



Swim England Sport Operations Committee

Minutes of the meeting held 26 November 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
	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 Representative
	Ally Whike (AW)	Sport Development Director

Staff:	Andy Salmon (AS)	Swim England CEO
	Claire Coleman (CC)	Head of Development
	Ekaterina Boyd (EB)	Head of Events (item 3 onwards)
	Andrea Startin	Volunteering (minutes)

Min No:

1. Standing Items

1.1. Chairman's Welcome

1.1.1. JW welcomed all attendees

1.2. Apologies

1.2.1. Apologies were received from Alex Harrison

1.3. Declaration of Interest

1.3.1. None declared

1.4. Declarations of AOB

1.4.1 AW to give an update on Dive Recorder.

1.5. Minutes from previous meeting (12.09.24/15.10.24)

1.5.1. Both sets accepted as a true reflection of the meetings held

1.6. Actions from previous meeting

1.6.1. Reviewed and updated

2. Sport Development Directorate

2.1. AW had prepared a report in advance of the meeting which was taken as read.

2.2. The Sport England systems review has been completed. The consensus being it was positive and well received with varied discussions having taken place.

2.3. With the upcoming Commonwealth Games in Scotland, a meeting took place with Commonwealth Games England regarding the investment for Swim England. Preparations are accelerating steeply to plan for the selections of the teams, coaches and their development.

2.4. The Learn to Swim Roadshows have produced a good level of engagement for Learn to Swim and Operators groups with good information sharing. Long term success, impact and quantitative and qualitative feedback and measures were discussed.

Work is on-going with operators to impact the culture of Learn to Swim and the way the programme is taught. It is also hoped to promote teaching aquatics as a career rather than a temporary job. The average length a teacher remains teaching is only two years.

2.5. There is focus on improving soft skills in the coaching community. An external organisation has been working with the coach developers. An external body will present at the Winter Championships on the soft skills required of a coach rather than just technical skills.

In the discussion that followed, AW clarified that coach education is being reimagined in order to feed into club culture that coaching extends beyond achieving the certificate. The need to influence leadership level coaches to cascade better practice within clubs had been recognised.

A more balanced approach and more accessible delivery methods are being considered for coach education. This will focus on soft skills and include ethical coaching, behaviours and values.

Coach accreditation and licensing is being considered for the future. This links into work with CIMPSA on a pilot national coach cross-sport register.

3. 2025 Event Planning

- 3.1. EB gave a presentation on 2024 event delivery and 2025 plans. The 2025 programme will be very similar to 2024 with the main changes being the addition of the delivery of the GB Masters in 2025 and the removal (due to rotation) of the AGB Para meet. Details for the 2025 U15 Water polo are still to be confirmed.
- 3.2. The events team have a new member, Jade Smith, who has good knowledge of Water Polo.
- 3.3. Following the 4500 swims at the 2024 Summer Meet and the human costs of delivering the event, consideration needs to be given on making the 2025 event more ethical.
- 3.4. Details of the 2024 spend against budget and projected 2025 financials were shared. It is expected that there will be an approximately £43k increase in 2025 on 2024 costs.
- 3.5. Dates for the 2025 schedule of competitions will be released w/c 9 December 2024. Summer meet conditions for swimming will also be released at this time. SOC welcomed this development and noted that these issues had caused concerns for 2024 and had been raised in the listening report and roadshows.
- 3.6. During December a 'Thankyou' message will go out to volunteers along with recruitment requests for 2025. Succession planning is in progress for priority risk roles. SOC was keen that volunteering opportunities be subject to open recruitment.

4. Strategy update

- 4.1. AS Shared a presentation on the strategy.

The strategy has been named 'One Swim England'. The focus is on internal and external collaboration with a move away from siloed working.

The objective from the outset was to have a clear and memorable one page strategy around experiences, leading and serving. The reason for the refresh was to incorporate culture and organisational values and articulate positive and negative behaviours. Each goal has annual objectives with action plans, with focus on outcomes..

The definition of participation was discussed as committees, coaches, volunteers are also participating in the sport. With the goal of lifelong participation being linked to health it was agreed that the greatest benefits come from being active.

Responding to a question over what success would look like in 5 years, AS explained that a successful strategy would result in a culture shift with poor behaviour reduced due to education and with clubs being seen as a community asset.



4.2. AW shared slides on the refreshed strategy scorecard. There are 18 goals each with their own objectives. All goals have already been shared with SOC. Some objectives could sit under more than one goal.

The following four goals were expanded upon:

Stronger clubs – some work is already on-going. Additional key stakeholders have been identified in the strategic approach to partnerships. The appearance of the club landscape needs to be established. Most club athletes will not reach national competition, but sport is still a valuable part of their lives. There is a need to look at rewards and recognition beyond competition. Focus, especially for younger athletes, needs to be more fun less pressure.

Outstanding events – the annual portfolio will continue to be delivered. Broadening participation will accompany the review of athlete centred competition at all levels and be incorporated into the long-term event planning.

Outstanding people – this includes coaches, volunteers, club personnel as well as Swim England staff and committees. The new coach strategy is pushing forward with the workforce governance register giving a foundation for licensing and accreditation. The volunteer strategy will also form part of the plan.

Success on the world stage – a 4-year plan has been created to include establishing the right environments and areas for development. Within this is the driver for Artistic Swimming and Water Polo to replicate our other sports and key to this is the relationship with AGB. It is fundamental to address how we talk about sport with the term 'performance' only applying at the highest level.

Cultural change is key for all goals; selling the wider benefits of the sport, managing the expectation gap between those of the athlete / parent and what is delivered.

Some additional examples were also shared with the Committee:

Safeguarding and Welfare – the need for an effective welfare structure. A group is in the process of looking at what welfare officers do to transform the way we keep people safe from harm.

Shifting culture – working on the model of more face-to-face club engagement.

Building trust – an expo event is planned to bring the strategy to life and open opportunities for more collaborations.

Connected digital eco-system – address frustrations with the lack of a connected infrastructure and establish what a better system looks like.

In terms of the strategy launch, key stakeholders will be briefed on 28 November with a formal launch at National Awards on 30 November.

5. Minutes of Leadership Group meetings and any reports from SOC Liaison

5.1. Artistic Swimming LG

The minutes from 02.10.24, 14.10.24, 18.11.24 were taken as read.

- 5.1.1. It was noted that Artistic Swimming Judge 1 Training is oversubscribed. Currently the focus is on regional delivery however some regions are not offering training, and some candidates do not find the locations easy to reach.
Action: CC to discuss approach with relevant parties.

5.2. Club LG

The minutes from 01.11.24 were taken as read.

- 5.2.1. The continuing inconsistent messages regarding Welfare Officers in Masters only clubs was discussed. It was noted that Wavepower states that these clubs should have a welfare lead, but this differs from information in the regulations. There is concern where the county welfare officer is used that this produces an increased burden on them.

Action: CC to work with relevant parties including MSLG to agree the best approach.

5.3. Diving LG

The minutes from 01.10.24 were taken as read.

5.4. Swimming LG

The minutes from 19.09.24 and 21.11.24 were taken as read.

- 5.4.1. The minutes of 19 September express concern about the GB swimming officials group failing to fulfil its obligations. The informal approach has not worked to resolve this. AS has a meeting with the CEO of AGB and other home nations 29 November where he will raise this issue.

Action : AS to raise issue and provide feedback

5.5. Water Polo LG

The minutes from 09.10.24 were taken as read.

5.6. Masters Swimming LG

Draft minutes of 14.11.24 were taken as read.

- 5.6.1. NB reported that the Masters Swimming LG was transitioning from a Working Group to a Leadership Group. Going forwards there is a need to look at how the management group works on development and other strands of the strategy as opposed to solving problems, but the group is keen to address issues.

5.7. Youth Advisory Panel

- 5.7.1. No meetings have taken place. It was noted that the leadership of the group has reduced from four to two and that the current volunteer manager has not as yet progressed recruitment.

5.8. Health & Safety Forum

The minutes of 25.09.24 were taken as read.

- 5.8.1. Following open recruitment, Tracy Colbert has been appointed as the new Chair of the Forum. She has a strong Health and Safety background and an interest in swimming as a swim parent.



There will be a meeting in December which will include a presentation from the insurers, discussion of the recording of 'minor' incidents and minimum depths for Artistic swimming.

6. Regional Update

6.1. A meeting is to take place w/c 2 December which will include discussions on implementation of the strategy, working together as one Swim England.

7. Any other business

7.1. SOC dates for 2025:

The following dates were agreed for SOC meetings in 2025. All meetings would take place on line, starting at 10.30 am, with the exception of the April meeting which would be held at Sportspark.

28th January

4th March

29th April

17th June

9th September

25th November

7.2. SOC Terms of Reference

7.2.1. JW presented the report circulated by email, drawing attention to the main proposals for change to the Terms of Reference. Although a full-scale review of Swim England Governance was planned, changes to the Terms of Reference for SOC were required in the short term to address issues relating to staff changes and providing SOC representatives on all leadership groups.

7.2.2. The proposed Terms of Reference recommended an additional two Swim England Members, and an extension of the term of office for the Regional Chairs' Representative. The Director of Learn to Swim would be replaced by the new Director of Community Participation and Health and the Director of Business Engagement would cease to be a member.

7.2.3. In discussion of the report it was noted that the Committee was not covering all its current roles and responsibilities, for example it had not seen the proposed budget for all sport areas. It was agreed that a review of key responsibilities and priorities was needed in the light of the new strategy as it is essential to maintain oversight in a time of rapid change. Although it was accepted that this should not involve acting as a 'shadow board', it was agreed that SOC should receive a report on the relevant elements of the 2025 budget.

Action: AW to present a report on 2025 budget

7.2.4 In terms of SOC recruitment it was noted that some groups, for example Masters and Water Polo, are currently not specifically represented. A skills audit would be performed to inform recruitment. It was also suggested that the Head of Development should be shown as in the membership as a non-voting member.

7.2.5 Agreed that the amended Terms of Reference be recommended to the Board,

Action : JW to progress the proposal to Swim England Board.



7.3. Dive Recorder Risk

7.3.1. Following discussion at a previous meeting, AW gave an update on Dive Recorder. The risk has been mitigated for the next 3-4 years, to give time for a more sustainable way forward to be agreed.