

Meeting of the Board of the Amateur Swimming Association (Swim England) Limited

Wednesday 9th July 2025 11:30am – 5:00pm

Venue: TEAMS

Members	Initials	Mtg 1 20.02.25	Mtg 2 07.04.25	Mtg 3 09.07.25	Mtg 4 17.09.25	Mtg 5 24.11.25
Richard Hookway (Chair)	RH	✓	✓	✓		
Neil Booth	NB	✓	✓	✓		
Ali Breadon	AB	A	✓	✓		
Caroline Green	CG	A	✓	✓		
Aysha Kidwai	AK	✓	✓	A		
Carrie Ryan	CR	✓	✓	✓		
Andy Salmon (Chief Executive)	AS	✓	✓	✓		
Barry Saunders	BS	✓	✓	✓		
Sara Todd	ST	NA	✓	✓		
Katie Walcott-Greenwood	KWG	A	✓	✓		
Joan Wheeler	JW	✓	✓	✓		

Non-members in attendance on 09.07.2025:

Catherine Searcy (Minutes)	CS	✓
Item 6 only:		
Lisa West, Finance Director	LW	✓

Rebecca Cox, Business Engagement Director and Institute of Swimming Managing Director	RC	✓
Item 13 only:		
Maria Papadopoulos, People Director	MP	✓
Item 14 only:		
Simon Davies, Director of Safe Aquatics and Welfare	SD	✓
Kirsten Fasey, Interim Director of Safe Aquatics, Legal and Governance	KF	✓

Key: ✓ = Present, A = Apologies given, P = Partial attendance, X = Non-attendance

STANDING ITEMS: ADMINISTRATION	
1.	<p>Welcome and apologies</p> <p>RH welcomed everyone.</p> <p>Apologies received from AK.</p>
2.	<p>Declarations of interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BS declared a small personal contract with Aquatics GB (AGB).
3.	<p>Minutes of the Board of the Amateur Swimming Association (Swim England) Limited held on 7 April 2025</p> <p>Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST to be added as in attendance. • AS to provide AGB, Digital Transformation and brand conversations update today as part of CEO update or Finance Report. • JW suggested when a redacted version is created, as per Item 6, a non-redacted line is added to capture broad discussion e.g. 'Board discussed its financial arrangements with AGB'. <p>Decision: Draft minutes of the Board meeting held on 7th April 2025 approved, subject to the amendments agreed above.</p>
4.	<p>Actions arising from the meeting held on 07.04.2025</p> <p>Meeting 15.03.23 Minute number 12.2.4: Zoe Mitchell will be attending today's Board meeting to present the commercial strategy.</p> <p>All other actions updated as per the action log distributed with the Board papers.</p>
5.	<p>Confirmation of decisions made by email</p> <p>Decision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of audited accounts ahead of AGM 2025 • Text redacted.
SECTION 2: STRATEGIC MATTERS	
6.	<p>Finance</p> <p>2026 Membership Fee:</p> <p>A paper making recommendations for 2026 membership fees had been previously distributed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion took place in regard to the process involved in producing the paper and the requirements of the Swim England Handbook. It was agreed that more time was needed to consult with Regional Chairs and SOC and to enable this, an

amendment to the Handbook was approved, amending the deadline for a Board decision from 31 July to 30 September.

- The executive team will consult with Regional Chairs and SOC, noting that such consultation does not involve approval as the decision lies with the Board.
- The discussion then focused on the options and rationale for each.
- The paper provided a breakdown of all County and Regional membership fees and the membership fees of other NGBs, including Scottish Swimming and Swim Wales, so that comparisons could be made. It also noted the significant investment in a new membership management system to benefit members and the new website plans, both of which are planned for launch in Spring 2026.
- There was concern amongst most members that a 10% increase was too high.
- AS reported that even after a 10% increase and when considering the most expensive permutation of county, regional and national fees, the Swim England (SE) membership fees would still be significantly lower than other Home Nations. Furthermore, the 10% increase would equate to £3.40 at the most.
- It was agreed that any increase above inflation would need to be accompanied by outstanding communications, outlining the rationale for such an increase.

Action: Handbook to be updated.

Action: Final proposal to be prepared for September Board meeting, following consultation with Regional Chairs and SOC.

Financial Overview:

LW gave a verbal update of current finances:

- Phasing has led to a positive in Y2D income (membership)
- Two previously proposed transformation projects have been removed from the 5-year pipeline: 1) data warehouse (other systems will provide the data and reporting functions SE need) and 2) AI Cyber Security project (exploring alternative options so no longer feel is needed). The total effect of removing these two projects is £1.2m. Furthermore, both the new membership management system and Human Resources system vendor selections have produced savings versus budget.
- The Board felt this was prudent and was in approval of this course of action. AB noted that the Audit and Risk and Governance (ARG) (previously Audit, Risk and Probity) had seen this proposal and were in support.
- There had been a significant downturn in the 5-year forecast, producing a challenge of circa £3m over the next four and a half years. This was discussed in detail and the next steps agreed.
- Text redacted
- LW is confident in the figures presented for today's meeting. AS and LW advised that the culture and ownership levels we are trying to establish are not yet fully

	<p>embedded, but SLT is fully committed to individual and collective accountability for the accuracy of budgets and forecasts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LW will produce a comprehensive reserves policy for the group and each subsidiary for the September Board meeting. <p>Action: SLT to bring options for returning to a sustainable financial basis to the next Board meeting (see also item 8). This will include analysis of downside and upside risks, with probabilities, in the analysis for the September board meeting.</p>
7.	<p>Panorama debrief</p>
	<p>AS gave a verbal overview of the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swim England (SE) received notification from the BBC of the impending programme and was given a "Right to Reply", involving providing written responses to multiple questions and follow-up questions. The BBC also provided an option to speak to camera. The decision was made for AS to interview on camera. AS was interviewed for 90 minutes. A comprehensive communications plan had been prepared which included providing support to clubs and regions. Feedback had been very positive in this regard. The media reaction to the programme was not as significant or adverse as expected. However, there was a greater response to the misleading statement issued by Swim Ireland following the programme. Text redacted. AS had received numerous messages of support and encouragement from the aquatic community and the wider sporting sector following the programme but was disconcerted by the silence from the SE Board, leaving him to speculate on whether the Board was dissatisfied with his and the organisation's response. Constructive feedback had been received in relation to the communications plan and a key learning was to improve clarity on the meaning of confidentiality and to be explicit about which individuals or groups were party to confidential information. <p>Board members apologised for not contacting AS before or following the programme being aired and thanked him for his and the team's approach to the situation. All agreed that the programme was not as negative towards SE as had been anticipated. CG has previously raised that she felt the BBC could have been clearer that AS was the new SE CEO.</p> <p>Discussion moved to consideration of how much detail Board members should know regarding safeguarding cases. AS felt that it would be inappropriate for the Board to become immersed in specific cases but that it should satisfy itself that the organisation is handling concerns in the appropriate way.</p> <p>Action: SD and AS to consider what further Board training might be required in this regard.</p>
8.	<p>Strategy Day in September</p>
	<p>A paper had been previously distributed. In the paper, AS proposed that the day in September be focused on two key topics:</p>

1. Board Engagement & Ways of Working
2. Strategic Focus

Board Engagement & Ways of Working

RH requested a private session for NEDs only, following which AS and CS rejoined the meeting.

RH asked AS to summarise what he was looking for from the Board. AS' response is summarised as follows:

- Acknowledgement that the organisation had and still has a number of very serious issues that needed addressing.
- Most importantly, it seems likely that the Board was not aware of the issues that existed within the organisation and AS is anxious to ensure this can't be repeated.
- That the Board provide the executive with challenge and support, broadly in equal measure. AS does not feel supported in so much as he has no idea whether the Board considers him to be doing a good, bad or indifferent job.
- With regard to historic cases in general and the one to be considered at item 14, that the Board reflects and shows humility in its consideration.
- That, as outlined in the paper, his first consideration is to ask what he and the executive can do better to improve board engagement and with this in mind, time is spent in September on co-creating a better way of working.

RH invited each Board member to respond.

The Board expressed their regret and agreed that time should be spent in September to address this matter. AS was assured he had the Boards full confidence and support.

Initial discussion considered how to align expectations and to what extent the Board should consider itself a team. AS suggested it absolutely should be a team with high trust relationships to enable constructive challenge and robust debate in a supportive way.

RH suggested that in addition, consideration is needed around minimum performance and outcomes, and the Board and executive must align around:

- Direction of travel
- Boundaries
- Resources
- Delivery

It was agreed to have a facilitated session in September and that at least part of the day to be restricted to the Board only.

Action: AS & RH to design the session and any pre-session work required.

Strategic Focus:

The paper outlined the need to consider the organisation's strategic focus in light of the financial challenges and the performance levels a broad strategy enables. It suggested a

	<p>narrower focus would produce higher performance levels, and that difficult decisions are needed.</p> <p>The Board agreed and this topic will also form part of the September day.</p>
9.	<p>Commercial Strategy</p> <p>As the Board wished to prioritise time for thorough consideration of item 14, this matter was postponed until the September Board meeting.</p>
SECTION 3: ORGANISATIONAL	
10.	<p>Chair's Report</p> <p>No updates required.</p>
11.	<p>CEO's Report</p> <p>A paper had been previously distributed.</p> <p>AS reported four key challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical matters, mostly of a safeguarding nature. • Financial projections. • Lack of strategic focus and the potential that the organisation is too sport performance focused (see item 8). • Board engagement and ways of working (see item 8). <p>He also reported positively on a recent meeting with Aquatics GB, Scottish Swimming and Swim Wales CEOs and Safeguarding leads. The meeting established some key areas for collaboration and joint action.</p> <p>Notwithstanding matters reported at item 6, none of the live brand partner discussions had been progressed to contract.</p>
12.	<p>Annual Scorecard</p> <p>No comments.</p>
13.	<p>People Report & Gender Pay Gap Report</p> <p>MP joined the meeting.</p> <p>The Gender Pay Gap report was taken as read.</p> <p>MP gave a verbal update of first few months in the role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impending organisation design process is much needed. • Line management of staff is a significant learning opportunity. • Text redacted. • People policies have been reviewed and updated where necessary • Two new People Partners have been employed and aim is to get back to proactively supporting Directorates and Regions • Text redacted. <p>MP left the meeting.</p>
14.	<p>Safe Aquatics, Legal and Governance reports</p> <p>KF and SD joined the meeting.</p> <p>SD gave a verbal overview of his background.</p>

Verbal update from SD and KF:

- Update from Kevin Suckling at the February Board meeting was useful and Board would be keen to repeat this at a few points of the year.
- Safeguarding trends remain the same – mobile phone use and teen boys.

Action: SD to give a review of trends at next Board meeting.

SD left the meeting.

ARG Appointment

NB has agreed to join this Committee.

Decision: Approved.

Appointment of RH as Chair for 2nd term

It was noted that CG, as the Senior Independent Director, has conducted an appraisal of RH's performance among fellow Board members.

RH left the meeting.

Decision: Approved.

CG will feedback to RH in person.

RH rejoined meeting.

Terms of Reference (ToFR) for Governance Review: update

- These were shared in the April Board pack, with some amendments shown in tracked changes, principally relating to how members of the Working Group and Steering Group will be selected.
- Applications for the Working Group close 16/07/25. KF and ST to shortlist applications and bring back to Board.
- There was a discussion around clarity on the role of Board in the review process. It was agreed the Board should be consulted during the Review as a key stakeholder.

Historical case review tender: update

- Agreed that preferred supplier was NSPCC for reasons set out in report. The NSPCC consultancy arm would be carrying out the review – we would be allocated three reviewers to complete review, and have been given a timescale for the review to be completed.
- Text redacted.
- There is the option to employ NSPCC to carry out regular reviews each month/dip sampling of SE Safeguarding cases – these would be on current and not historical cases.

- CG asked KF to highlight to SE insurers to ensure full awareness of it, the following statement in the NSPCC Expression of Interest document (Page 4) (notwithstanding that approval from the insurers has already been obtained):

2. Whether any such failure to follow its procedures led to, or is likely to have led to:

- a) disciplinary action not being taken when it ought to have been taken or
- b) disciplinary action being taken when it ought not to have been taken
- c) and there is, or is likely to be, a continuing risk of harm to the public as a result of that action or inaction.

Decision: Approved subject to confirmation that SE insurers are aware of the statement above.

Complaints Policy

- Needs to be clearer and simplified, with the language amended to enable some discretion to challenge unreasonable complaints.
- The board were requested to consider whether the option to request external review should remain. Considerations here include that this was relatively recently requested within the Listening Report, balanced against this being a higher standard than any other NGBs are held to, and also in light of resourcing constraints.
- There was a discussion around another option, namely referral back to a Board Member instead, given this was all that was required in the Weston Report. The Board discussed the impact on their time, other roles/commitment and personal health, as well as on the cost of using an external service. It was agreed to leave the option for an external to review where requested, with every claim being 'triaged' first.

Ellesmere: update

KF gave verbal update:

- Text redacted.
- The Board engaged in a lengthy discussion, Text redacted:
 - Text redacted.

Decision: Agreed to issue a clear apology, to be on behalf of the Board along with the organisation, as to how Swim England handled the consequences of disaffiliation and its impact on **all** those affected.

SECTION 4: SUBSIDIARY AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

(to be taken as read – questions only)

15.	Committee/Working Group Reports (meetings held since last Board meeting)
15.1	Sport Operations Committee 29.04.2025 and 17.06.2025
	Minutes taken as read – no further comments.
15.2	Swim England Qualifications Board 13.05.2025
	Minutes taken as read – no further comments.
15.3	Regional Chairs 02.06.2025

	Minutes taken as read – no further comments.			
15.4	Audit, Risk and Probity 23.06.2025			
	No further update required.			
15.5	People Committee 16.06.2025			
	Minutes taken as read – no further comments.			
15.6	Trading Board 01.07.2025			
	No further update required.			
15.7	Institute of Swimming Board 04.07.2025			
	No update available.			
15.8	Oversight Committee			
	A paper had been previously distributed. It was agreed to dissolve the Oversight Committee but to explore other ways in which the Board can hear from the aquatic community. Action: set up call to discuss 'survivors group'.			
SECTION 5: CLOSE				
16.	Dates for next meetings:			
	Wednesday 17 September 2025	In person	9:30am – 5:30pm	Information
	Monday 24 November 2025	Virtual	1:00pm – 4:00pm	
17.	Any Other Business			
	None.			

Meeting closed.