

Swim England East Region
Minutes of the Open Water Swimming Leadership Group Meeting
1st October 2024, 7pm via Zoom

Present	Paul Kendall (PK)	Manager
	Stewart Murray (SMu)	Director Representative
	Ian Murray (IM)	Bedfordshire Representative
	Jacqui Kendall (JK)	Norfolk Representative
	Helen Stephens (HS)	Essex Representative
	Stephen Westwood (SW)	Specialist
	Marion Westwood (MW)	Specialist

Also present James Salmon, Regional Manager (JSa)

24/24 Apologies

- 24/24.1 PK welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending.
- 24/24.2 Apologies for absence were received from Sara Matthews (SM).
- 24/24.3 IM joined the meeting at 7.53pm.

24/25 Declarations of conflict of interest

- 24/25.1 No conflicts of interest were declared.

24/26 Previous minutes

- 24/26.1 Minutes from the meeting held on 21st May 2024 were circulated prior to the meeting.

24/27 Matters arising

- 24/27.1 No matters arising

24/28 Open Water Championships 2024 - Feedback

- 24/28.1 PK reported that the preparations and the events had gone very well. He thanked everyone for their help, especially thanking HS, MW and SW.
- 24/28.2 PK commented that, from a resource and delivery perspective, the event was very successful. No negative feedback had been received, and the competitors seemed to have thoroughly enjoyed the event.
- 24/28.3 HS reported difficulties in managing parents who wanted to enter the changing rooms with their swimmers to see if hired wet suits fitted.

This was acknowledged as a safeguarding issue which needs addressing in future as people without a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check must not be in the changing rooms.

- 24/28.4 Preventing people without a pass being able to access the deck has to be managed better. Moving the location of the event control desk to slightly after the paying pod, and having more barrier ribbon would help.

SW suggested tightening up the entrance control to have more ribbon and moving the event control desk to bring it slightly after the paying pod to prevent people accessing the deck. Unauthorised access to the deck must be prevented, as this is a safeguarding issue.

- 24/28.5 The adequacy of the changing facilities was discussed. In past years they were adequate, but the change of circumstances which required the use of wetsuits this year meant there was not enough provision for changing. It was agreed that this needs consideration in planning for next year.

- 24/28.6 SW suggested using red and white barriers to control the access and having a barrier for people to go through after getting the wetsuit from the shop.

- 24/28.7 In summing up, PK stated that the control of access onto the decking needs to be improved so that it is more secure.

- 24/28.8 PK reported on a post-event debrief held on 29th July between East Region representatives and London Region representatives to discuss how the event went.

- 24/28.9 JK summarised the meeting.

London Region was grateful for the opportunity given to London swimmers to travel to Norfolk to try to qualify for Nationals.

All agreed to the need for additional volunteer support with the results process.

Agreement was made that for future events, the results personnel should be located in pod one with the Race Timing Solutions staff members to enable closer communication between them and to protect them from any interruptions.

- 24/28.10 PK confirmed it had been a productive meeting that identified a need to have a process in place for creating the results. He said that interruptions and pressure from outside the pods to get the results was an issue.

PK stated that no county representative will be allowed to access the pod at next year's event, and results will be issued when they are ready.

24/28.11 SW reiterated a comment he had made during the debrief meeting regarding the amount of pressure placed on the small number of people who organise the event. Further support is needed from other people and volunteers.

24/28.12 It was suggested that it would be a good idea to identify who will process the results next year, and give them time to practise with last year's results so that they are prepared. This was agreed.

24/28.13 It was questioned whether the results issue was caused by a lack of experience in the manipulation of the data or whether there was an issue with the format of the data. PK responded it has to be manipulated in a certain sequence into the format which is suitable for presentation to the counties.

PK mentioned the need for due diligence with judges and the Race Timing Solutions results side by side so that the order is not missed in the correct format.

24/28.14 JK also mentioned there were problems producing something to pin up on the notice board for parents and those on the bank to see the results.

24/28.15 PK was suggested for the role of producing the results next year.

PK responded that moving the roles around should be considered, and in any case, he would not be able to do it on his own - it would need at least two pairs of eyes.

SW said that it is something to take forward and start looking at.

24/28.16 PK reported that there was a shortfall of officials on the day due to a number of people who were unavailable at short notice.

24/28.17 JK mentioned that the rest of the event went incredibly well.
The new system with the van worked well.
The clearing up at the end went very well, with apparently more people helping.
The figures have come in and look really good.

24/28.18 PK raised a comment from an individual that they had observed a swimmer competing in what they thought was an invalid wetsuit design. He mentioned that owing to not being strict enough in the provided pre-event information by providing pictures etc. as to what would be acceptable, the swimmers competed in what they had. He did not believe that it affected the validity of the swim or provided any advantage. He said the matter highlighted the need to produce visual indication in next year's competitors' briefing pack of what is acceptable, with an image being provided as part of the conditions. He

raised it as something that needs to be put out at national level and in other regions.

PK said the need for a wetsuit was overcome on the day by people borrowing from the venue if necessary, but that those borrowed were not designed for swimming, and this potentially put those using them at a disadvantage.

24/28.19 SW reported that parking this year was the worst ever experienced.

JK has talked with Graham from Whitlingham about the car parking. A new company have taken over the parking, leading to stricter parking rules and the available space for parking being considerably reduced. Graham suggested contacting Whitlingham Charities to see if the field on the opposite side of the road can be hired.

SW also mentioned that the field was unavailable because of the weather, and the overflow car park was not available as quickly as needed, leading to people parking as they wished.

24/29

2024 Plan and Budget

24/29.1 PK did not have an update on the budget.

24/29.2 PK believed the income over the year to be £20,486.20. Actual expenditure for the year was £17,212.42. There was a profit this year of £3,273.78. PK confirmed that all the invoices had been submitted and payments made.

24/29.3 Items reported included that the refreshments did well, making £360, Fine Designs clothing made a profit, and a healthy profit was made on coach passes. There was another around £300 on the participation fee for the Development Lake event participation fee. There was a higher number of participants than was forecast.

24/29.4 The officials pre-ordering their food worked well. It was noted that the volunteers, officials, safety officers and staff were fed for free because the barbeque made a good profit and this covered overspending on the refreshment budget, whilst still leaving a profit.

PK confirmed that next year's budget for refreshments had been increased slightly.

24/29.5 PK said that arranging hotel rooms, rather than paying accommodation expenses worked well, as more people helped with set-up and drawdown.. This process will be used again next year.

24/29.6 PK had drawn up a rough budget for the coming year based on the results of this year and the knowledge of expectations for next year.

- 24/29.7 SW asked for the traffic management course he needs to attend to be added. SW will send details to PK.
- 24/29.8 The county charge will be £300 next year, as agreed, and this will be included in the budget.
- 24/29.9 PK confirmed that the electronic timing equipment is hired from Race Timing Solutions and is included in the expenditure under timing. PK confirmed the February payment is the deposit, followed by the balance.
- 24/29.10 JK mentioned that the hire of the toilets also requires a deposit and final payment, and the quote for next year falls within the amount budgeted.
- 24/29.11 Concern was raised about the quality of the radios used. JK will follow this up with the hirer.
- 24/29.12 The cost of the guest speaker for the development session was discussed and advice on this will be sought from regional staff.
- 24/29.13 The purchase/ hire of barriers was discussed. Also discussed was their storage and potential use by other disciplines in the Region.
- 24/29.14 Taking into account discussions in this meeting, the budget will be submitted to the Region.

24/30

Open water plans 2025

- 24/30.1 With regard to the development of swimmers in general, PK would like to see every County in the Region providing a development event in their own County, but with joint events if this is not possible.
- PK would still like to offer regional development to the younger and less experienced swimmers to steer them towards success at Nationals after the regional event.
- 24/30.2 PK reported that despite there not being a great number of successes at Nationals this year, the Region had representation across all distances and all age-groups, with most qualifying from the Regional Championships.
- The following swimmers were mentioned:
Talia Staines, second in her age-group for the 7.5 km; Ryan Wall, third in his age-group for the 7.5 km; and Jasmine Hall, second in her age-group for the 5km.
- 24/30.3 SMu asked whether the intent next year was to have a 5 km at regional level and a 7.5 km nationally. PK responded that the format was discussed prior to Nationals, but no one had been able to answer the question of why the distances are different.

- 24/30.4 At a meeting about Nationals, PK had commented that there should have been provision for the 12-year-olds at the Nationals to swim a shorter distance.
- 24/30.5 With regard to advice of any planned changes in distances for next year, PK stated that it was unlikely that the Regions would be asked to increase the distances they fulfil without some formal consultation process.
- 24/30.6 The date of next year's event was confirmed as 13th July 2025.
Dates for the other Regions' events are:-
Midlands and South West – 22nd June 2025
South East – 29th June 2025
London – 6th July 2025

North West and North East – 5th July 2025

24/31

Any other business

- 24/31.1 PK will still be responsible for delivering some training programmes for officials' development. There are three people who would like to do the referee training. PK needs to work out how to deliver the training, as currently there is no structure for this. Some resources from the poolside referee training could be used.

- 24/31.2 SW raised the matter of the country no longer having any form of open water sea swim, despite there being interest. Swim England have not responded to the idea, but it is supported by some senior officials and at least one other Region.

PK said that likely costs would have to be investigated for venue hire, local authority rental of space, and costs for safety cover in the water and on land.

Possible venues were discussed. The event would be in addition to the Regional Championships and not in replacement thereof. It could potentially be used for a longer event like a 10km, as currently there is no competitive 10km Swim England event in the country.

Investigations will be made.

24/32

Confidential items

- 24/32.1 There were none.

24/33

Next meeting

- 24/33.1 The next meeting will be on Tuesday 4th February 2025 at 7pm.

