



Swim England East Region
Minutes of the Open Water Swimming Leadership Group Meeting
15 April 2021

Present	Paul Kendall (PK)	Chairman
	Sandra Grant (SG)	Bedfordshire representative
	Jacqui Kendall (JK)	Norfolk representative
	Sarah Tait (ST)	Suffolk representative
	Janet Warrington (JW)	Hertfordshire representative (outgoing)
	Gillian Pick (GP)	Hertfordshire representative (incoming)
	Marion Westwood (MW)	Specialist
	Steve Westwood (SW)	Specialist

Also present

David Metcalf (DM), ER Independent director. Keith Belton (KB), ER Finance Director

21/10 Apologies

- 21/10.1 Simon Yates (SY), Cambridgeshire representative - Resigned
 Paul Hayes (PH), Essex representative - Resigned

21/11 Declarations of conflict of interest

- 21/11.1 There were none

21/12 Previous minutes

- 21/12.1 The minutes of the meeting 11 February 2021 were agreed, with one attendee omission corrected.

21/13 Matters arising

- 21/13.1 Changes of group members:
PK welcomed GP onto the OWSLG as the new representative for Hertfordshire and thanked JW for the support they had given during their term of office.
PK informed the meeting that PH and SY had stood down from their roles as respective Essex and Cambridgeshire representatives ahead of the meeting; both counties are now asked to seek replacements as their open water representatives.

- 21/13.1 21/05.4 The new group TORs have now been ratified by the Region.
- 21/14**
- County reports**
- 21/14.1 County reps reported back results from club surveys conducted since the last meeting regarding support for an open water event in July. Overall an estimated 30% reduction of anticipated participation was noted when compared to the 2019 event. Ability of some club swimmers to compete over the regular distances was questioned. Clubs with good land training schemes and immediately available water-time indicated their athletes would be fully capable of completing the usual race distances, clubs where pools were still closed felt that their members would struggle to be sufficiently prepared. A number of clubs were noted to have expanded their training to include open water specific skills and even to using open water venues in their training schedules. The lack of any National Championship to progress on to and possibility of non-representative county championships distances at the regional event is considered likely reason for the lower enthusiasm to participate this year. Some clubs indicated that their members might support a "fun" event, others felt a time-trial type event might prove more popular. The prospect of holding races over different distances also called into question whether county fees could be justified if the regional open water event did not follow the expected profile. If no medals or awards were being given the expectations were that entry costs should be considerably lower than previous championships fees. Any requests to limit spectators at the event was likely to be unable to be controlled given the public have right of access to the parkland and shoreline.
GP informed the meeting that Hertfordshire is working towards holding an open water event later in the year.
- 21/15**
- Swim England "Return to Competition"**
- 21/15.1 PK had ensured that all OWSLG members received a link to this document ahead of the meeting, and had requested that they read and bring to the group any points they wish to discuss. PK informed the meeting of a discussion held in relation to this document between other Region's OW managers where the general consensus had been that the opening-up of competition would need to consider the lack of water fitness in a significant number of swimmers and to keep OW event distances within the capabilities expected after such a long period away from training. Armed with this information and alongside the need to respect the guidance issued regarding COVID precautions, the meeting discussed at some length the full implications of the current situation with regard to holding an OW event this year.
- 21/16**
- 2021 Regional Open Water Championships**
- 21/16.1 Following extensive discussions regarding the ability to safely stage the 2021 East Region Open Water Swimming Championships, the OWSLG reluctantly decided that we were unable to go ahead with the event this year. In arriving at this decision, it was felt that having examined all current Government, Local Authority and venue COVID limitations and restrictions, plus the Swim England "Return to Competition" guidance, the conclusion reached was that the potential restrictions meant that it would not be possible to deliver the event in a COVID safe manner under the guidance available to us. We decided



that we will put this year behind us and come back strong next year with a full competition itinerary.

- 21/16.2** The regional open water event due to be held on 18 Jul 21 is cancelled. A provisional date of 10 Jul 22 is under discussion with the venue.

21/17 **Any other business**

- 21/17.1 There was no other business

21/18 **Confidential items**

- 21/18.1 There were none

21/19 **Next meeting**

- 21/19.1 The next meeting will take place on 21 October 2021 via Zoom.