



Swim England East Region
Minutes of the Artistic Swimming Leadership Group Meeting
14th March 2026 at 10am, via Zoom

Present: Amy Davis (AD)	Swim England East Region Artistic Swimming Manager
Sheila Mackenzie (SM)	Swim England East Region Director
Kath Downes (KD)	Norwich
Emily Gower (EG)	Norwich
Laura Neary (LN)	Chelmsford
Helen Poletti-Taylor (HPT)	Potters Bar
Olivia Taylor (OT)	Potters Bar

- 26/01 Welcome and apologies**
- 26/01.1 AD welcomed everyone to the meeting.
 - 26/01.2 Apologies received from Karen Brennan (KB), Aqualina, Tom Brennan (TB), Aqualina, Amy Bryant (AB), Hatfield, Emma Chapman (EC), Dacorum, and Emma Winter (EW), Regional Administrator.
- 26/02 Declarations of conflict of interest**
- 26/02.1 There were no declarations of conflict of interest.
- 26/03 Previous minutes**
- 26/03.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 8th November 2025 had been circulated and were agreed as a correct record.
- 26/04 Plan and Budget 2025/2026**
- 26/04.1 AD reported that the plan and budget for 2026 is very much on target to date. A profit had been made from both the February competition and the January grading day, which was pleasing.
 - 26/04.2 AD noted that the March competition would be a smaller event and would 'hit' the budget slightly, but that this would be recovered across the remainder of the year. AD was not concerned about this position.

26/04.3 AD confirmed that all competitions and grading days for the year had been set as part of the plan agreed in the previous year and reminded the Group about the upcoming events.

Action: AD to circulate the grading day entry forms during the weekend following the meeting

26/04.4 AD reported a delay in the delivery of grading certificates. Certificates had been ordered in January but had not yet arrived. AD advised that Swim England were rebranding, and this may have contributed to the delay. Grading stickers for bronze, silver, and gold were also outstanding. The Group was assured that nothing had been forgotten, and that EW was chasing the delivery. AD expected that the certificates would be available in time for the next grading day.

26/05 **Grading days 2026**

26/05.1 AD confirmed that the next grading day is scheduled for Sunday 10th May 2026, at Hemel Hempstead. AD advised that she intended to circulate entry forms during the weekend following the meeting.

26/05.2 AD advised that she had considerable pool time booked. She would send the forms asking clubs to indicate their requirements, and then she would plan judging arrangements around the entries received.

26/05.3 The following grading day is provisionally scheduled for 18th July 2026. AD confirmed that she still needed to finalise the venue booking but wanted to have a date in the diary.

The confirmed 2026 grading day calendar is:

- 10th May 2026 (Hemel Hempstead – confirmed)
- 18th July 2026 (Venue to be confirmed)
- 7th/8th November 2026
- 5th/6th December 2026

Action: AD to circulate entry forms for the 10th May grading day over the weekend following the meeting.

26/06 **Competitions for 2026**

26/06.1 AD provided an update on the 2026 competition programme:

- February competition (Stevenage) – completed. AD reported that it had gone well overall and invited feedback from those present.
- 21st March 2026 (next week) – 15 years and over solos/duets; Acrobatic teams; Combos; and Masters' Tech events. AD confirmed that this is a smaller competition and should run more quickly than the February event.
- 13th June 2026 – Ungraded figures; Combos; Masters' Tech solos/duet
- October 2026 (provisional date) – Grade 1+ figures; solos/duets, all ages; Masters' Free, subject to demand

26/06.2 **Feedback on the February 2026 competition**

The February competition was discussed in detail. The Group provided observations and suggestions for future planning.



1. Scheduling of figures presentation and routines

EG asked if it would be possible to schedule the figures presentation before the routines start. This would be better for athletes not doing routines, and younger swimmers would not have a long waiting time.

AD confirmed that this had originally been planned — figures were to be completed, followed by the presentation ceremony, with routines afterwards. However, the high volume of entries meant that AD became concerned about overrunning the pool booking time, and the presentation was moved. AD also had to book an additional half-hour of pool time.

AD agreed that this was not an ideal situation and suggested that, when planning next year's competition schedule, some figures elements could potentially be moved from February into the March competition, which typically runs more efficiently.

AD also considered scheduling routines first as an alternative, subject to the logistical need to qualify solo results before the routines start. The suggestion of moving ungraded figures to March was also raised and discussed favourably.

2. Growth of the February competition

HPT noted that the February competition is likely to grow further in future years. She reported that the National Age-Groups competition had increased in size by approximately one third, clubs now having caught up with age-group grading requirements following COVID recovery.

AD acknowledged this and agreed that scheduling arrangements would need to be reviewed for future years, with decisions to be made once the March competition had concluded and its timings had been assessed.

3. Behaviour in the shower areas

AD raised a concern regarding the state of the changing and shower areas following the February competition. Hair, gel, nose clips, shampoo, and other personal items had been left behind, causing the pool site manager to raise a complaint. A lifeguard and AD had been required to clear the showers.

AD requested that team managers remind swimmers and parents to collect personal belongings from the shower areas at the forthcoming March competition, noting that failure to improve the situation may result in showers being closed to competitors. The Group was asked to relay this message to their swimmers and team managers.

Action: All club representatives to remind swimmers and team managers about keeping shower areas clean and clear at the March competition.

4. Use of the training room

AD advised that the training room at the venue (the room used for meetings) would be booked between 2pm and 5pm at the March competition. Swimmers wishing to walk through their routines should use this room rather than the changing village, as noise from the changing areas carries to poolside and interferes with the music being played for other competitors.

AD confirmed that this would be communicated again the following week.



5. Noise levels at poolside

KD reported that at the February competition, the level of noise from spectators supporting their teams was extremely disruptive to the judging panel. One judge on the panel stated that she felt physically unwell as a result of the volume of screaming.

AD agreed that this was a serious concern and thanked KD for raising it. AD acknowledged the difficulty of discouraging enthusiastic support without dampening the atmosphere but confirmed that the impact on judges' ability to concentrate and score accurately was unacceptable.

AD suggested that supporters be encouraged to move to the boom end of the pool, further away from the judging panel, to reduce the immediate impact of crowd noise. EG agreed that this would be beneficial.

AD confirmed that she would include this message in the team manager communication ahead of the March competition.

Action: AD to include clear guidance in team manager communications prior to the March competition: (a) supporters should be reminded to move to the boom/far end of the pool when cheering; (b) shower areas must be left clean; (c) the training room is available for routine walk-throughs.

6. Need for additional judges

KD reported that the Region is desperately short of judges and asked if any progress has been made on recruiting or training additional judges.

AD confirmed that she had emailed Jenny Gray regarding availability to judge at the March competition but had not yet received a response.

AD had also checked the Swim England website that morning and confirmed that there were no Level 1, Level 2, or any officials' training courses currently listed. AD agreed to follow up with Andrea and Serena (Swim England National Officials) directly.

Action: AD to contact Andrea and Serena (Swim England National Officials) regarding judge recruitment and upcoming officials' courses.

26/06.3

Level 3 judges not invited to NAGs

HPT raised a concern regarding judging representation at the National Age-Groups (NAGs) competition the previous weekend.

HPT reported that Level 3 judging at NAGs is invitation-only, and that the East Region had not been represented at all.

HPT noted that KB had volunteered but was not selected, and LN confirmed that she had not been invited either, despite both being long-standing Level 3 judges.

AD explained that selection for national events such as NAGs is normally made via an email contact invite using a list held by Swim England. East Region judges had not been contacted despite there being four Level 3 judges in the Region.

AD expressed surprise that Level 2 judges had apparently not been considered, given they are qualified to judge figures.



AD also noted the possibility of a bias in selection towards certain clubs or Regions. SM offered to investigate further and, if necessary, escalate the matter to seek a fairer and more transparent selection process.

The Group considered the absence of East Region Level 3 judges at NAGs to be a matter of concern requiring follow-up with Swim England National.

Action: SM to investigate the invitation process and to explore escalating the matter to ensure that East Region judges are appropriately included in future national events.

26/07

Officials' courses

26/07.1

AD reported that the Institute of Swimming (IoS) had been in contact with AB regarding the demand for Coach courses in the Region.

AB had indicated that she did not believe that there was sufficient demand at present.

AD asked the club representatives to consider whether any of their swimmers or parents wished to undertake an Assistant Coach or Level 1 Coach qualification, and asked those interested to contact either AD or AB directly, so that the need for a course in 2026 could be assessed.

AD noted that an immediate option is available. There is a Level 1 Coach course in Guildford, commencing on 13th April 2026, with a closing date of 1st April 2026 for application. This course is being organised by Louise Ross. AD offered to forward further details to any interested party.

Action: Club representatives to notify AD of any interest in Coach courses (Assistant Coach / Level 1 Coach) so that demand can be assessed for a potential regional course.

26/07.2

HPT ask if the 'Introduction to Judging' online course is free of charge.

AD confirmed that on the Swim England IoS website the course appears to be free of charge. It takes approximately 60-90 minutes, can be completed over multiple sessions, and does not confer a formal qualification. It provides a basic introduction to what is involved in judging and is a prerequisite before undertaking a Level 1 Judging course.

AD encouraged all clubs with potential judge candidates to direct them to this resource as a starting point.

26/07.3

AD noted that she is hoping to put on a Scorers / Chief Recorder course in the Region before the June competition, provisionally around 23rd May – 6th June 2026. The course is expected to require in-person attendance.

AD invited the club representatives to gauge interest from their swimmers, parents, and helpers and to provide numbers.

AD stated that the scoring role is an accessible and engaging way for older swimmers to remain involved in competition. The minimum age requirement is 16years.

Action: Club representatives to advise AD of potential candidates for the Scorers / Chief Recorder course (minimum age 16), so that numbers can be



confirmed and arrangements finalised.

26/07.4 AD confirmed that she would continue to pursue Jenny Gray regarding judging at the March competition, and separately regarding availability for a Level 1 Judge course in the Region.

26/08 Regional Games

26/08.1 AD reported that the Regional Games programme had continued positively, with one further training session planned for May before the competition date of 29th May 2026.

In TB and JW's absence, HPT reported on the most recent session.

The 12 years and under swimmers had been invited to join the last couple of sessions. This went well.

Jane White is assisting TB with the coaching of the group.

HPT noted that the sessions had become quite large, with approximately 10 swimmers per coach, which was putting pressure on both the available pool space and the coaching resource. HPT suggested that a little more structure and additional coaching support may be needed.

AD acknowledged that having a large number of swimmers was a 'nice problem to have' but agreed that the coach-to-swimmer ratio and use of pool space needed to be reviewed with TB ahead of the final session and in planning for future years.

Action: AD to follow up with TB and JW following the meeting to discuss the Regional Games training arrangements, including coach-to-swimmer ratios and pool space management.

26/09 Any other business

26/09.1 AD confirmed that the running order and officials' information for the March competition would be circulated during the following week, subject to confirmation from LN.

AD requested that swimmers arrive at approximately 1:45pm with their hair done, if possible, though confirmed that this was not essential.

26/09.2 Masters' judging rules: AD noted that she had seen communications regarding changes to masters' judging rules, with an indication that masters' rules may be aligning with mainstream artistic swimming rules in 2027. This had led to some uncertainty about whether ongoing masters'-specific judging training was worthwhile. EG confirmed that the rule change was expected next year.

AD said she would seek clarification from National Officials.

Action: AD to seek clarification from National Officials regarding the timetable for masters' judging rule changes and their implications for ongoing judge training.

26/10 Confidential items

26/10.1 There were none.



26/11

Next meeting

26/11.1

The dates of the meetings for 2026 were set as below: -

- 6th June 2026
- 12th September 2026
- 14th November 2026

DRAFT