

Sports Operations Committee

Minutes of the meeting held 9 September 2025

Draft minutes subject to approval at the next meeting

Present:

Joan Wheeler (JW)	Swim England Board Member (Chair)
Amy Bryant (AB)	Swim England Member
Alex Harrison (AH)	Swim England Member
Keith Munday (KM)	Swim England Member
Jo Sackett (JS)	Swim England Member
Alex Williams (AWi)	Swim England Member
John Hidle (JH)	Regional Chairs Representative
Ally Whike (AWh)	Director of Sports
Helen Marney (HM)	Director of Community Participation and Health

Staff:

Andy Salmon (AS)	Chief Executive Officer
Claire Coleman (CC)	Head of Development
Catherine Searcy (minutes)	Executive Assistant
Leanne Brace (LB)	Head of Membership Development (item 4 only)
Lisa West (LW)	Finance Director (item 4 only)

Apologies:

Richard Palmer Jones (RPJ)	Swim England Member
Neil Booth (NB)	Swim England Board Member
Ellie Conway (EC)	Youth Advisory Panel Representative

1. Standing Items

1.1 Chairperson's Welcome

Members were welcomed to the meeting. JW thanked all for accommodating the earlier meeting start.

1.2 Apologies

Apologies received from RPJ, NB and EC.

1.3 Declarations of Interest

None.

1.4 Declarations of AOB

None declared.

1.5 Minutes from previous meeting (16 June 2025)

The minutes were approved and agreed as a correct and accurate record of the meeting.

1.6 **Actions from the previous Meeting**

CC has updated the action log 08/09/25. The majority of actions had been completed so outstanding items are shorter than what was circulated with meeting papers.

Reference 23.15 – Risk Assessment Portal: Reminder that the decision was made to not pursue this portal from Howdens. Has been referred into the H&S Forum for guidance on work that should be delivered for upskilling on risk assessments but also covered within ongoing governance review taking place.

Reference 24.09 - Governance and Coach Compliance: This is under review to agree the purpose of reporting. Currently the view is to provide SOC with national and regional performance analysis and trends.

Reference 25.11 – Artistic Swimming LG: current legal workload has delayed this action. Will remain as live.

All other actions identified have been noted as complete.

2. **Sport Development Directorate**

2.1 AWh provided a verbal update to members.

2.2 Commonwealth Youth Games 2027 have now been confirmed as allocated to Malta. They include Water Polo for the first time, though in a different format to full WP matches.

2.3 The Sport Directorate is collating a report to highlight successes over summer 2025 including medal winners at the World Championships in Singapore and World Juniors in Romania. Both were available to watch live online free of charge via the AGB website, with great performances across the disciplines. Clubs, coaches and programmes should be very proud of their performances.

2.4 World Para Swim Champs take place in Singapore 21st – 27th September 2025 and we look forward to seeing some great swimming.

Community Participation and Health Directorate

2.5 HM provided a verbal update to members.

2.6 Once the current Organisational Redesign and resourcing for the new strategy is completed, a new range of work within the Directorate will start focusing on new areas.

2.7 One of the focus points will be looking at a place-based approach with Regional and National members to explore where we can have impact through partner working. Additional funding is being requested from Sport England (target of 20 places in England) to primarily tackle inequality but this would also enable us to incorporate a number of different work strands e.g. health, participation opportunities.

- 2.8 There is an Active Partnership Network session in October. This is an opportunity to reset our relationship and start to work with them more consistently and within a wider remit/area of work. Swim England will be presenting to all Active Partnerships across England at the event.
- 2.9 We have been confirmed as a priority NGB in the school sport partnership infrastructure that the Government are investing in. The tender for this is coming out in Autumn 2025 for national organisations to submit, with a view to implement in Autumn 2026. Swim England are involved as a key NGB, aiming to operate more within space and influencing the strategy nationally.
- 2.10 CC confirmed that the Club Health Tracker shows the current national average score. Of 129 clubs who completed the tracker, 83.5% of those were performing well in Coaching and Teaching. CC asked that where possible members should advocate completion of the Club Health Tracker
- 2.11 **ACTION: Discuss a future report/session on Club Health Tracker (JW/CC).**
- 2.12 AP Racing MOU: The MOU allows for clarification on roles within the swim space we both operate in, acceptance of Swim England as the NGB of the sport within England. In discussion SOC members raised similar concerns to those shared by Regional Chairs during their meeting. It was noted that work is to be done on how the relationship between SE and AGB is being promoted within the sport/members.
- 2.13 Concern was also raised around the language used in the MOU which felt had a negative view of the regional engagement with AP Racing. AWh confirmed this was not the intention
- 2.14 **ACTION: AWh to review the language of the MOU and make changes where possible to present a balanced view of the regional engagement.**
- 2.15 AWh confirmed that the Coach Education programme will go out to further development and consultation once work is completed internally. Craig McCulloch will attend a future SOC to provide an update.
- 2.16 The committee raised the need to be more proactive in promoting 'Flourishing In Coaching' information to a wider audience including clubs.
- 2.17 **ACTION: CC to discuss wider communication of 'Flourishing in Coaching' with the communications team and Craig McCulloch (CC)**
3. **CEO Update**
- 3.1 AS provided a verbal update to members.
- 3.2 Organisational Redesign: The proposal was presented to staff on 02/09/25 at which point collective consultation began. The rationale for structure is 1) to bring the organisation in line with our new strategy, 2) ways of working need to change 3) feedback received via The Listening Report and 4) financial sustainability with predictions showing a significant budget deficit by 2029. Members were advised that Swim England's current payroll is 40% more compared to other similar NGB's. Elected Employee Representatives are playing a key role in the staff consultation.

- 3.3 Regional staff are not within the scope of consultation. However, they are able to feed in via the People Team.
- 3.4 A separate working group is exploring the regional structure with the aim to compliment the agreed national structure.
- 3.5 A Culutre Deck has been produced to support the change in the ways of working and this forms part of the consultation process. It is hoped this will be communicated wider once the consultation has been completed.
- 3.6 Governance Review: This is now underway, with a third meeting of the Steering Group taking place on 09/9/25. This was made up of a good blend of participants including regional representatives, other sports and independents. Terms of Reference have been agreed for the review which was starting from a blank sheet with the timeline showing an interim report available in November 2025 before going out for consultation on questions and possible solutions/answers.
- 3.7 There was a discussion around what other potential income streams have been explored, including sponsorships. AS confirmed this work was being done alongside reducing costs including work to look at income from programmes, education, commercial and partnerships. It is not yet clear what harm the Listening Report and Panorama has done to the Swim England brand, though AS was confident that SE remains a fantastic vehicle for a brand to be associated with.
- 3.8 Text redacted.
4. **Membership Fees 2026 - proposal**
- LB and LW joined meeting.*
- 4.1 LB shared a presentation to summarise key points.
- 4.2 JW reminded SOC that whilst the decision on Membership Fees would be made by the Board, she will feedback SOC views at the September Board meeting before a decision is made.
- 4.3 In the discussion that followed, SOC members were in favour of the proposed increases in light of the need to invest in the One Swim England Strategy.
- 4.4 The committee was of the view that the communication to explain the increase in fees to members must be carefully considered. There was a need to highlight benefits more and demonstrate 'you said, we did' actions such as investment in Safeguarding
- 4.5 Noted that there is a risk around club training fees increasing, as there have been examples of entire clubs taking all of Learn To Swim out of SE membership, making independent arrangements for insurance. It was accepted that there was much work to do with those clubs to highlight benefits of SE membership.
- 4.6 AS noted that with Train category, there is still an action to look at the fee in more detail before further changes could be considered.

- 4.7 **ACTION: AWh and HM to progress review with Head of Membership**
5. **Scorecard 2025 - update**
- 5.1 CC gave a verbal overview of paper circulated.
- 5.2 The report focused on the 4 primary goals that are within the responsibilities of SOC. Going forward, the Scorecard will be presented in the same way at meetings with narrative included. It was noted that there were gaps in the reporting for the previous quarter, particularly in the safeguarding areas.
- 5.3 When building the template for the 2026 Scorecard learnings/feedback will be used to develop the format so appearance/information may change.
- 5.4 AWh confirmed that discussions with AquaticsGB (AGB) regarding the future arrangements for Artistic and Water Polo at an elite level may have some staffing implications but that the proposed structure was based on the current arrangements.
- 5.5 AS stressed that this report shows a snapshot of the 18 goals in our strategy and although our role may stop as an athlete transition from national level to AGB, we are focused on all sporting elements of our strategy rather than just traditional elements as reported here.
- 5.6 A question was asked around the 'Keep It In Your Locker' campaign and previously discussed case increases of mobile phones in changing rooms. SOC was advised that there has been no notification of any increase in trends, but staff are exploring how the messaging is being continually delivered. The committee provided feedback that clarity on the impact of using mobile phones on changing rooms should be part of the messaging.
- 5.7 **ACTION: circulate updated scorecard on safeguarding after meeting.**
- 5.8 AS confirmed the intention to publish the Scorecard on the website on an annual basis at the end of each applicable year.
6. **Meridians Titans National Club application**
- 6.1 HM gave a verbal update.
- 6.2 It was noted that more work was to be done on the potential implications of this model of membership and therefore that the application would be deferred for consideration at a later meeting.
- 6.3 **ACTION: Explain to the applicant that outcome would be delayed.**
- 6.4 **ACTION: Revisit the specified 60 days' time frame in policy relating to direct affiliates.**
7. **Harold Fern and AH Turner Awards – nominations for 2025**

- 7.1 JW reported that the nominations had been circulated to SOC members, and scores had been aggregated.
- 7.2 As a result of the aggregation of scores recommendations to the Board were agreed.
- 7.3 Text redacted.
- 7.4 Text redacted.
- 7.5 It was noted that awards will be presented at the National Awards on 29th November and should therefore be regarded as confidential at this stage. CC confirmed that after the annual awards event, SE write to all nominees to inform them they were nominated.
- 8.0 **Minutes of Leadership Group meetings and any reports from SOC Liaison**
- 8.1 **Artistic Swimming Leadership Group**
Nothing to report.
- 8.2 **Club Leadership Group**
The minutes were taken as read.
- 8.3 **Diving Leadership Group**
The minutes were taken as read.
- 8.4 **Swimming Leadership Group**
Nothing to report.
- 8.5 **Water Polo Leadership Group**
The minutes were taken as read.
- 8.6 CC reported that work was currently being done to review the role of regions in the development of Water Polo going forward. There is a paper going to Regional Officers on 15/09 which will then be circulated around community following that meeting.
- 8.7 **Masters Swimming Leadership Group**
Met 08/09 – nothing to report. Comments regarding the application from Meridian Titans were noted.
- 8.8 **Youth Advisory Panel**
Work continuing to develop the group without trying not to tie members up in too much Governance work.
- Health and Safety Forum**
- 8.9 Reporting on the recent meeting of the Forum, KM advised that the incident register from Howdens showed there have been six serious incidents in 2025, in which 3 people have died and 3 were unconscious but recovered. There has been nothing like that number in previous years. The Forum agreed that there is a need to have more detail about these incidents and that this was being sought from the insurers so that the Forum could consider whether any further action was required.

8.10 ACTION: KM to provide further details of the outcome at the next meeting following the forum.

8.11 AWh informed the group that Swim England are looking into the insurance register to identify any trends. These will be brought back to SOC if trends are found or lessons to be learnt.

9. **Regional update**

9.1 Regional Chairs met 01/09/25.

9.2 Members received information from the working group review of regional roles and there was a discussion around the AP Racing MOU.

10. **AOB**
None.

F E M I N A L