

Water Polo Leadership Group with Water Polo Regional Representatives

9th October 2024

Time: 18:30 – 20:00

Attendees:

Ian Mackenzie (IM)	Chair
Mike Hesketh (MH)	Competition Lead
Chris Stephens (CS)	Officials Lead
Steve Kinloch (SK)	Communications Lead
Paul Metcalf (PM)	Support Competition Lead
Claire Coleman (CC)	Swim England Head of Development
Ekaterina Boyd (EB)	Swim England Head of Events
Richard Blackshaw (RB)	Swim England Head of Performance
Gareth Picken (GP)	Swim England Development Team Administrator
Mike Coles (MC)	South West Region Representative
Adrian Wood (AW)	London Region Representative
Luke Brown (LB)	North West Region Representative
Rosa Gallop (RG)	South East Region Representative
Matthew McNicholas (MM)	East Midlands Region Representative
Gabby Williams (GW)	North East Region Representative

Apologies:

Craig Figes	Water Polo Programme Lead
Dean Walker	East Region Representative

MINUTES	
1.	Welcome
IM opened the meeting thanking everyone for attending.	
2.	Apologies
Apologies were received by Craig Figes and Dean Walker.	
3.	Conflict of Interest
There were no conflicts of interests.	
4.	Action Log
IM explained the actions listed in the action log. All actions were either complete or an update was provided.	
Action – GP to redistribute the Talent Centre athletes.	

Action - CF to provide an update on the support that can be offered to the East Midlands and the development of the girls' teams.

5. Sports Development Update

RB began by highlighting the current recruitment of a head coach, assistant head coach, coach, and team manager for the senior men's team and the under 20's boys' team. The aim is to have a programme of coach and team manager development to ensure the future. RB met with the BWPL last week to develop a great working partnership with SE with a focus on the 2025-26 season. The BWPL and SE are working together to develop a workable calendar of events.

The under 19 girls team finished 9th in the European championships earlier in the summer, whilst the boys and girls under 20's teams both competed in Barcelona with the purpose of competition development experience. The girls' team finished 6th, whilst the boys finished 16th. The under 18's teams are working towards the European championships in 2025.

Regarding the development talent plan, a sport specific SWOT analysis has been completed and will be shared with the community over the coming weeks. The SE Sport Development Directorate will be meeting over the next two days in person.

Following RB's update, AW mentioned that despite the Talent Centres, there seems to be little development within the sport. RB explained that for too long the Aquatics GB, SE, regional and county strategies have not aligned. This piece of work aims to resolve this.

MN asked whether the Talent SWOT analysis will show the athlete pathway. RB explained that there is an infographic showing the stages of the athlete pathway which he is happy to share with the regional managers.

Gabby asked whether there is an athlete pathway that does not include the Talent Centres as many players are missing out due to the travel requirement and the costs involved. RB replied that there are inclusion issues throughout Water Polo, however there is a focus to try to resolve any issues where possible.

Action – RB to share the Water Polo Talent Pathway, via GP, with the regional managers

CC began the Sport Development update explain the Learn to Swim Club to Club Links programme review. Working groups have been formed to review the process with recommendations scheduled to be announced in Spring 2025.

A review into Swim Mark is currently approaching a conclusion with a communications plan in development for any announcements to be made to clubs before the end of the year.

Finally, the SE national awards will be taking place on the 30th November with a range of Water Polo awards so there is hope for good Water Polo representation to be at the event.

AW asked whether the nominees would be posted to the website ahead of the awards as nothing has been posted yet. CC replied that SE was waiting on one region to hold their regional awards evening before publishing the results.

There were no further questions for CC.

6. **Regional Round-up**

IM invited the regional representatives to provide an update on their region and raise any concerns that they may have.

South West – referees course went well, however there is now a push for all attendees to be qualified. The region is working closely with the Talent Centre to ensure there are no clashes of training.

South East – The region is planning to develop a working group instead of one regional team manager. Players are missing opportunities within the sport due to the size of the region, the amount of travel required and the subsequent cost. Furthermore, the region is setting up league matches within the region.

London – AW is receiving many questions about the cost for regional tournaments. Pool time is becoming exclusive and expensive. New ladies regional head coach. The region is now having to run a few regional training days in the lead up to competition days as monthly training sessions were becoming unaffordable.

North East – Now have a Talent Centre which was originally based in the East Midlands. Very few girls are involved in the sport and the number is decreasing. Hosted the first regional competition in the summer with an additional competition in December. Inter-regionals now require players to attend the regional training sessions to be eligible for selection. Gabby raised that the region is struggling with the number of coaches. There are several assistant coaches, but they cannot be left to coach by themselves. IM suggested that if the issue is with the number of coaching courses: the WPLG can push this.

Action – IM to work with the IOS to potentially adapt the age boundaries of the coaching course.

North West – Water Polo was really well represented at the regional awards. SE support has been gratefully received. MH is on the table officials panel for the region. Additionally, the region is struggling with their regional workforce, specifically with lead roles.

CC explained in response to coaching courses, that each course has a minimum participation number which if not met will cause the course to be cancelled. Coaching courses are circulated to the community on a frequent basis. If any region representatives are not receiving the coaching course list, they need to contact GP.

7. **AOB**

IM thanked the regional representatives for attending the meeting.

WPLG members only

1.	Action Log
<p>IM explained the action listed in the log. Actions were either complete or an update was provided.</p> <p>CS mentioned that for the 3rd action, the second part of the course should be face-to-face due to the nature of the course content. The group agreed with this decision and CS would continue to communicate with the region in question</p>	
2.	SOC Update
<p>Minutes being finalised. CC updated the group that the partnership agreement between the regional teams and the SE national team. Changes in the SLT and the regional partnership agreement needed to be reviewed and streamlined. Regions are onboard with the regional agreement.</p>	
3.	Sports Development Report
<p>The report was distributed to the group ahead of the meeting. There were no questions raised by the group.</p>	
4.	Talent Update
<p>RB explained that there was no further update to his earlier update but agreed to provide the group with a written report ahead of future WPLG meetings.</p>	
5.	General Update from Craig Figes
<p>Update postponed to the next meeting.</p>	
6.	Talent SWOT Scene Setting
<p>Paper to be shared by the end of next week ahead of public release.</p>	
7.	AOB
<p>SK asked about when the dates would be released for the under 17's and under 19's pre-National Age Group competitions. MH explained that the dates are currently being confirmed, however there would be an extra round included in the new season with a qualification round, preliminary round and a final all taking place.</p> <p>RB asked what the purpose of the extra round is for the athletes. MH explained that the current format only allowed all teams to play for a short amount of time before some teams were knocked out. The new format will see competitions over a weekend for each competition rather than a day to replicate international competitions better.</p> <p>EB explained that work is almost complete on organising competitions for the under 17's and under 19's. There is still more work to be done for the under 15's, however the aim is to publish the competition calendar by the beginning of December. The first SE Water Polo competition in 2025 will be on the weekend of the 21st - 22nd February. Finals will be taking place in GL1, Gloucester after the success of last year.</p>	
8.	2025 Meetings
<p>GP to circulate the 2025 dates subject to agreement from IM. Date of next meeting is 27th November 2024</p>	

