

# Swimming Leadership Group

DATE: 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Venue: Microsoft Teams

Time: 18:00 20:00

**Attendees:**

- Tom Baster – Chair (TB)
- Barry Saunders - Competitions Lead (BS)
- Joan Wheeler – SOC Liaison (JW)
- Kevin Brooks – Coaching Lead (KB)
- Craig McCulloch – Swim England Head of Coaching (CM)
- Claire Coleman – Swim England Head of Aquatic Clubs (CC)

**Apologies:**

- Ekaterina Boyd – Swim England Head of Events (EB)
- Richard Blackshaw – Swim England Head of Sport (RB)
- John Hidle – Licensing Lead (JH)
- Ian Makenzie - Specialist Member (IM)

AGENDA	
1.	<b>Welcome</b>
	TB opened the meeting, welcoming all attendees to the first SLG meeting of the year.
2.	<b>Apologies</b>
	Apologies were received by EB, RB, JH and IM.
3.	<b>Action Log</b>
	<p>A detailed review of the outstanding action items was undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coaching Lead Appointment - Recruitment completed. Applications were reviewed with an emphasis on broadening representation, A decision has been made, and the successful candidate will be contacted shortly.</li> <li>- Fines for Non-Attendance Guidance - Guidance previously developed and shared with relevant regional groups. Concerns remain around inconsistent application of fines across sport. Further publication through the Club Newsletter and potential video content is planned.</li> <li>- Para Swimming Classification - Work paused pending staff redesign. Classification opportunities will be reviewed later in the year. Currently AGB are supporting through Sue Purchase.</li> <li>- Transgender &amp; Non-Binary Policy Clarification - Policy continues to operate effectively with existing terminology. Digital road map may influence future system consistency.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Action: At the next review add in open/male CC/EB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Level 3 Time Gap Concerns – The discussion acknowledged regional variation and complexities with age-group differences. Competition review outcomes are expected to inform future adjustments.</li> </ul>
4.	<p><b>SOC Update</b></p> <p>JW summerised previous SOC minutes, confirming no outstanding matters requiring SLG action. The meeting discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expectations for technical swimming presentations were clarified – these remain within SLG remit.</li> <li>- Update provided on national event cost pressures and efforts led by EB to reduce expenditure and increase revenue.</li> <li>- Observations made about prize structures at Inter-County events, with proposals to evaluate the £1000 award to the winning county in Division One to improve fairness and manage budgets more effectively. Suggestion includes a commemorative prize for each swimmer.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action: EB to evaluate the allocation and to determine a suitable prize for division 1 and 2</b></p>
5.	<p><b>Sport &amp; Community Participation Health Update</b></p> <p>CC presented the December report covering several areas:</p> <p>Club Development &amp; Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Structural changes following the disbandment of the development team.</li> <li>- Continued use of Club Newsletter as a key communication channel.</li> </ul> <p>Competition Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 856 responses received: analysis underway. Swimming and Water Polo in phase one, Artistic Swimming and Diving in phase two.</li> </ul> <p>Commonwealth Games Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- RB continues in his role as Team Manager with support from Swim England’s Head of Sport Operations, Anna Garside.</li> </ul> <p>Coaching Team Update (CM):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Significant work underway developing the new coach education framework.</li> <li>- Multiple new short courses launched, covering leadership, ethics, skill development, and character-building.</li> <li>- Strong early uptake with 32 participants and positive feedback.</li> </ul> <p>KB later provided further insights into regional coaching engagement challenges and best practices adopted in the Sout East region.</p>
6.	<p><b>New Structure</b></p> <p>CC delivered a detailed walkthrough of the new organisational structure. Key highlights:</p>

	<p>Safe Aquatics Directorate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transition from Safeguarding &amp; Welfare to Safe Aquatics to reflect broader responsibilities.</li> <li>- Introduction of a two-pod model to manage caseloads more efficiently.</li> </ul> <p>Sport Directorate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearer structuring of sport-specific staff, including regional distribution of national sports swimming officers.</li> <li>- Expansion of EB's events team to meet increased operational demands.</li> </ul> <p>Aquatics Clubs Directorate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New learning and development focus under Aquatics Training &amp; Education.</li> <li>- Club engagement to be driven by field-based officers aligned to four geographic squads (North, East, West, South).</li> <li>- Governance support transitioning from compliance-based to development-focused models.</li> </ul>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Talent Update</b>
	<p>Talent report was circulated to the group. Items included in report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Updates on pathway camps.</li> <li>- Monitoring of junior and senior elite athletes.</li> <li>- Adjustments made in response to organisational restructuring.</li> </ul>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Coaching Update</b>
	<p>CM provided a comprehensive update on coach education developments and cultural challenges. Kevin added regional insights covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Declining coach engagement post-COVID.</li> <li>- Social factors influencing coach participation, including fear of judgement and credibility concerns.</li> <li>- Good practice examples from the South East region, including WhatsApp communication channels, structured forum roles, and in-person meetings at regional competitions.</li> <li>- Recognition of the need to rebuild trust and connectivity across coaching communities.</li> </ul>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Officials Update</b>
	<p>TB outlined extensive progress in official development, including:</p> <p>New Officiating Pathway:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduction of revised mentoring CPD with reduced burden on mentors and increased accessibility.</li> <li>- Development of new introductory officiating courses for pool and open water using online platforms.</li> <li>- Removal of the standalone para-swimming officials course, embedding inclusion content across all levels.</li> <li>- Proposed changes to assessment formats, retaining examinations only for starter and referee.</li> </ul>

	<p>Cultural Improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plans for a national seminar for all referees on communication, inclusion, and conduct.</li> <li>- Reinstitution of the Swimming Officials News weekly scenario series.</li> </ul> <p>Operational Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues highlighted regarding Aquatics GB's selection processes for international officials, particularly para pathways lacking federation nomination processes.</li> </ul>
10.	<b>Official Appointments of Key Officials for 2026</b>
	<p>CC introduced a new centralised recruitment model for national event officials. Key components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Open application windows promoted via national newsletters.</li> <li>- Criteria for selection to be developed by SLG working group.</li> <li>- Appointments made through transparent, criteria-based process.</li> <li>- Alignment across disciplines to ensure fairness and consistency.</li> <li>- Transition of responsibility from former individuals (e.g., Helen Akers) to the events team under EB.</li> </ul>
11.	<b>Licensing Update</b>
	<p>TB expressed serious concerns over poor communication from regional licensing officers.</p> <p><b>Action: TB and JW to raise concerns with JH</b></p>
12.	<b>Any Other Business</b>
	No additional items were raised for discussion.
13.	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>
	The next SLG meeting is scheduled for 9th April.