

Water Polo Leadership Group with Water Polo Regional Managers

Minutes of the meeting held 8th October 2025

Draft minutes subject to approval.

Present:

Ian Mackenzie	Water Polo Leadership Group Chair
Steve Kinloch	Communications Lead
Chris Stephens	Officials Lead
Mike Hesketh	Competition Lead
Tom Wall	Coaching Lead
Paul Metcalfe	Co-opted Member
Craig Figes (left after item 7)	Swim England Water Polo Programme Lead
Richard Blackshaw	Swim England Head of Performance
Claire Coleman	Swim England Head of Development
Helen Akers	Swim England Leadership Group Administrator
Mike Coles	South West Region
Adrian Wood	London Region
Sandra Donald	North West Region
Luke Brown	North West Region
David Parry	North East Region
Gabby Williams	North East Region
Fiona Conway	East Midland Region
Zoe Foster	West Midland Region
James Warrener	London Region
Terri Halstead (item 7 onwards)	West Midland Region

Min No:	
25.19	Welcome and Introduction
	IM thanked attendees for giving up their time and advised that if any questions arose that could not be answered during the meeting, he would endeavour to get a reply afterwards.
25.20	Apologies
	Apologies were received from Matthew McNicholas (EM)
25.21	Conflict of Interest
	None were declared. Members were asked to declare any that arose during the course of the meeting at the relevant point in time.
25.22	SOC Update
	The minutes of 17 th June 2025 had been circulated prior to the meeting, there were no questions or matters arising.

25.23	Minutes of the Regional Representative Meeting
	The minutes of 9 th April 2025 had been circulated prior to the meeting, there were no questions or matters arising.
25.24	Regional Round-up
25.24/a	<u>South West</u> (MC) Intercounty event well supported by 4 counties. 2 academy sessions left in 2025 with 8 booked for 2026. Awaiting decisions on 2027.
25/24.b	<u>London</u> (AW) Have cut back to 3 or 4 regional sessions before tournaments. Feel in limbo with regard to differing direction and budget considerations.
25/24.c	<u>North West</u> (LB) Current position is strong with regards to clubs, leagues and support. Regional office would like guidance on the way forward. Luke is standing down, there is a lack of members on the regional water polo group. Sandra Donald is replacing him.
25/24.d	<u>North East</u> (DP/GW) Currently no designated water polo lead so staff would appreciate support. Currently good levels of interest in officials training, being assisted by CS. Same areas of uncertainty as other regions around the way forward and finances. Seeing a drop off in the older age groups, possibly due to a lack of competition for 2008 born athletes, coupled with younger age groups who are not at the standard they should be.
25/24.e	<u>East Midland</u> (FC) Similar position to the other regions, currently no water polo committee with activity be supported by a couple of dedicated coaches. Would like some guidance on what the ideal committee would look like.
25/24.f	<u>West Midland</u> (ZF) Currently recruiting for Water Polo Committee Chair
25/24.g	<u>East</u> (IM) Water Polo Manager Dean Walker has stood down; Jackie Spinks has replaced him.
25/24.h	<u>South East</u> There was no representative present.
25.25	Club Health Tracker
	CC gave a summary of what the Club Health Tracker is and what the benefits to Water Polo may be. It was stressed that it is important that multi-discipline clubs fill it in for each discipline to increase the sample size to give useable data. Regions are able to see their own scores but they should reach out to CC/Andy Jack for further assistance. Clubs requiring log in details resending should contact clubdevelopment@swimming.org
25.26	Club Development & Support
	RB shared a presentation on an approach to the future of water polo development and gave some details of the background and consultation process. There are finite resources so there needs to be a targeted approach to developing a sustainable sport by focussing on the club environment and development of player numbers.

	<p>There is an intention to work with each region on an individual basis, this is not a one size fits all plan and understanding the local landscape is key - linking back to the Club Health Tracker.</p> <p>There was also considerable discussion around the Talent Centres and their impact on Regional Academies. Concern was expressed around the cost, both financially and in staff time on hosting talent centres. Regional Managers also expressed confusion over the positioning of the Inter Regional Games and having to absorb the cost of this alongside regional academies and talent centres.</p> <p>CC and RB are willing to attend regional board/group meetings to explain the approach if it will be of use and emphasised the need for this change to be approached on an individual regional basis if change is going to be achieved for the development of the sport.</p>
25.27	Calendar
	<p>Swim England has launched a competition review across all sports with swimming and water polo having priority. The intention is that the outcome will be communicated in Q1 of 2026.</p> <p>There were no questions at this time.</p>
25.28	Officials
	<p>There will be more communication around the programme for female referees in the near future.</p> <p>A review of the Table Officials course, with a view to moving it online, is in progress.</p>
25.29	Any Other Business
	<p>Attendees were asked to feed any initial thoughts on the development plans to CC & RB, prior to individual approaches to Regions. It was confirmed that 4 Regional Chairs had attended a briefing session previously.</p>
25/30	Date of Next Meeting
	<p>Q1 2026 to be confirmed, there may be interim meetings to discuss the development plan.</p>