

Sports Operations Committee

Minutes of the meeting held 29 April 2025

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	Swim England Member
Ellie Conway (EC)	Swim England Member
John Hidle (JH)	Regional Chairs Representative
Ally Whike (AW)	Sport Development Director
Helen Marney (HM)	Community Participation & Health Director

Staff:

Andy Salmon (AS)	CEO
Claire Coleman (CC)	Head of Development
Andrea Startin (minutes)	Volunteering
Helen Akers (HA)	Officials Development Coordinator (item 4)
Craig McCulloch (CM)	Head of Coaching (item 5)
Kirsten Fasey (KF)	Interim Director of Safe Aquatics, Legal and Governance (item 6 & 7)

1. Standing Items

1.1 Chairperson's

Members were welcomed to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies

Apologies for lateness were received from Ellie Conway (EC) and Neil Booth (NB) as they both had been delayed by traffic.

1.3 Declarations of Interest

None

1.4 Declarations of AOB

None declared

1.5 Minutes from previous meeting

Some amendments were requested to the use of language in item 7.1 resulting in a change of the wording from 'complaints' to 'concerns raised'. Once amended the minutes are accepted as read.

As a consequence of the discussions around item 7.1 it was acknowledged that a development plan is needed for all sports.

Action: Amendments to be made to item 7.1 before being shared with JW for final review.

1.6 **Actions from the previous Meeting**

The actions from the previous meeting were reviewed and updated. Regarding recruitment to the SOC, two new members, Alex Williams and Jo Sackett will join from the next meeting.

2. **Sport Development Directorate**

2.1 HM was introduced as Community Participation & Health Director. Helen explained that her remit will include Clubs, Regions, Learn to Swim, Swim England Qualifications, Places, Health and Open Water. There will be some overlap and collaboration between her and AW.

2.2 A report from the Sport Development Directorate had been circulated with the agenda. Presenting the report, AW reported that:

2.3 The Sport England funding for the next two years has been agreed in principle.

2.4 AS shared slides with an update on the budget and 5-year financial plans, recently approved by the Board.

2.5 Views are still being put forward on Martin's law. Timescales on changes are not tight and the impact on sport is still being considered. It was agreed that a position on the process should be drafted and disseminated by the regions to ease anxiety in the community.

2.6 The SLG discussed future arrangements for the County Team Competition, and agreed to remove the subsidy for team travel while maintaining the option for those struggling with costs to make an appeal for assistance.

2.7 AGB have announced their World Championship team. The Para World Championships and European U23 teams are still to be confirmed.

2.8 The Women's Water Polo team have qualified for the World Championships. With the additional two places at the Olympics the chances of qualification are good. Agreement on funding is moving forward.

2.9 It was agreed that a 'holding message' is required following the Supreme Court ruling on gender.

Action: AW to progress a holding message and to share the communications plan for this.

2.10 Discussions were had around the Swimmark review and its timings.

2.11 It was reported that four companies are submitting a tender for the proposed Membership system. Initial work will cover critical functions with high priority functions to follow.

2.12 AS also reported on an emerging media issue in relation to the historical case review.

3. **Swim England Strategy Scorecard**

3.1 The scorecard was circulated prior to the meeting

3.2 4 goals were highlighted as directly related to SOC with a further four goals of interest to SOC.

3.3 There was discussion around embedding Swim England values, how far they have been passed down and the plan for ensuring clubs feel they are relevant and adopt them. KM felt that the green rating was misleading as there was further work to be done in this, and other, areas.

3.4 It was suggested an engagement toolkit be produced to enable people to efficiently advocate the values.

Action: AW to consider options

3.5 A report card will be shared on the website with active examples of values. How to report on the scorecard to SOC was discussed.

Action: AW to consider options to provide narrative to bring the scorecard 'to life'.

4. **Technical Officials (Swimming)**

4.1 HA shared a presentation.

4.2 Statistics suggest that number of licensed Swim England swimming officials is not depleting however it is not possible to track the number of active officials. It is hoped that a solution to this will come with the digital ecosystem. Barriers to officials offering their services need to be explored.

4.3 The Sport England Active Life Survey suggests that Swim England differs from other sports in the willingness of their volunteers to undergo officials training.

4.4 Issues have been identified as to the consistency of the training experience across different areas and deliverers.

4.5 New materials and training development has not been happening due to various reasons including the large amount of manual processing in the qualification process, which impacts on staff capacity to perform more appropriate activity.

4.6 SLG had agreed that members of the Swimming Officials Group will take on a management and information role while recruitment will be opened for a new Training and Development working group. It is proposed that ownership of training is devolved from AGB to enable each home nation to manage their own.

4.7 It is hoped to reach out to existing officials for feedback to aid the creation of resources and development of training. This is hoped to involve soft skills such as mentoring and the opportunity to role play some suitable scenarios.

- 4.8 Inconsistencies in the funding of training was discussed. It was suggested that this be addressed by the Regional Chairs group.

Action: AW / HM to progress.

- 4.9 Consideration of other volunteer workforce groups was suggested.

5. **Co-creation of coaching strategy update**

- 5.1 CM gave an update on the project. 750 surveys have been completed. 15 workshops have been delivered, reaching 150 coaches. 2 online mop-up sessions have been hosted for those unable to attend in person.

- 5.2 10 check-in sessions are scheduled for 8-14 May. Following feedback during these sessions the strategy will be produced.

- 5.3 CM shared a presentation on the key messages about experiences and the key challenges faced.

Action: CM to share presentation.

- 5.4 There was some discussion around the purpose of coaching, how coaches feel (varying between our sports) and how to achieve a team approach with coaches, committees, parents and others.

- 5.5 It is hoped to have more 'blue sky thinking' than focus on where things are wrong. CM set a task for the SOC before the meeting

Action: SOC to share outputs to CM.

- 5.6 CM will return to a future SOC meeting to report on the emerging strategy.

6. **Swim England Governance Review TOR**

- 6.1 The proposed terms of reference for the review were shared prior to the meeting.

- 6.2 KF talked about progress and plans for the governance review, referring to the documents circulated prior to the meeting.

- 6.3 A small group (6-8 people) of governance experts is to be formed. They will work on stakeholder planning, comms planning and the scope of next steps. An implementation plan is expected by the end of the year.

- 6.4 The terms of reference will be submitted for board approval on 7 July.

- 6.5 It was agreed that the review will include all affiliated bodies.

7. **Managing non-compliance in Club Affiliation**

- 7.1 CC reported that Swim England adheres to government standards with regard to safeguarding and DBS. How we can support and remind individuals to adhere to these standards and barriers to adherence need to be better understood.

- 7.2 Appropriate sanctions for when an individual has not complied need to be established as the current sanction is heavy-handed and impacts on the whole club rather than the individual concerned.
- 7.3 SOC were supportive of the proposal that the Club Leadership group be tasked with creating a matrix of appropriate sanctions which will be presented to SOC for approval. Incentives will also be considered along with sanctions. It was noted that these sanctions must be in line with regulations.

Action: AB and CC to propose area of work to CLG and agree timeline.

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

8.1 Artistic Swimming Leadership Group

The minutes were taken as read. There was a discussion around communications and the shift of culture. Staff are to take a more prominent role in centralised communications

8.2 Club Leadership Group -

The next meeting is 1 May 2025

8.3 Diving Leadership Group

The next meeting is during May.

8.4 Swimming Leadership Group

No additional update.

8.5 Water Polo Leadership Group

CC reported that it had been agreed that there is a lot of work to be done to support the development of the sport. Priorities need to be agreed and in particular a decision on what happens below national talent centres. The sport development team are working with the talent team and the regions to provide some clarity. September has been targeted as the opportunity for some initial changes at the request of the regions.

8.6 Masters Leadership Group

Some issues have been had around membership cycles. The Chair of the MLG is producing a matrix to show whose term starts and expires when. It is suggested that, where these do not exist, other groups do the same.

8.7 Youth Advisory Panel

The group met and agreed their scope of activity. Recruitment is due to begin shortly as some members chose not to continue. A face-to-face meeting is scheduled for 31 May.

8.8 Health and Safety Forum

Next meeting 21 May.

9. Regional update

No Regional Chairs meeting since last SOC. The next meeting is 2 June. Minutes will be shared.

10. **AOB**

None.