

Swim England Sport Operations Committee

Minutes of the meeting held 30 April 2024

Draft minutes subject to approval at the next meeting

Present:

Joan Wheeler (JW)	Swim England Board Member (Chair)
Neil Booth (NB)	Swim England Board Member
Amy Bryant (AB)	Swim England Member
Alex Harrison (AH)	Swim England Member
Keith Munday (KM)	Swim England Member
Richard Palmer-Jones (RPJ)	Swim England Member
John Hidle (JH)	Regional Chairs Representative
Ellie Conway (EC)	Youth Advisory Panel
Ally White (AW)	Sport Development Director

Staff:

Claire Coleman (CC)	Head of Development
Ali Sibcy-Allen (AS-A)	Operations Administration Manager
Helen Weeks (HW)	Sport Governance & Welfare Manager
Craig McCulloch (CM)	Head of Coaching
Ekaterina Boyd (EB)	Head of Events
Emily Budzynski-Seymour (EBS)	Insight Manager
Richard Lamburn (RL)	Head of Facilities

Min No:

1. Standing Items

1.1 Chairperson's welcome

Members were welcomed to the in person meeting. Welcoming Richard to his first meeting, members introduced themselves to RPJ who provided an overview of his background. Members agreed a letter should be sent to Ian Mackenzie to thank him for his contribution while in role.

1.2 Apologies

Rebecca Cox

1.3 Declarations of Interest

None recorded.

1.4 Declarations of AOB

None recorded.

1.5 Minutes from previous meetings:

The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record.

1.6 Actions from previous meetings:

1.6.1 2.1 – Risk Assessment Portal: the portal has been transferred and is now in a testing phase. Testers from the community will be engaged to ensure the content is right. The portal will not be compulsory for clubs and is designed to provide support and prompts where needed.

Members were encouraged by the progression and emphasised that the messaging to clubs would need to be carefully managed. A further report would be made to SOC prior to the launch.

2. Governance and Coach Compliance

HW was welcomed to the meeting, outlining how the use of Power BI could support regions and clubs.

HW demonstrated examples of the high level information supplied, confirming that this can be drilled down for regions and disciplines, noting that the data will reflect that provided.

The importance of discussing the dashboard contents with Regional Chairs as well as staff members was noted, recognising that it could help to inform work focus areas.

HW advised that the platform will help to gauge the level of current compliance and, in the longer term, identify if policies are effective as well as helping to determine educational requirements.

The need to outline the positive messages for clubs and how this will be of benefit to them was conveyed.

SOC members requested to see data regularly and requested an overview to be provided as to where the data will be used across the organisation to ensure that there will be a comparable approach and consistency. Discussion agreed the high-level dashboard was best suited to the SE Board and that SOC would prefer regional and discipline breakdowns.

JW requested that this remains a standing item with data provided in advance.

Action: AS-A to add Power BI dashboard as a standing agenda item.

3. Sport Development Directorate

3.1 Sports Development Update

AW provided an update on the UK Sport funding that Aquatics GB will be receiving, highlighting the inclusion of Water Polo and Artistic Swimming. Swim England funding from Sport England is expected to remain flat and is due to be confirmed shortly.

Seven sports, including Swim England, have formed a Clean Water Alliance to encourage water companies to reduce pollution into open water and provide clean spaces to access.

The Talent Team are presenting to coaches during the Regional Swimming Championships to share key messages. So far, these presentations have been well received.

3.2 Health and Safety Forum

3.2.1 The minutes of the Health and Safety (H&S) Forum meeting held on 21st March 2024 had been circulated to SOC members prior to the meeting, together with proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Forum.

3.2.2 AW advised that the Health and Safety Forum Chair has resigned and recruitment will commence for a replacement.

3.2.3 With regard to the circulated TORs, AW advised these were also being reviewed by H&S Forum. AW will collate feedback from both sets of members to incorporate into the finalised document. SOC members agreed the Forum need to be conscious of their role and remit. SOC members agreed they were happy with proposed amends following the incorporation of provided feedback.

4. **Coaching**

CM was welcomed to the meeting. Craig reported on his initial observations made since starting in role.

The observations are aimed to be developmental, contributing to the action plan arising from the Listening Report.

Noting that there were many positives with the sports, CM advised that a key area of work was to review the long-term aim and vision. Alongside this, work will be completed to elevate ethics and to begin to change the culture of coaching.

Details of the recommended coach education amendments were outlined as well as the development of coach networking and aims to increase diversity within the workforce.

SOC members thanked CM for his comments and conveyed their support for his approach.

It was agreed that CM would return to a future meeting to provide an update.

Action: CM to return to a future meeting.

5. **The Listening Report**

EB was welcomed to the meeting.

AW gave an update on the Listening Report. Members were advised this is the key priority for the organisation and that while there is a sense of urgency to address the outcomes, measured consideration will be given before an action plan is finalised. Discussion with the SE Board will continue to determine the priorities with input from the Oversight Committee. It was confirmed the Heart of Aquatics is still relevant and future work will embed and use its guiding principles.

Following the Report, twenty-one recommendations were made across three areas; positive culture, continued listening and welfare, safeguarding and complaints management. AW provided further detail as to how Culture will be addressed through the following responses:

- Purpose and Value Roadshows: These are targeted at all involved in aquatics with details behind the scheduling provided.
- Production of a new vision, mission and values following the collection of insight.
- The development of a refreshed strategy, incorporating the Heart of Aquatics and culture as golden threads.

Discussion further considered the Roadshows with AW advising that numbers are limited compared to membership but details are being communicated across all platforms to maximise attendance. It was confirmed that Andy Salmon (CEO) would be facilitating the sessions with a member of the Welfare Team attending all

dates. SOC members suggested that access to a recorded online session would be beneficial for those who cannot attend the session.

EB provided an overview of the amendments made at National Events across all disciplines, following the publication of the report.

The provision of a safe environment for all was highlighted. The accreditation protocol reflecting Wavepower requirements was outlined alongside the protocol for volunteers under 18 years of age.

Following the banning of mobile phone use in changing rooms, a campaign is due to be launched to encourage athletes to store them in lockers and not take them onto poolside. Challenges with start lists and results being accessed via phones were noted alongside the importance of consistency at all events.

EB informed members that a designated welfare officer is named for all National Events. This individual may not be on site at all events and athletes are provided with signage to advise how to contact them. Discussion considered how immediate on site support could be accessed and EB agreed to consider this issue.

6. Online Community Panel

EBS was welcomed to the meeting.

The development of an Online Community Panel was outlined, highlighting the benefits of this type of forum and details of the task types that can be employed. Tasks are split into large and small pieces with a maximum of one large and two small to be used each month.

The community will be club focussed and include members from all disciplines, roles and regions with rotation every three months. Members will be able to be tagged with the relevant roles to ensure that they are appropriate for the particular insight. EBS confirmed that members can be targeted for relevant research.

Participants would have to agree to the code of conduct with monitoring be completed by the contracted agency and the Insight Team. The motivation for members to be involved were outlined, with details provided of the rewards that could be used.

It was noted the in house team is small but it was confirmed that additional resource can be agreed with the agency, if required, to support in monitoring the community.

The community is due to launch on 13 May with a timeline of projects in place for the following three months.

EBS was thanked for her presentation.

7. Facilities

RL was welcomed to the meeting.

A brief update on the current position of available water per head of population was provided, highlighting how this has reduced and the reasons behind the loss of water space.

RL outlined the number of pools that have closed since 2020 as well as those which have been built. The depth of pools continues to be challenging and the

likelihood was that the downward trend would continue. RL advised that the capital to invest in building was the issue as once tanks are built the operational costs are comparable for deeper and shallower pools.

Details of the Swimming Pool Support fund were outlined, highlighting the significantly larger value of applicants than funding available. The fund supports initiatives aimed at reducing the energy use of pools to improve their sustainability and can make the investment back within five years.

RL highlighted the challenges in being able to make a financial case to build deep water facilities compared to the social value and Learn to Swim programmes.

SOC Members outlined their concerns about the loss of pools where competitions are held, particularly for artistic, diving and water polo. RL confirmed that, where appropriate, Swim England encourages Local Authorities to invest in deep water but consultants and national operators often favour shallow water facilities. The importance of speaking to LAs as early in the process as possible to help influence the decision making process was noted.

RL was thanked for his report.

8. Leadership Group updates

8.1 Review of Leadership Groups

The supplied paper was taken as read.

It was noted that JW would be the project lead with KM, AW and CC involved from SOC.

The report set out the proposed consultation process and timescales, with the review focussing on the needs of the sport.

CC reported that the next step is to introduce the review to the Leadership Groups before insight is completed, with a proposed deadline of November.

SOC members agreed with the process and were asked to feedback on section 5 to CC by 7 May 2024.

Action: Members to feedback on section 5 to CC by 07.05.24.

8.2 Masters Working Group

JW reported that Masters Working Group has submitted a request to become a Leadership Group, reporting directly to SOC instead of feeding into the SLG.

In considering this request, the committee noted the views of SLG and relevant issues raised in the Listening Report. JW recommended that the issue be progressed with the TORs to be drafted and circulated to SOC by email for approval.

Members approved the request. It was agreed that, as the group would be focussed on swimming and not the other disciplines, it would be appropriate to use the title 'Masters Swimming Leadership Group'. The Terms of Reference for the Swimming Leadership Group would need to be amended to reflect the change.

8.3 **Minutes of Leadership Group meetings**

8.3.1 **Artistic Swimming**

The minutes of 19th February and draft minutes of 8th April were noted. KM had nothing to add to the minutes.

The policy which is being developed for working with neuro-divergent swimmers was recognised as being welcomed by the community. SOC members requested that this is shared across all sports.

8.3.2 **Clubs**

The next meeting is scheduled for 1st May.

The SwimMark review group has been formed and the plan for the review is being developed.

8.3.3 **Diving**

The minutes of meeting of the Diving Leadership Group held on 12th March 2024 were noted.

AH drew attention to a discussion regarding a proposal for assistant coaches to be able to run sessions without supervision. The implication on the other sports was highlighted. CM has been made aware of the discussion and wider ramifications.

8.3.4 **Swimming**

The minutes of 12th March were taken as read.

8.3.5 **Water Polo**

The draft minutes of 3rd April were taken as read. JW will keep in contact with Ian Mackenzie as there is no SOC liaison for the WPLG.

8.3.6 **Youth Advisory Panel**

The minutes of 4th April were taken as read.

9. **AOB**

None raised.

10. **2024 Meeting Dates**

- Tuesday 25 June, 10.30am, Zoom – moved from Tuesday 18 June
- Tuesday 20 August, 10.30am, Zoom
- Tuesday 26 November, 10.30am, Zoom