

Swim England Sport Operations Committee

Minutes of the meeting held 22 November 2022, via Zoom

Draft minutes subject to approval at the next meeting

Present:

Joan Wheeler (JW)	Swim England Board Member (Chair)
Neil Booth (NB)	Swim England Board Member
Alex Harrison (AH)	Swim England Member
Ian Mackenzie (IM)	Swim England Member
Keith Munday (KM)	Swim England Member
Ellie Conway (EC)	Young Athletes Panel
John Hidle (JHi)	Regional Chairs Representative
George Wood (GW)	Sport Development Director
Jon Glenn (JG)	Learn to Swim and Workforce Director
Rebecca Cox (RC)	Swim England Business Engagement Director & Institute of Swimming Managing Director

Staff:

Ali Sibcy-Allen (AS-A)	Operations Administration Manager
Claire Coleman (CC)	Head of Development
Ekaterina Boyd (EB)	Head of Events
Lindsay Trimmings (LT)	Head of Coaching
Kevin Suckling (KS)	Head of Safeguarding and Welfare

Min No:

1. Standing Items

1.1 Chairman's welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies

None recorded.

1.3 Declarations of Interest

None recorded.

1.4 Declarations of AOB

None declared at this stage.

1.5 Minutes from previous meetings:

1.5.1 11 October 2022: The minutes were accepted.

1.6 Actions from previous meetings

1.6.1 22.22 – Howden's technical team is establishing a security solution; an update will be provided in due course. CC will look at the reporting of near misses and whether these could be incorporated into the system.

1.6.2 22.27 – CC will update SOC in January regarding the launch of supervision ratios.

- 1.6.3 22.28 – all LG's have provided feedback which has highlighted further work. CC and JW to meet to progress.
- 1.7 **Leadership Group Updates**
- 1.7.1 Artistic Swimming: The main focus has been on the FINA rule changes. Certificates of exemption have been discussed and are to be considered over the next 12 months. The importance of ensuring inclusivity within the sport was noted by SOC.
- 1.7.2 Clubs: Nothing to highlight from the most recent meeting.
- 1.7.3 Diving: Recruitment for the vacant DLG roles is ongoing, with difficulties being experienced in recruiting, it is hoped that this may change now competitions are being held. Work is being completed on the badge framework and judging pathway to make progression easier. It was noted that there are challenges with the recruitment of tutors for judging courses.
- 1.7.4 Swimming: The most recent meeting covered a variety of topics and agreed a proposal for competition planning and the licensing of third party events. JW will offer to meet with the Chair of the masters working group to discuss some issues raised in his report.

The SLG have requested to amend the membership of the group to include a Coaching Lead and revise their TORs to reflect this. SOC members agreed to the inclusion of the Coaching Lead role and update to the TORs. It was confirmed that consideration will be given to recruiting an individual who can represent all levels of coaches.

- 1.7.5 Water Polo: It was noted that the attached minutes related to the WLG meeting held on 6th October. The next meeting will be held at NAGs and will be a face-to-face meeting.

2. Items for Decision

2.1 Events: Progress on 2023 schedule, updated costs and entry fees

EB was welcomed to the meeting.

EB advised that the paper had been updated from the previous meeting and confirmed the 2023 calendar. The open water events are still to be confirmed but arrangements were progressing. A current competition review for water polo could impact on plans for the second half of 2023.

The budget for 2023 has proposed a 10% increase on external costs, based on rates received from key stakeholders, partners and suppliers. This equated to request for an overall increase of £20,000 in the budget compared to 2022, although it was noted that in some cases increased costs may be higher than 10%. Following discussion, SOC members agreed a 10% increase to entry fees across all events.

The future use of the 2022 Commonwealth Games pool in Sandwell was questioned with EB advising that the pool is scheduled to open by July 2023. Conversations are ongoing regarding the required specification for water polo and diving events.

Referring to the review of volunteer expenses, accommodation sharing for volunteers was queried. It was noted that the implementation of this had been suspended as a result of Covid and the potential knock on effect on recruitment. It

was agreed that EB would look into costings, and bring a further report to the January meeting. EB would include the current British Swimming policy to enable an informed decision over reinstating the policy to be made by SOC members.

Action: EB to review volunteer accommodation sharing at events for January meeting.

Questions were asked regarding the feasibility of increasing the volume of entries. The knock on effect on event schedules and potential decrease in entries was acknowledged. EB confirmed that there is an expectation that standards and entry numbers will increase in 2023. In addition to striking an appropriate balance between participation and the standards expected for national championships, the wider implications of hosting larger events needs to be considered in the context of revised operating procedures impacting on issues such as warm ups and spectator capacity.

2.2 **Minimum Swimming Depths**

JG advised that discussions have been held with both the Legal team and the insurance brokers over the implementation of a transition period incorporating relevant mitigations. SLG considered the report at their meeting on 17th November agreed with the proposals. JG emphasised that a minimum depth of 1.35m for swimmers holding the Competitive Start Award would be required for all from September 2023 but that the transition period provides pools and clubs time to make required amendments.

SOC members agreed with the proposal requesting comms to be circulated as quickly as possible to give the maximum notice of implementation from 1 January 2023. The need to include league secretaries in the circulation of the guidance was highlighted.

Action: JG to arrange for comms to be sent as soon as possible and include league secretaries.

JG was asked how concerns from pools and clubs would be managed. He advised engagement has begun with those who have already expressed concerns, and confirmed that support will be offered to others who need it.

2.3 **Artistic Swimming rule changes**

KM presented an overview of the plan proposed by the ASLG to support the implementation of the FINA rule changes.

The plan proposes a 12 month phased rollout starting in January 2023 with the first international competitions being held to the new standards during summer 2023. A budget of up to £30,000 to support the project had been projected.

The 12-month implementation process was welcomed. GW would look at how the plan could be worked into the Sport Development Directorate budget. GW advised that this would need to be the focus of the budget for the ASLG for 2023 and that it would impact on other potential growth areas during this time.

SOC accepted the proposal, noting that this would be the major spend for AS in 2023.

CC confirmed that a project officer has been identified who has experience within the AS community, and that further resource is being identified within the team to support the project.

2.4 **Coaching plan 2022 – 2025**

LT was welcomed to the meeting.

LT reported that the Coaching Plan was signed off earlier in the year and some of the work on implementing this has begun. The need to more explicitly state our approach to welfare and safeguarding before publication has been identified following the Whyte Review into British Gymnastics. The timescales for release will be clearer after a meeting with the CPSU on 1 December.

SOC members were keen to ensure that safeguarding is embedded into the culture of swimming and that there is a move away from it being an inference to stronger wording. Discussion considered the wording of statements, with LT to incorporate these.

SOC members approved the document, that subject to the amendments discussed. Additional agreement was given that if further minor amendments were required these would not need to be brought back for approval.

3. **Items for Discussion**

3.1 **Teaching and Coaching Register – compliance approach**

LT introduced the paper and explained how it came in to place, advising that currently the paper is in the early draft stages.

LT outlined the importance of the paper, including what would be captured and when, along with its positioning in relation to SwimMark and Club Affiliation dates. There would be a requirement for named individuals to hold responsibilities as well as identifying cover for those.

Concerns were raised regarding having specific date for compliance however the emphasis would be continued compliance with consideration to be given as to how to address non-compliance between reporting dates.

LT ran through the further considerations, highlighting key elements and the resulting penalties, with the need to tighten current conditions to ensure all teachers and coaches have DBS clearance. The potential consequences were noted while also acknowledging the outcomes of the Whyte Review into British Gymnastics need to be considered. The current popularity of safeguarding courses and resulting availability was highlighted with a pragmatic approach requested. LT agreed to take the feedback to Kevin Suckling (Head of Safeguarding and Welfare) to consider from a safeguarding perspective.

The appropriate level of DBS is now auto populated on the system when roles are selected. A training need for welfare officers has been determined to ensure they understand why it is there.

Further discussion considered the inclusion of safeguarding training within the coach education courses. RC confirmed this had previously been looked at with complications arising when individuals have already completed training. There is potential to review as the courses are now modular and exemptions could be made but there would need to be decisions made regarding the timeframe in which training need to have been completed.

Previous delays in certification were acknowledged to be a concern. RC advised that action has been taken to address the delays within the Institute of Swimming and that Swim England Qualifications are also exploring a more functional process.

JH advised that the Regional Chairs would be discussing the paper at their next meeting. As part of this, clarity over roles and resource management as well as monitoring would need to be included.

LT noted the comments and will work on the development of the paper before returning with an update when appropriate.

Action: LT to return to update SOC members when appropriate.

4. Items to Note

4.1 Swim England response to the Whyte Review

KS was welcomed to the meeting.

KS began by outlining the Legal team structure, outlining new roles and how they link in to the Sport Development team as well as how safeguarding cases are assessed as they received so they can be directed internally more appropriately.

The draft Whyte Review report was presented, noting that it will shortly be circulated to SLT, the SE Board, and the CPSU. KS ran through the report highlighting pertinent points and changes to previous operating procedure. KS noted that historically SE have been more reactive to issues while the Whyte Report has identified that NGBs have a responsibility to be more proactive and manage any issues at an earlier stage. SOC members agreed that managing problems earlier and at a club level is a positive step.

KS advised that culture features heavily in the Whyte Report as being fundamental to ensuring welfare and safeguarding are central to everything SE does as an organisation. Historically, the safeguarding team have worked in isolation but moving forwards this is changing with links to the Sport Development team already in place.

SOC members agreed the progress is a major step forwards. Communication to club welfare officers was questioned as this was felt to have been minimal in past cases. KS confirmed that the club welfare officers would be the point of contact and would remain updated on any issues based on the frequency that they request. KS further added that the team will no longer be relying on written communication and that they will be speaking to people where possible in the first instance.

NB expressed his thanks to KS, recognising the workload currently being dealt with. Issues with the system had been recognised prior to the appointment of KS but these are now being addressed. The identification of where failures are had started prior to the Whyte Report but now there is impetus and direction.

To conclude, KS informed the group that there are a variety of different issues but these are not disproportionate and are comparable to other sports. Moving forwards there will be an ability to identify trends across the reports and learn lessons from other near misses and trends.

4.2 Update on the review of the Judiciary

NB informed members that the judicial laws of the sport have been updated to make the processes and timescales clearer and will be considered by the SE Board at their December meeting.

The proposed changes to the rules are minimal with the focus being on the management and administration to provide a tighter, time-bound process with less flexibility.

Training will be provided for those involved in the judiciary to ensure that roles and responsibilities are fully understood and the process will be made more streamlined and efficient.

4.3 **Club Financial pressure**

GW outlined how the Club Health Tracker will be used to support clubs with its foundations based in what makes a club work, including finance and operator relationships. The tracker is currently in the testing phase, overall feedback is positive and confirms that it helps to clarify key priorities and issues in club development. Once the tracker is opened up to all clubs' greater clarity and trends will become apparent.

There are already measures in place to address some issues, with Andy Jack assisting with club operator engagement issues. Workshops are being delivered to support clubs to help themselves, the first on taxation was well received with a further three planned. These will continue during 2023 and the Club Financial Toolkit will be promoted in early 2023.

Work is ongoing regarding the financial viability of pools which impacts on clubs. Together with operators, SE are campaigning to highlight the impact of the increase in energy costs with the aim of ensuring that pools are able to remain open at an affordable rate. RC confirmed that engagement with operators over ways they can refine processes, and reduce associated costs, is already ongoing.

RC also advised that SE are supporting operators, and promoting initiatives as widely as possible. It is hoped that the data from England Swims will enable wider engagement.

The importance of clubs considering how they could be more sustainable was agreed, including consolidating their water time and optimising their usage. The benefit of using the Club and Operator toolkit to support decision making was noted, with the potential for greater engagement via the regional teams to make greater use of the toolkit. The importance of taking a pro-active approach in advising clubs was welcomed.

5. **AOB**

5.1 None Recorded

6. **2023 Meeting Dates**

- Tuesday 17 January 2023, 11am – in-person at SportPark
- Tuesday 28 February 2023, 10am
- Tuesday 2 May 2023, 10am
- Tuesday 27 June 2023, 10am
- Tuesday 12 September 2023, 10am
- Tuesday 28 November 2023, 10am