC members for feedback.

YAP: Four new members have commenced their roles with new Sport Development team members joining as well. The transition to the new Chair has begun with the official handover on 2 July 2022. Project planning for future plans, alongside the retention project, has been completed.

1.8 **Swim England Strategy**

The SE Board is looking to develop a new strategy looking forward to the next 10 years to enable long-term issues to be addressed. An independent facilitator has been recruited to assist with the project but ownership and development remain within SE.

Completion of the Strategy is expected in September 2022. There are a large number of stakeholders to be consulted. To aid discussion and feedback, questions will be supplied to DLG Chairs to consider with their groups before feeding back through discussions with a facilitator. It was agreed that the Youth Advisory Panel Chair and the Masters Working Group Chair should be consulted. GW to action.

Action: GW to ensure consultation with Youth Advisory Group and the Masters Working Group is included during strategy development.

Given the time limitations, it is not currently planned to liaise directly with clubs and counties in the first instance but they will be engaged during the stakeholder validation phase when there is the scope to share initial thinking and receive feedback. A significant amount of insight is already held from clubs and members but if information is lacking there will be an opportunity to revisit and widen the consultation.

Further updates will be provided as available.

1.9 **Update from Regional Chairs meeting**

The role of the counties was discussed with an agreement from the Chairs to more clearly determine their role and establish governance standards and consistency across the country.

Communication will go to counties in early April to ensure awareness of the project and transparency. A fact base will be compiled with a model constitution for counties developed by the end of 2022 along with a standard MOU for regions and counties. It was noted that timescales for implementation will need to consider the timing of county AGM's to enable the adoption of a new constitution.

There was a discussion as to whether a stepping stone of 'stronger' county affiliation was needed before moving to compliance with the UK Sport Governance Code. The answer to this will emerge once the Factbase has been completed..

1.10 **SE Board Minutes**

It was noted that moving forwards SE Board minutes will be brought to SOC meetings.

2. Items for Decision

2.1 **Harold Fern and A.H. Turner Awards**

JW and JH voluntarily left the meeting for item 2.1.

Following a vote, the Harold Fern award went to Alan Boyle and the A.H. Turner Award went to Rosa Gallop.

The names will be taken to the May SE Board meeting for confirmation.

Action: NB to take names to May SE Board meeting

3. Items for Discussion

3.1 **Coaching Plan 2022-25**

The Coaching Plan was described to be four key areas which sit below the overall strategy, and can be updated if needed following the development of the new SE strategy.

The areas were outlined as:

- Connecting the coaching environment
- Empowering people – growth and development
- Setting standards – better governance and improving standards
- Tackling inequalities – making coaching workforce more diverse and supporting people to move through the system.

The plan has been developed across the organisation and has been brought to SOC before implementation. To aid implementation, a Head of Coaching role will be recruited. Discussion considered how this would incorporate the coaching policy update and the need to increase the number of L2 coaches. Key activities of the Head of Coaching role will include understanding the demand for coach education and determining the effective workforce to develop the sport in the future.

The consultation involved in the development of the plan was reviewed highlighting the contribution of the talent teams, coaches and individuals within the disciplines. It was noted that Leadership Groups had been consulted but that it was necessary to

clarify how this had taken place and to take the Plan back to the groups for final comment and to ensure no issues. GW will clarify with Lindsay Trimmings who was consulted and will organise for redistribution of the Plan to relevant DLGs and also to Regional Chairs.

Action: GW to clarify who has been consulted during plan development with Lindsay Trimmings (LT) and redistribute Plan to DLGs and Regional Chairs.

The cost of the project was queried, with it being advised that so far it has been all internal resourcing to develop the plan. There will be an associated cost with the recruitment of the Head of Coaching with a business case having been produced outlining the expected costs and potential income generation routes to recoup this.

A request to ensure regions are included during discussion to enable consultation was agreed with respect to match-funded roles. Compliance requirements were reviewed, noting the need to clarify the wording to ensure there are no loopholes available during the completion of DBS checks.

Action: GW to feedback to LT on match funding requirements and clarification of wording around DBS checks.

SOC members confirmed they were happy to support the implementation of the Plan following DLG input and thanked LT for her work.

3.2 Coaching Policy update

Following the update in February which was seen as an update to the previous version an amount of feedback has been received questioning this.

A discussion over the wording contained within the policy relating to the delivery of sessions without a L2 coach and unexpected / planned absence followed. The need for consultation with clubs was considered but it was agreed that in cases such as this, it is the role of the NGB to set best practice, standards and guidelines.

Worries surrounding clubs not having appropriate coaches to deliver were highlighted and noted to need addressing, which would tie into the remit of the new role of Head of Coaching. It was questioned whether there have been loopholes available within the wording and whether these need to be tightened.

There was agreement that the requirements in the document need to be implemented and the challenge would be how it is presented to clubs. The need for clubs to complete risk assessments and properly record them was highlighted as the undertaking of activities outside of the qualification of a coach could be putting individuals in danger and resulting in them not being covered by insurance. The implementation of the plan is about protecting the deliverer, the club and its committee as well as participants

Planned and unplanned absences were discussed, referring back to risk assessments and the need for it to be an exception and not standard practice. Wording to suggest risk assessments which plan for a L2 coach to not be present should be amended as this sets the wrong precedence to clubs. The word 'emergency' was deemed to be key and while clubs may need an interim policy there should be a specified date whereby clubs need to meet the requirements to continue operating. It was agreed that there should be provision for clubs to utilise a coach with less than a Level 2 qualification (or equivalent) in cases of emergency where the Level 2 coach was unexpectedly absent. This would require a risk assessment by the club to show that the activity was still safe and effective for

participants. It was also agreed that this provision should not be extended to situations where the Level 2 coach was on a planned absence as this would set a dangerous precedent.

Discussion continued to consider the safety element of the document and coaches acting as lifeguards during sessions. The Safe Supervision document has been referenced and the RLSS consulted. GW proposed an additional wording be added which aims to ensure clubs do not take reckless decisions with roles being properly documented and risk assessments fully completed with the facility provider. It was agreed that this should be added.

The majority of the committee were happy with the amends, JB and BG abstained from voting.

GW advised that a forum could be held with club chairs to explain the reasoning behind the guidance if needed. Confirmation will be gained from the insurance brokers and the revised document will be communicated following the agreed amendments.

Action: GW to confirm insurance cover and arrange communication of revised document following agreed amends.

3.3 **Water Depth Guidance**

RL was welcomed to the meeting.

The background behind the proposed amends was presented, outlining FINA guidance alongside UK health and safety regulations.

Whilst reviewing the guidance, the number of affected pools was considered and deemed to be minimal and predominantly older pools.

Pool certification was considered and the work that will need to be undertaken to review these and ensure certification is removed from pools that are too shallow. The cost of completing this was raised and noted to be something to keep in mind.

JH advised that the Regional Licensing Officers have not identified any licensed events where this could cause a problem in the short term. Following discussion, it was agreed to re-confirm this information.

Action: JH to liaise with Regional Licensing Officers to confirm if any licensed meets will be impacted by the depth change requirement.

Discussion turned to the depth needed to learn racing starts which was confirmed to be 1.35m. The need to update the details for awards was recognised.

JG advised that impacted facilities and clubs would be worked closely with to provide support and assist with amending meet formats if needed. Individual notifications to be sent to the clubs that will be affected. As the change results from a Health and Safety rationale implementation of the change will need to be immediate.

SOC members agreed the paper.

4. **Items to Note**

4.1 **Facilities**

RL provided an overview of the background of his role.

A brief update on some of the areas being worked on was provided, including the provision of facilities and development of new facilities both for Local Authorities and within the educational sector.

Documentation to support the start of facility–build conversations is in development. A co-branded document with Sport England is being worked on which suggests four different pool options alongside a variety of dryside possibilities and includes 2022 approximate costs for building.

A SE document to support this has also been developed which encourages the undertaking of a needs analysis to ensure the needs of the local community can be met as well as incorporating the needs of clubs across all disciplines. Outdoor pools have also been included within the document alongside bringing in environmental considerations. The document links to a Sport England publication so cannot be launched until this is also completed. RL is happy to share the draft with SOC members if they would like to review.

The Decade of Decline initiative was detailed alongside progress being made with highlighting the ageing stock of pools and outlining the 600 pools in 400 facilities which are over 40 years old. The role of Swim England in amplifying the issues and providing sustainable solutions was noted with aquatics being a high energy usage sport and the advances in technology to provide suitable alternatives. Discussions are ongoing with operators who are gravitating towards SE to speak on their behalf.

5. AOB

5.1 SOC Chair: Following discussions with the SE Board Chair, Richard Hookway, and Jane Nickerson, NB will be stepping back from SOC until September due to time pressures. JW will be the interim Chair during this time.

5.2 May Meeting: The date of the May SOC meeting will need to be amended. A Doodle poll is to be circulated.

Action: AS-A to circulate Doodle poll with alternative dates.

5.3 Recruitment for SOC members: The process is underway with an advert being put out shortly. Interviews will be held at the end of April.

5.4 Fees for over 80s: As members over 80 years of age do not receive the benefit of insurance the membership team are to be asked to review their fees.

Action: GW to ask membership team to review fees for over 80s

5.5 NB thanked JB for his contribution to SOC over the past few years.

6. 2022 Meeting Dates

- Tuesday 24 May, 10am – date change TBC
- Tuesday 12 July, 10am
- Tuesday 13 September, 10am
- Tuesday 11 October, 10am
- Tuesday 22 November, 10am