

Sports Operations Committee

Minutes of the meeting held 9 December 2025

Draft minutes subject to approval at the next meeting

Present:

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| 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 |
| Richard Palmer Jones (RPJ) | 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:

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|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Claire Coleman (CC) | Head of Development |
| Catherine Searcy (minutes) | Executive Assistant |
| Craig McCulloch (CMc) | Head of Coaching (Item 4 only) |

Apologies:

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| Jo Sackett (JS) | Swim England Member |
| Neil Booth (NB) | Swim England Board Member |
| Ellie Conway (EC) | Youth Advisory Panel Representative |
| Andy Salmon | CEO |

1. Standing Items

1.1 Chairperson's Welcome

Members were welcomed to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies

Apologies received from JS, NB, EC and Andy Salmon.

1.3 Declarations of Interest

None.

1.4 Declarations of AOB

None declared.

1.5 Minutes from previous meeting (09 September 2025)

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

1.6 Actions from the previous Meeting

Reference 23.15 Risk Assessment Portal: following testing of the system, it was determined it would not be suitable for clubs. Health & Safety Training for clubs needs to be considered as a wider item as part of the Health & Safety Forum.

Reference 24.09 Governance and coach compliance: paused whilst the awaiting the outcome of the current redesign.

Reference 25.11 Artistic Swimming (music licence): have now received a response from Legal which clarified that a PRS licence is required but this maybe held by the venue. Further questions arose specifically in relation to Artistic Swimming so further work is needed here before guidance is given to all club.

Action: AB to provide artistic swimming specific details for consideration. Aquatic Clubs Team to produce necessary guidance and communicate to clubs. Katya (?) to meet with AB.

Reference 2.11 Mtg 09.09.2025 Club Health tracker: to be added to future agenda (Jan or March 2026).

Reference 2.14 Mtg 09.09.25 MOU: This is now completed and the final MOU reflected the concerns/feedback received from Regional Chairs.

Reference 2.17 Mtg 09.09.25 Flourishing coaching: The wider group met last week re.comms and this is now completed.

Reference 4.7 Mtg 09.09.25 Membership fees: Completed.

Reference 6.3 Mtg 09.09.25 Meridian Titans application: Completed. The 60 day time frame needs to be part of wider review in 2026.

Reference 8.1 Mtg 09.09.25 H&S update: Completed.

All other actions identified have been noted as complete.

2. **Governance Review – update**

- 2.1. AWh gave a verbal overview of the process so far, with Kirsten Fasey (KF) continuing to lead on the project until March 2026.
- 2.2. **Action:** JW will circulate the Terms of Reference (ToR) by early Jan 2026 for reading by Members, with feedback to be submitted in advance of the next SOC mtg on 27.01.26 and then discussion at that meeting.
- 2.3. Noted that the draft annual planner included in the paper does not make any reference to Health and Safety and relevant incidents, membership or staff satisfaction. This will be fed back to KF and can be discussed in more detail at the next SOC.
- 2.4. The existing process for making decisions takes too long – an emphasis on timely decisions as theme/output of review would be welcomed by Members.
- 2.5. Suggestion of moving some activities to other quarters throughout year as 3rd and 4th are particularly busy. The Governance Steering Group will look at frequency and membership of meetings across all Boards/Committees as part of the process.

3. **Adult Open Water – Membership**

- 3.1. HM gave a verbal overview of the proposal including some background and answered questions.
- 3.2. There was a discussion around the target audience at the initial stage of launching the membership, with the possibility of expanding this over future years.
- 3.3. Discussions with Howdens have taken place and continue to develop. Insurance cover will be restricted to event activity, which will be made clear to those taking up the offer.
- 3.4. The initial concept is limited to national events but subject to the agreement of regions, it is hoped to also include regional competitions. The programme will not include County and Club events, but this may develop at a later date.
- 3.5. Competitions will not be run in line with World Aquatic rules.
- 3.6. HM confirmed that SE is intending to engage a consultant to deliver the time trial series using established venues. SE has access to specialists within the organisation to assist in delivery and the Events Team will also be involved.
- 3.7. There was a discussion around the benefit of involving a partner with experience in running mass participation events. HM confirmed that discussions have taken place with NOWCA and Sport Guardian around their offerings.
- 3.8. Responding to a question about measuring success, HM confirmed that KPI's would be set.
- 3.9. Beyond Swim scheme brings in £12k per year which SE expect to increase on in 2026. In view of the potential cross-over of athletes SE, is working with British Triathlon to explore the market opportunities in more detail.
- 3.10. Members gave overall approval subject to a clear market and staged plan over a number of years.
- 3.11. It was agreed that AWi would join the working group as SOC Representative.
(Action: HM)

4. **Coaching Strategic Plan – update**

- 4.1. CMc joined the meeting and gave an overview of the Coaching Plan going forward. He reported that the plan focussed on achieving better quality coaching, with person-centred effective and ethical coaching. Learning and education would be central to future coaching with the value of coaching and coaches increasing.
- 4.2. There was a discussion around how SE will bring all coaches on the journey, including informal opportunities, and create new pathways into coaching. The end focus is on moving towards required licensing with requirements for frequent upskilling and personal development.
- 4.3. Previous feedback has been that coaching courses are too expensive particularly as these may be volunteer roles. CMc confirmed that the new Session Coach

course is cheaper and coaches would be encouraged to continue their development via shorter courses.

4.4

Although timescales are to be confirmed, it was anticipated that both Session Coach and Practitioner courses would launch in January 2027.

4.5.

The role of Head Coach is a very specific one so new module will help both Head Coaches and the wider coaching team.

4.6.

CMc confirmed the next step will be to go back out to consultation both with coaches and clubs, in preparation for significant change in 2027. Consulting Club Chairs will be supported by the SE Clubs team.

5. **Place based working – a starting point**

This agenda item was deferred until next SOC meeting on 27.01.2026.

6. **Directorate Updates**

Community Participation and Health Directorate

6.1 HM provided a short verbal overview of key parts of the update circulated with the agenda.

6.2 SE is working with Neurodiverse Sport in developing the neurodiversity project and believe the content covers diagnosed and undiagnosed conditions in athletes. There was a discussion around identifying common themes and issues experienced by athletes, coaches and volunteers in order to develop a toolkit for how to deal with these.

6.3 SE will look at how it positions the Neurodiverse Sport course and communicate this widely to all SE communities, not just to coaches.

Sport Development Directorate

6.4. AWh provided a short verbal overview of key parts of his update.

6.5. AWh confirmed that the WhatsApp group is open to anyone from the coaching community – CMc is actively trying to grow members and engagement via the channel.

6.6. In response to a question about the format of County and Regional swimming development programmes AWh confirmed that SE have not promoted any changes in relation to these.

6.7. Dive Recorder: Referring to previous discussions, AWh confirmed that the current platform will cease to exist from January 2026 but will move to a different platform hosted by SE for clubs and programmes to use. SOC was assured by this development as uncertainties around Dive Recorder have long been recognised

6.8. Members indicated that they were happy with the format of report and agreed that this should continue to use going forward.

7. **Scorecard 2025**

- 7.1. Q4 almost finished but will be reported on at January 2026 meeting.
- 7.2. It was agreed that for items that continue to be red rated, some context or detail as to why would be helpful.
- 7.3. **Action:** Evergreen launch information to be sent to SOC members (HM)

8. **Health and Safety Update**

KM gave a verbal update:

- 8.1. Kirsten Fasey has met with H&S Forum as part of the Governance Review.
- 8.2. Trends are being evaluated every 3 months within the H&S Forum and are identifying any occurrences in clubs that are not insurance claims. The Forum also continues to look at policies and guidance.
- 8.3. KM advised that there is no process currently for near misses to be reported.
- 8.4. AWh reported that the membership of the H&S Forum is not wholly reflective of the current needs. The membership of governance groups will be looked at as part of the Governance Review. A broader overview of committees is needed as numerous programmes are in action at the same time and these need to be effectively joined up.

9.0 **Minutes of Leadership Group meetings and any reports from SOC Liaison**

Artistic Swimming Leadership Group

- 9.1. KM reported that Artistic Swimming have had a good year and the Group is very pleased with results.

Club Leadership Group

- 9.2. AB reported that the sharing of good practice continues and neurodiverse resources reported earlier would be helpful.

Diving Leadership Group

- 9.3. A query was raised about DiSE athletes attending the J1 course. AWh noted that it is not a consistent feature but is an available opportunity and where interest is shown, SE can signpost people to it.

Swimming Leadership Group

- 9.4. Query as to whether technical officials training is on the SOC agenda in the future. It was noted that this area would be reported via the Swimming Leadership Group minutes. Meet Licencing is in the process of being reviewed with changes likely to be rolled out from September 2026.

- 9.5. **Action:** An update to be included in January's Directorate Report.

Water Polo Leadership Group

- 9.6. Nothing to report. It was noted that the minutes indicated that water polo may be struggling at a regional level. CC clarified that SE is trying to support regions in their growth and management of talent development and although water polo is not struggling, SE are exploring why the messaging might not be reaching all.
- 9.7. The Water Polo LG have an application going to them to establish another league. Unfortunately, the application is retrospective in that the league has already begun before affiliation is determined. From a strategic view, SE is midway through a competition review. Subject to the views of the Water Polo Leadership Group, it is possible that SOC will this consider this application at its next meeting.

Masters Swimming Leadership Group

- 9.8. Nothing to report.

Youth Advisory Panel

- 9.9. Continue to meet and will be recruiting for the panel currently.

Health and Safety Forum

- 9.10. Discussed already in item 8.

10. Regional update

- 10.1 Regional Chairs met 01.12.2025 in London.
- 10.2 All feedback has already been covered in the meeting.

11. **AOB**
None.

Meeting closed.