

## Swim England East Region Minutes of the County Forum Meeting Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at 7.30pm, via Zoom

### In attendance:

Kevin Rumsey (KR)	Norfolk Chairman/Chairman of the meeting
Ian Mackenzie (IM)	Interim Regional Chairman
Ian Cotton (IC)	Suffolk Chairman
Chris Vinter (CV)	Suffolk Secretary
Nicola Phillips (NP)	Cambridgeshire Secretary
Gergely Kokas (GK)	Cambridgeshire Chairman
Sheila Mackenzie (SM)	Hertfordshire Secretary
Angela Equakhide (AE)	Essex Secretary
Also in attendance: James Salmon (JSa)	Regional Manager

- 25/01 **Apologies, welcome and introductions:**
- 25/0.01 KR welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced himself to the members as the Norfolk Chairman and chairman of the meeting.
- 25/01.2 Apologies received from Bryan Thompson (BT) Hertfordshire Chairman. Karen Woodhouse (KW) Norfolk Secretary sent her apologies after the meeting.
- 25/01.3 Gergely Kokas (GK) joined the meeting at 7.34pm and apologised for being late. Angela Equakhinde (AE) joined the meeting at 7.46pm.
- 25/02 **Declarations of conflict of interest:**
- 25/02.01 None declared.
- 25/03 **Previous minutes:**
- 25/03.01 The minutes from the meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024 had been circulated. No points were raised regarding the previous minutes.
- 25/04 **Matters arising:**
- 25/04.01 No matters arising were raised.
- 25/05 **Regional updates:**
- 25/05.01 IM reported that Emma Winter has returned from maternity leave, so the Region is back to full complement, which is good news. The annual calendar is on the website, showing all the dates of events and meetings.
- 25/05.2 IM mentioned that a G9 group has been created which consists of a representative from each of the eight regions and a representative from Swim England. The idea behind it is that there is an understanding and co-operation between the eight regions and Swim England so that there is one Swim England. The Regional Chairmen already meet on a regular basis, and now the operational side of the regions are getting together too.
- 25/05.3 IM reported that the Swim England's Strategy is in place, so now the Region is going to build their strategy from the basis of Swim England's, adding any local elements appropriately.
- 25/05.4 The Region has purchased a new music centre for Artistic Swimming as the one they had no longer works.
- 25/05.5 IM reported that Diving is having major issues at Southend. Two of their diving boards in the dry gym have been condemned and three diving boards in the pool area have been put on amber which means they only have a life of between three and six months and with them being £8,000 each, there is a massive replacement cost. IM has spoken to Andy Salmon (AS) Chief Executive

Officer of Swim England, and he is going to question, from Swim England's point of view, the operation of Dive Gym, who condemn and supply the boards

- 25/05.6 Water Polo National Age-Groups (NAGs) for the 17 and 19-year-olds started last weekend (15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> February 2025), with 42 teams entered across the Country and the finals in May 2025.
- 25/05.7 IM reported that the Regional Swimming Championships 2025 dates have now been advertised with the first weekend at the end of March. This does clash with an Artistic Swimming event at Stevenage on the Saturday. Branding needs to be at both events. So rather than only having one set of branding and moving it around the disciplines, each discipline needs their own branding
- 25/05.8 IM reported that several Masters clubs held open meets over the weekend (15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> February 2025). He attended the meet at Hemel Hempstead. It was a really good event, with over 60 teams/clubs taking part, and two European records were achieved. The pool does not have a measurement certificate at present, but IM has spoken with the general manager at the pool and with Loughborough and it is being progressed, and they aim to get it resolved.
- 25/05.9 IM reported on an interesting and productive meeting with the head of Para Swimming from Swim England. The regional meets this year will be held on different dates unlike last year.
- 25/05.10 IM reported that the Region's Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2025. IM asked that Counties send Jo Stalley (JSt) the names of their Members of the Members' Forum.
- 25/05.11 KR asked when the G9 will they meet. JSa confirmed that they met on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2025 and that they are planning on having meetings quarterly around four times a year. He will update the Forum with the relevant information from the meetings. The first meeting was mainly about how the group was going to operate and what the remit would be. They also touched on the Strategy as all the Regions now need to develop theirs based on that of Swim England.
- 25/05.12 KR asked if there is a timeline for the East Region's Strategy? IM reported that a group, chaired by Stewart Murray (SMu) will put together the basis of the Strategy which will then go to the Board of Directors.

GK asked if it is known when the input will be added. IM expected this to be soon, but changes are continuing following the appointment of Andy Salmon (AS) as Chief Executive Officer of Swim England. AS wants things to change for the better for the athlete and for the member, and is keeping the Regions updated with any changes.

25/06

#### **County updates:**

- 25/06.01 **Norfolk:** KR reported that Norfolk has now fulfilled all elements of the County Governance and that is now complete and accepted. The County Championships were held over the last few weeks. It all ran well. A new Welfare Officer is now in place and there is almost a full committee, so the County is in a good position with the committee members and Governance in place.
- 25/06.02 **Suffolk:** IC reported that the County Governance is in place. The County has not had a Welfare Officer for a couple of months but have found a volunteer to come on board. IC has informed Fran Vesztröcy (FV), Regional Welfare Officer, regarding the new Welfare Officer, and Fran will be able to support the new person. IC reported that their County Championships racing-wise went well but unfortunately there were several safeguarding issues, particularly during the first weekend involving a member of the public and the changing rooms. It was a challenge as the facility was still open to the public with half the facility being a leisure pool. The County, pool management and the Council all met after that weekend to put additional measures in place for the remainder of the Championships and the County will review for the long term to see what measure can be put in place particularly from point of view of a changing room which is shared with the public. IC reported that the County is relatively stable and once the new Welfare Officer is on board the County will have a full executive.

25/06.03 **Cambridgeshire:** NP reported that Cambridgeshire's County Governance is not complete yet, and that the initial couple of months have been dealing with the County Championships. NP and GK have been working towards getting on top of the Governance. The situation at the moment is that the compliance statements have been sent out and they are waiting for these to come back. NP is currently dealing with the County's constitution. The County's Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be in July.

GK asked if it was an issue if committee members do not have generic email addresses. He stated that the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer all have county email addresses, and that they are looking into using Google Workspace. IM suggested that, for the interim, until they can be set up, personal email addresses are used if the committee members are happy with that. A discussion took place regarding generic email accounts.

GK reported that the County had received positive feed-back from the County Championships. Observations points were mainly on the pools and the infrastructure. GK also reported a similar situation as Suffolk's where the venue still held swimming lessons while the County Championships were on. GK reported that some pool operators are reluctant to provide pool time when they have swimming lessons on. A discussion took place regarding pool operators and Councils and working with them to negotiate pool time.

KR suggested that if NP needed any help and support with their constitution, they speak to Chris Galer (CG) who deals with constitutions in the East Region. KR also offered support with County Governance and was sure that any of the other Counties who have completed theirs would be willingly to help wherever they can.

IM reported that Cambridgeshire have also held their Diving Championships and congratulated them on doing so.

GK reported that they are meeting all the Cambridgeshire clubs individually to understand their situations and their status so that a comprehensive data set can be put together, and find out what the County can start working on. GK also reported that Cambridgeshire has a Welfare Officer in place.

NP reported that Cambridgeshire have also established a Coaches' Forum to engage with the coaches across the County.

25/06.04 **Essex:** AE reported that Essex held their County Championships in January at the London Aquatic Centre (LAC). It was a very successful Championships, and the County has broken even on the budget. The 2026 County Championships will be held again at the LAC as Basildon pool is due to close in April. They are hoping to return to Basildon once it re-opens.

AE reported that Essex has a Welfare Officer in place, and they work closely with FV. County Governance is not completed yet and AE is working with Helen Weeks and her team at Swim England to get it completed for this first quarter.

AE also reported that they are setting up a Coaches Forum to gather their views with organising the County Championships and making sure their voices are heard. Essex currently provides a long course training session for their County's swimmers at Regional level. It is held at the LAC and will continue this season and into next season.

25/06.05 **Hertfordshire:** SM reported that they had very successful and well-received County Championships over four weekends. They have held their County Championships at Borehamwood for many years, but this year the County took a big step in finding a new pool, negotiating with the Council and managing to book Westminster Lodge. It is a much better facility with a 10-lane pool and opened up a lot more water time. The issue was space for the athletes. This is an ongoing issue for 2026.

SM reported that their County Governance is completed. They have their Annual Council Meeting (ACM) in March where there will be elections for new members. At present the County have a very depleted Management Board as it is very difficult to get people to engage and step up to roles.

25/06.06 **Bedfordshire:** PP reported that the County is just finishing off their new website and it will be up and running soon. All the County email addresses have been changed.

The County held their AGM in November 2024. There are a couple of vacant posts which are Water Polo and Synchro secretary. The Synchro club that was in Bedfordshire has now closed.

PP reported that they held their County Championships over three weekends. It went really well with no issues. A couple of sessions were a bit long so they will look at the qualifying times for 2026.

County Governance is completed.

## 25/07 **Club Affiliation and SwimMark update:**

25/07.01 JSa reported that the latest batch of clubs went through at the end of January. It was a particularly challenging quarter. There were 47 clubs all going through at once. Jo Stalley (JSt) assisted four struggling clubs to get them through. Unfortunately, clubs are not engaging early enough even though being advised three months ahead of the deadline. Clubs were leaving it to the last minute. A lot of the issues were around committees not necessarily understanding and following the club's constitution and clubs not having Safeguarding and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in place for the people who need them. The next batch of clubs will be notified at the end of this month and given their three months' notice for completion.

25/07.02 NP asked if a list could be provided to counties to identify which clubs are due for renewal. JSa advised that JSt supports the clubs through the process, but a list can be provided so that counties can help by reminding the clubs that they need to renew.

25/07.03 JSa advised that for SwimMark accredited clubs, the timescale for renewal remains the same, with three months' notice being given, even though SwimMark has been paused.

25/07.4 GK had been asked by the webmaster if he should start removing the SwimMark affiliations. JSa said that they should not remove them as if a club had SwimMark when this was paused, the club has still got it because there is no replacement. As far as websites are concerned the clubs can continue to say they are a SwimMark club.

IM asked JSa to send out the statement received from the development team at Swim England explaining the situation with SwimMark. It was confirmed that, at renewal, just the Club Affiliation sections of the process need to be completed.

## 25/08 **Any other business:**

25/08.01 JSa reported that Swim England are working on a new national coaching strategy, and all coaches and clubs should have been sent a questionnaire to fill out. There is a face-to-face meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025 in Cambridge. Coaches should be encouraged to fill out the questionnaire and attend the event if they can. It covers all disciplines, not just Swimming.

25/08.02 JSa reported that Emma Winter (EW) has returned to work and she has been contacting the County Presidents, inviting them to the regional events. JSa asked if the County Secretaries and Chairmen could kindly remind them to let EW know if they can attend or not.

PP informed JSa that they are having issues with their President's email address, so if EW would like to send him the email PP can forward it on.

KR suggested that EW sends the email invite to all County Secretaries as well as to the County Presidents.

25/08.03 JSa asked that Cambridgeshire, Essex and Norfolk send the names of their Members of the Members Forum to him by the end of the month.

JSa explained to GK that the Members of the Members' Forum are county representatives who vote at the Region's AGM. An email went out with all the information on but this can re-sent if needed.

25/09 **Confidential items:**

25/09.01 None

25/10 **Future meetings:**

25/10.01 KR put himself forward to chair future meetings. Everyone was happy to agree to this.

25/10.02 Next meeting - 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025 at 7.30pm.