

Water Polo Leadership Group

Microsoft Teams 11th February 2026

Time: 18:30 – 20:00

Attendees:

Ian Mackenzie (IM)	Chair
Steve Kinloch (SK)	Communications Lead
Tom Wall (TW)	Coaching Lead
Chris Stephens (CS)	Officials Lead
Mike Hesketh (MH)	Competition Lead
Craig Figes (CF)	Swim England Water Polo Programme Lead
Ekaterina Boyd (EB)	Swim England Head of Events
Craig McCulloch (CM)	Swim England Head of Coaching
Richard Blackshaw (RB)	Swim England Head of Sport
Claire Coleman (CC)	Swim England Head of Aquatic Clubs

Apologies:

Paul Metcalfe (PM)	Co-opted Member
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MINUTES	
26.1	Welcome
	IM opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and CC explained changes to administration processes following the recent staff restructuring. Gareth Picken has moved to Operations and will continue to handle premeeting admin and minute production. Meetings will now run using recordings and transcripts rather than having an administrator present. Members discussed attendance expectations and confirmed at least one of Swim England Team will always be present.
26.2	Conflict of Interest
	IM reminded all members to declare conflicts of interest at relevant points. No new conflicts were raised during the meeting.
26.3	Action Log
	<p>A full review of previous actions took place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Report – Delayed due to the loss of Andy McGinty; recruitment for replacement now approved. Regional engagement paused but will resume once role is filled. This report will detail the work with regions on the development of water polo • Financial Commitment for International Competitions – RB outlined full financial summary. Members discussed communication of funding to the wider community. • IM raised that the minutes from the Water Polo Summit are yet to be circulated. RB agreed to circulate the minutes to the group. <p>Action – RB to circulate RB to circulate the minutes of the Water Polo Summit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GB Origins League – No progress; league appears no longer active.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Meeting – Awaiting update following ‘Women Who Whistle’ promotion discussions. • BWPL & Dave Andrews – Communication ongoing but delayed due to illness; action remains open.
26.4	SOC Update
	<p>CC presented highlights from December and January SOC meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance review now in confidential consultation phase. • Discussion on national events financial sustainability and possible cost-effective models. • New place-based working model, including Head of Social Impact & Inclusion role. • Commonwealth Games 2026 – Water Polo not included. • Review of 2025–2026 strategic scorecards, with focus on organisation-wide KPIs rather than silo metrics.
26.5	Sport & Community Participation Health Update
	<p>CC and RB summarised the newly combined report covering Aquatics Clubs and Sport Performance.</p> <p>Key updates included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to Swim programme review concluding Phase 1. • Establishment of the Aquatics Clubs team, replacing the Development Team structure. • Greater regional alignment supported by new officer roles. • Ongoing work to realign community programmes, health initiatives, and participation pathways.
26.6	New Structure
	<p>CC presented the full organisational restructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe Aquatics now operating with pod-based case management • Sport Team changes include DiSE officers fully embedded in each discipline. • National Talent Officers renamed National Sport Officers to shift language away from “talent”. • Coordinators now replace administrators, managed centrally under Sports Operations. • Introduction of the geographic matrix model (North, East, West, South squads) to promote multi-discipline, regionally aligned club support.
26.7	National Talent update
	<p>CF reported on current programme status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing domestic training camps running monthly. • Under 20’s Men completed successful January camp in Italy. • Senior Women competed at European Championships, finishing 9th after strong performances. • Under 18’s squads preparing for upcoming events in April. • Long-term athlete development focus, including closer integration with DiSE. • Recruitment for Andy McGinty’s replacement essential for continued progression. <p>Action: CF to inform IM with the progress of two candidates for the World Aquatics courses.</p>
26.8	Events Update
	<p>EB shared updates including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U17/U19 preliminary rounds completed; qualifiers next at Sandwell and Sheffield.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New national events branding being introduced, replacing GoCardless. • Merchandise to be trialled at qualification events, supported by U20 female squad volunteers. • U15's events pencilled for 7–8 Nov and 21–22 Nov, venues TBC (cost-effective options being explored). • Ongoing liaison with BWPL on hybrid model for 2027; meeting with Dave Andrews delayed. • Positive community feedback received on two-round format with longer games.
26.9	Coaching Update
	<p>TW highlighted low uptake of new short courses among Water Polo coaches. CMc outlined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New short-course model: 1.5 hours every two weeks, running 3–6 months, £50 each. • Courses include Leadership, Skill Development, Ethics, and Character Development. • Future Water Polo-specific course on games-based coaching planned. • Current Water Polo Coach Learning Programme delivering high coach investment. • Need for cultural shift toward greater CPD participation. • Regional disparities noted; East Midlands struggling to engage coaches and regional office.
26.10	Communications Update
	<p>No major updates.</p> <p>Ongoing work with Nick Brookes regarding 'Women Who Whistle' promotional opportunities.</p>
26.11	Officials Update
	<p>CS reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Aquatics Development Camp not beneficial for officials; cost (£900 + travel) too high. • New referee presenter, now accredited and ready to deliver NE courses. • International referee nominations submitted for World Cup: Max Kerasimov, Johnny Richard, Connor Dukes. • European Aquatics confirmed BWPL Super 5s standings will serve as national ranking for European entries. • Need for clearer Aquatics GB coordination on cross-nation matters.
26.12	Official Appointments of Key Officials for 2026
	<p>EB outlined the new centralised process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All disciplines will follow a single standardised approach. • Swim England Comms will publish volunteer opportunities using membership data. • Event team and discipline lead will jointly assess applicants. • New membership system (late 2026) will eventually enable volunteers to manage profiles and sign up through an integrated portal.
26.13	AOB
	<p>Key items raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical group being established to review Water Polo coaching content and resources. • Recognition that there are responses required from Swim England to quires by the BWPL. RB proceed with providing answers.

26.14	Date of the next meeting
	Dates previously circulated to all members; attendees reminded to check meeting links and availability. The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 15 th April 2026.