

Swim England East Region
Minutes of the Masters' Leadership Group Meeting
4th February 2026 at 6.30pm, via Zoom

Present:

Douglas Drake (DD)	Manager
Gerry Metcalf (GM)	Swim England East Region Director
Marianne Phoenix (MP)	Representative
Lucy Ryan (LR)	Representative
Liz Woolner (LW)	Representative

Also present: Emma Winter (EW), Regional Administrator

26/01 Apologies and introductions

26/01.1 No apologies were received.

26/02 Declarations of conflict of interest

26/02.1 No declarations of conflict of interest were received.

26/03 Previous minutes

26/03.1 The minutes from the meeting held on 1st December 2025 were reviewed.
The minutes were agreed and accepted by all members present.

26/04 Matters arising

26/04.1 No matters arising were identified which were not already covered in the agenda.

26/05 Budget 2026

26/05.1 DD reported that the 2026 budget had been submitted to and approved by the Region. The budget is based on the previous year's figures with a 5% increase applied to each item.

GM explained the budget process to LR. The Masters Leadership Group submits an annual budget estimating costs. The Inter-Counties has been budgeted for, based on the profit from the Championships. The Group can request additional budget allocation if needed but must justify it.

26/06

Development Plan and Competition Plan

26/06.1

Masters Open Water Development Day:

DD reported that the Open Water Development Day is scheduled for Saturday, 6th June 2026 at Stanborough Lakes. At the time of the meeting, 23 Masters swimmers had expressed interest in attending.

When asked how many participants were needed, GM clarified that EW had stated that a minimum of 20 participants was required for the event to run, with 30 being the ideal number. GM confirmed that with 23 expressions of interest, the event was viable.

EW confirmed that with 23 expressions of interest already received, the event could proceed, leaving approximately 5-7 additional places available.

EW confirmed that the maximum capacity is 30 owing to the limited size of the classroom facility at Stanborough Lakes.

LW suggested that if additional participants were needed closer to the date, the event could be advertised on the unofficial British Masters Swimming platform, which would likely attract swimmers from London.

DD agreed that this was a good contingency plan, noting Stanborough Lakes' accessibility from the M25 for London-area swimmers.

26/06.2

The Group agreed to proceed with the Open Water Development Day on 6th June 2026.

Action: EW to email the 23 individuals who had expressed interest with payment details and sign-up link

26/06.3

Swim England East Region Masters Inter-Counties

The Group discussed the Inter-Counties competition scheduled for Sunday, 15th November 2026. DD noted that the 2025 event at Biggleswade had been an improvement from the previous venue (Bury St Edmunds) and that feedback from the Essex County team was positive.

DD and LW expressed a desire for a higher quality venue comparable to those used by other Regions, noting that London Region holds their Inter-Counties at London Aquatics Centre (LAC).

Following LW's email request to explore better venue options, EW reported on pool hire quotes obtained:

- Basildon: £1,720 for 5 hours
- UEA: £1,757 for 5 hours (price expected to increase in April)
- Luton: Awaiting response

For comparison, EW confirmed that Biggleswade costs £1,000, plus £250 for electronic timing hire. Newmarket's current hire cost is £641.10 - £115.50 per hour for the whole pool hire, based on five hours, plus potential additional costs for duty manager and lifeguard if the event runs beyond 4pm. If kept within operating hours (until 4pm), the cost would be even cheaper. However, EW cautioned that Newmarket prices are also subject to increases.

The Group discussed other potential venues.

Braintree: Used previously for Inter-Counties. Free parking (6 hours) but Christmas shopping crowds were problematic. Issues with wet swimmers

using stairs and the lack of a microphone for safety briefings. The results system had temporary problems.

Mildenhall: Good pool but only 150 spectator capacity - insufficient for the event.

Bury St Edmunds: Used three times previously. Only six lanes. Technical officials refused to return as the pool is not fit for purpose for modern swimming.

Ipswich Crown Pools: Not ideal as starting blocks had to be moved to the deep end (spectator end). Seating behind blocks but along one side.

Hatfield: Used for Arena League. Cannot directly access spectator area from poolside. LW suggested investigating further and speaking with Arena League participants.

GM raised the important issue that Swim England is unlikely to provide the usual subsidy for the Inter-Counties in 2026.

DD raised the suggestion that counties contribute towards pool hire.

GM clarified that, for the Swim England East Region Open Water event, counties are required to contribute to the running costs where their championships are included.

A contribution of £250 per county for the Inter-Counties was therefore considered not unrealistic. GM noted, however, that the financial position of each county differs.

LW asked when a decision on the Swim England funding would be confirmed. EW offered to email Swim England to find out.

Action: EW to email Swim England to determine whether the usual £1,000 Swim England subsidy for Inter-Counties will be available in 2026

Action: Representatives to approach county treasurers to request contributions towards Inter-Counties pool hire costs

Action: EW to obtain additional pool hire quotes from other venues including Hatfield and any other suitable facilities

Action: EW to compile all venue quotes (pool hire and additional costs such as tea/coffee for officials and officials' expenses) into a spreadsheet for Group review

26/06.4

Swim England East Region Masters Championship 2026

The Group discussed dates for the 2026 East Region Masters Championships. Two dates were ruled out - 4th October 2026 (clashes with the Swim England National Inter-Counties Championships) and 27th September 2026 (Swim England East Region Para event).

LW asked if 20th September 2026 was being considered and whether a Saturday would be possible. EW explained that Saturday bookings are problematic as many venues have learn-to-swim lessons on Saturday mornings and would require payment to cover loss of income from those lessons. EW confirmed that Newmarket and Basildon cannot be booked before 2pm on Saturdays.

DD asked GM if there were any age-group events on 20th September which would take officials away. GM confirmed that there were only club meets; nothing that would significantly impact officials' availability. GM noted the need to avoid the regional Para meet on 27th September.

The Group had previously considered Mildenhall but ruled it out because of insufficient poolside seating (150 capacity as against 200 entrants in 2025).

The Group agreed to hold the East Region Masters Championships on Sunday, 20th September 2026 at Newmarket Leisure Centre.

MP raised concerns about parking and warm-up/warm-down pool availability at Newmarket, which were issues noted in previous meetings. EW confirmed that she would enquire about using the Academy car park adjacent to the leisure centre once a date is confirmed, potentially avoiding the need for the rugby club car park arrangement. EW also confirmed that the warm-up/warm-down pool would be included in the booking.

DD confirmed he would be the promoter and prepare the conditions but cannot manage the entries. EW confirmed that the regional staff would support with processing of the entries.

Action: EW to contact Newmarket Leisure Centre to confirm availability for 20th September 2026 (noting that the venue has been slow to respond recently)

Action: Once the date is confirmed with the pool, EW to contact the Academy about car park availability and any associated costs

26/07

County matters and updates from representatives

26/07.1

MP gave feedback on the proposed new format for the Masters Leadership Group (transitioning from county representatives to six active Masters volunteers, as discussed in December meeting 25/47.2).

MP raised concerns about capping the number of volunteers at six. If all the volunteers came from one county this could be seen by others as unfair. Also, there could be a problem if volunteers from the same county disagreed with a decision.

DD clarified that this proposal arose from the December meeting discussion about difficulties in securing county representatives and the need for broader participation. The Group noted ongoing challenges with representative participation, particularly from Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, and Suffolk.

MP asked whether county representatives would be eliminated under the new structure. GM confirmed that this was so. The plan would be to have willing volunteers rather than designated county representatives.

GM explained the rationale. The Group is struggling to get county representatives, so transitioning to interested volunteers regardless of county affiliation would help to ensure participation.

26/07.2 **Cambridgeshire**

LR provided an update on Cambridgeshire Masters activities. LR explained that she had recently volunteered as the Cambridgeshire Masters representative and noted that many Masters swimmers do not strongly identify with county affiliation, often swimming for clubs registered in different counties.

LR reported that a coach, John Burling (JB), has been organising approximately monthly training sessions for Cambridgeshire Masters, offering free coached pool sessions rotated across various pools and times. The purpose was to build sufficient interest and participants to field a Cambridgeshire Inter-Counties team. This was successfully achieved in 2025. The county did not participate in 2024.

JB continues to run these sessions with the goal of ensuring that Cambridgeshire can field a team for the Inter-Counties in November 2026. The Cambridgeshire County Executive has subsidised pool hire costs for these sessions as an approved initiative.

LR also reported that the Cambridgeshire Executive has struggled significantly and continues to have difficulty filling critical volunteer roles, though the recent new leadership (from about 18 months ago) has reinvigorated the county organisation.

26/08

Any other business

26/08.1 MP raised a matter of event promotion. Representatives were asked to ensure that clubs in their respective counties list events on the National Masters Calendar at swimming.org/calendar. This provides free advertising and helps spread awareness of local events.

LR queried whether all Masters meets in the East Region should be listed on the National Masters Calendar. MP confirmed this was the intention.

Action: Representatives to encourage clubs to list their Masters events on the National Masters Calendar at swimming.org/calendar

26/08.2 LW raised the issue of Decathlon awards for 2025. The annual awards run from January to December.

LW asked EW to confirm which awards were given in 2024. EW confirmed: that there were trophies for the top male and female individuals (perpetual trophies), and medals for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place for the male and female teams. EW believed that the 3rd place team awards from 2024 were not collected and remain in the storeroom.

LW noted that nationally, the Decathlon now includes a mixed team category (Two males and two females) and proposed aligning the regional awards with this format.

The Group discussed award options. MP suggested having trophies for first placed teams, and medals for second and third places. This would be more cost-effective than perpetual trophies for teams. LW agreed with this approach.

The Group discussed whether to obtain perpetual trophies for the top male, the top female and the top mixed teams. EW confirmed she could obtain quotes from the current supplier.

The Group agreed to:

- 1) Add a mixed team category to Decathlon awards (Two males and two females) to align with national competition
- 2) Award trophies to the first placed teams and medals to second and third placed teams for the male, the female, and the mixed categories
- 3) Continue using perpetual trophies for the top male and the top female individuals
- 4) Explore obtaining perpetual trophies for the top teams (male, female, mixed).

Action: LW to send EW the Decathlon results for the top male individual, the top female individual, and the top three teams in male, female, and mixed categories

Action: EW to obtain quotes for three perpetual trophies (for the male team, the female team and the mixed team) matching the style of the existing individual perpetual trophies

26/08.3 LW suggested an update to the name in the Terms of Reference to be more explicit about the Region.

The Group agreed to update the name to Swim England East Region Masters Leadership Team, or similar, to make the regional affiliation explicit.

Action: EW to update the Terms of Reference with the revised name.

26/09

Confidential items

26/09.1 No confidential items were raised.

26/10

Next meeting

26/10.1 The Group agreed that the next meeting will take place Wednesday 1st April 2026 at 19:00, via Zoom.

Future meeting dates will be set on a meeting-by-meeting basis owing to scheduling constraints.