



Swim England East Region
Minutes of the Masters' Leadership Group Meeting
1st April 2026 at 7pm, via Zoom

Present:

Douglas Drake (DD)	Manager
Gerry Metcalf (GM)	Swim England East Region Director
Caroline Cofield (CC)	Representative
Kelly Clarke (KC)	Representative
Ryan Kelly (RK)	Representative
Marianne Phoenix (MP)	Representative
Lucy Ryan (LR)	Representative
Liz Woolner (LW)	Representative

Also present: Emma Winter (EW), Regional Administrator

- 26/11 Apologies and introductions**
- 26/11.1 No apologies were received.
- 26/12 Declarations of conflict of interest**
- 26/12.1 No declarations of conflict of interest were received.
- 26/13 Previous minutes**
- 26/13.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 4th February 2026 were shared on screen by EW.
DD confirmed that the matters arising from those minutes — including the Swim England subsidy, the Masters Championships date, and the Open Water Development Day — were all covered within the agenda for this meeting and would be addressed under the relevant items.
- 26/13.2 The minutes of the meeting held on 4th February 2026 were agreed and accepted.
- 26/14 Matters arising**
- 26/14.1 EW confirmed that all outstanding action points from the February 2026 minutes would be covered within the agenda. No additional matters arising were identified.
- 26/15 Budget 2026**

- 26/15.1 The Group discussed the budget position, noting this had been approved at the February meeting based on the previous year's figures with a 5% uplift.
- 26/15.2 MP reported that she had spoken to Keith Belton (KB), the Swim England East Region Finance Manager, in relation to the Swim England £1,000 subsidy for the Inter-Counties. KB had indicated that, if the funding was not coming directly from Swim England, the matter should be brought to a Regional Board. He had been non-committal about whether funds could be drawn from the East Region budget.
- EW advised that she had received confirmation directly from Swim England regarding the subsidy and would provide a full update later in the meeting – see minute 26/16.1.
- 26/15.3 LW asked how much is made typically at the Masters Championships, noting that this was important for budget planning.
- EW confirmed that in 2025 the Masters Championship generated a surplus of £1,260, based on income of £7,450 and expenditure of £6,190.
- 26/15.4 LW asked what else the Masters budget is spent on beyond the Inter-Counties.
- EW confirmed that the other main expenditure is the Open Water Development Day. As it is a joint event with the Open Water Leadership Group, the Masters pays one third of the venue hire costs and one third of the coaching costs.
- 26/15.5 LW asked whether the Development Day breaks even if 30 participants pay £40 each.
- EW confirmed that this should be the case.
- 26/15.6 LW noted that it is important to know the total available budget before committing to a venue for the Inter-Counties, as this will determine which pools are financially viable.
- 26/16 Development Plan and Competition Plan**
- 26/16.1 **Swim England East Region Masters Inter-Counties — Sunday 15th November 2026**
- DD noted that the date for the Inter-Counties had moved to Sunday 15th November 2026, and that a venue had not yet been confirmed.
- EW confirmed that she had emailed Jerome Peters (JP) and spoken with Katya Boyd (KBd), Head of Events at Swim England. KBd confirmed that a contribution of up to £1,000 towards pool hire costs will be provided for 2026. The position for 2027 onwards is not yet confirmed. EW will follow up.
- RK asked whether the £1,000 grant was per county or for the East Region as a whole.
- EW confirmed that it is £1,000 for the East Region as a whole, specifically towards the hire of the pool for the Inter-Counties.
- DD reported that Essex County had confirmed a contribution of £250 towards pool hire, bringing the confirmed funding to £1,250 before entry income from the Championships is taken into account.

26/16.1.1 Venue search

EW reported on the current position regarding pool hire enquiries for the Inter-Counties:

- Basildon: Quoted £1,720 for 5 hours
- University of East Anglia (UEA, Norwich): Quoted £1,757 for 5 hours (price subject to increase in April — EW to confirm current price).
- Luton: Confirmed unavailable.
- Braintree (now Freedom Leisure): Awaiting response — EW has lost her original contact following the management change.
- Parkside, Cambridge: Enquiry submitted — awaiting response. Noted by EW that parking may be an issue (multi-storey). LR noted that Cambridgeshire holds county championships there and that pool costs can be high on Sundays because of needing to buy out the diving/training sessions.
- Woodside, Watford: Enquiry submitted — awaiting response.
- Hatfield: EW spoke with Ian Mackenzie, who advised that Hatfield would not be suitable for the Masters Inter-Counties.
- Newmarket: Estimated approximately £700 if concluded before 4pm. After 4pm, additional charges apply for lifeguards and duty managers. Several members expressed reservations about Newmarket as a venue given swimmers' feedback about pool quality.
- Ipswich Crown Pools: Previously considered and noted in February minutes as not ideal because starting blocks have been relocated to the deep end and there are concerns about seating. GM confirmed she had recently conducted a referee assessment there and found many seats taped off as damaged.
- Garens Park, Southend: Suggested by DD — 8-lane, deck-level pool managed by Freedom Leisure. A quote will be obtained.
- Harlow Leisurezone: Suggested by LW — 8-lane, 25m pool. DD confirmed that the pool has electronic scoreboards at both ends and raised spectator seating. A quote will be obtained.
- Riverside, Chelmsford: 10-lane pool, RK offered to obtain a quote. Pool hire would be needed 12:30–17:00 on Sunday 15th November 2026. EW confirmed that it must be a Sunday. RK noted that parking at Riverside Retail Park provides 3 hours free but this would be insufficient for the event.
- Becontree Heath, Barking and Dagenham: Suggested by RK. DD noted that whilst it is a good pool, its electronic timing system is currently not operational, which had caused problems when Essex attempted to hold a meet there. Also, it is not in the Region.
- Biggleswade: An enquiry will be submitted.

Marianne asked whether UEA would provide the whole pool (including any warm-up facilities).

EW confirmed that the enquiry for UEA covers only the 25m pool, as the Inter-Counties is swum in 25m. Warm-up pool provision has not been included in the enquiry.

- ### 26/16.1.2
- CS suggested that, rather than debating venues at length, the Group should rank their preferred options by location and then factor in price once all quotes are received in order to make a final decision. This approach was supported.

DD noted that there is no perfectly central venue within the Region and that any choice will inevitably involve longer travel for some counties.

26/16.1.3 The Group agreed to a deadline of 24th April 2026 for the receipt of all outstanding pool hire quotes. EW will circulate a full comparison spreadsheet including pool hire costs, any additional costs (tea/coffee for officials, officials' expenses, electronic timing hire) and last year's Inter-Counties costs, in advance of the next meeting on 5th May 2026, at which a final decision on the venue will be made.

Action: EW to chase all outstanding venue enquiries (Braintree, Parkside Cambridge, and Woodside Watford) for quotes by 24th April 2026

Action: EW to obtain quotes for Garens Park Southend and Harlow LeisureZone

Action: EW to confirm current UEA price following their April price increase

Action: RK to obtain a pool hire quote from Riverside Chelmsford for Sunday 15th November 2026, 12:30–17:00

Action: EW to compile a full comparison spreadsheet of all venue quotes including pool hire, additional costs and last year's Inter-Counties expenditure, and circulate to all members before the 5th May 2026 meeting

Action: EW to clarify the position on the Swim England subsidy beyond 2026 and report back

26/16.2 **Swim England East Region Masters Championships — Sunday 20th September 2026, Newmarket Leisure Centre**

DD noted that the date and venue (Sunday 20th September 2026 at Newmarket Leisure Centre) were confirmed at the February meeting.

EW advised the Group that she would not be in attendance on the day of the Championships as she is on holiday. James Salmon (Regional Manager) will be present on the day to provide administrative support. DD was confirmed as the event promoter.

26/16.2.1 **Entry fees**

EW confirmed that in 2025, the individual entry fee was £8 per event for all individual events, and £15 per relay.

The Group discussed whether to increase individual entry fees for 2026, noting rising pool hire costs and the possibility of reduced Swim England funding in future years.

EW confirmed that the Swim England Sports Systems will be used for entries. Graham Spratt normally assists with results and the Sports Systems setup. EW will confirm his availability.

RK asked whether this was the East Region Championships or individual County Championships.

DD confirmed that this is the Swim England East Region Masters Championships.

Following discussion, DD proposed increasing the individual entry fee to £8.50 per event, with the relay fee remaining at £15 per team.

Decision: Individual entry fee set at £8.50 per event (all distances). Relay entry fee to remain at £15 per team.

26/16.2.2 **Event programme order**

LW suggested reviewing the order of events, noting that attendances drop off towards the end of the programme. She suggested that events in the final session are typically lower-populated and the programme might benefit from rebalancing.

EW shared the 2025 event schedule on screen. It was noted that the 800m freestyle was first on the programme (which was agreed as appropriate) and that the 400m IM was currently last.

GM noted that a freestyle event should conclude the programme where possible. RK suggested that popular sprint events such as 50m freestyle, 50m backstroke and 100m freestyle work well at the end as they attract high entries.

LW agreed that finishing on IM was unusual and suggested that the events be rearranged. DD agreed and will review the programme.

Action: EW to email DD the 2025 conditions and event schedule Word document

Action: DD to review and revise the event order for 2026, aiming to advertise the conditions by May 2026

Action: EW to confirm Graham Spratt's availability to assist with Sports Systems results on 20th September 2026

26/16.3 **Swim England East Region Open Water Masters Development Day — Saturday 6th June 2026, Stanborough Lakes**

EW confirmed that, following the February meeting, she had emailed all 23 individuals who had previously expressed interest and invited them to sign up and pay.

As of this meeting, EW had received four replies - three confirmations and one withdrawal.

EW explained that she had not included a formal deadline in the initial email as she was aware of this meeting. She confirmed that after Easter, she will send a reminder to the 23 original individuals with a deadline for signing up, after which remaining places will be opened to all eligible participants.

GM raised the importance of ensuring that all participants are Swim England members.

EW confirmed that participants are required to provide their Swim England membership number on registration, and that she double-checks all entries.

LW asked whether Club Train(non-competitive) members could participate.

EW confirmed that participants may be Club Train. They simply need to hold a valid Swim England membership for insurance purposes.

Action: After Easter, EW to send a reminder email, with a firm deadline to the 23 individuals who expressed interest

Action: After the deadline, EW to open any remaining places to all eligible Swim England members and include the information in the May East Region newsletter

26/16.3.1 **Coaching requirements**

EW confirmed that the event still requires two additional coaches. Under the new Swim England Open Water policy introduced in 2025, coaches must hold a Level 2 Open Water qualification, although Level 2 pool coaches may act as support coaches providing that the majority of the coaching team hold the Open Water qualification.

26/17 **County matters and updates from representatives**

26/17.1 **Norfolk**

MP had nothing to report from Norfolk.

- 26/17.2 **Suffolk**
CS reported that she has formed a sub-group of three willing volunteers from Suffolk to assist with the organisation of the county's Inter-Counties team. Ashley Buck has agreed to help coordinate the team selection.
- 26/17.3 **Essex**
RK stated that he was new to the role as Essex representative and had nothing specific to report at this stage.
- 26/17.4 **Hertfordshire**
KC reported that she had stepped in at short notice to organise the Hertfordshire County Masters Championships, scheduled for Sunday 28th June 2026. She had booked the pool but had not yet identified officials. She raised concerns about finding a referee.
KC asked about the process for finding officials, and GM suggested that KC should contact Jonathan Pope.
GM offered the Group's assistance if needed.
LW asked whether the Hertfordshire County Championships would be a closed or open meet.
KC indicated she believed the event should be a closed meet (Hertfordshire members only). She confirmed she would seek clarification and update the conditions accordingly.
- 26/17.5 **Bedfordshire**
LW had nothing to report from Bedfordshire.
- 26/17.6 **Cambridgeshire**
LR reported that she has now attended two Leadership Group meetings as Cambridgeshire representative. Monthly coached training sessions continue, with the next session planned for April at Whittlesea. These sessions are organised by coach John Burling and are designed to maintain sufficient swimmer numbers to field a Cambridgeshire team for the Inter-Counties in November 2026. LR reported that Cambridgeshire Masters have been invited to participate in a county development day, originally designed for age-group swimmers. It is on 7th June 2026. Approximately one hour of pool time has been offered to Masters participants during the day. LR is still in discussion about cost and logistics.
- 26/18** **Any other business**
- 26/18.1 **Decathlon awards — Perpetual trophies**
LW raised the outstanding action from the February minutes regarding the Decathlon awards, specifically the acquisition of three perpetual trophies for the top male team, top female team and top mixed team (as agreed in February 2026).
EW had obtained prices for trophies like those used for the regional age-group championships from the existing supplier:
- 10-inch trophy: £240
 - Medium trophy: approximately £240–£263 (for a set of 3: £266.30)
 - Larger trophy: £440
- MP asked how much the previous Decathlon trophies (non-perpetual) had cost. EW confirmed that they were not expensive. A set of three trophies had cost £26.63.

Several members expressed surprise at the cost of perpetual trophies. CS noted that in Suffolk, shields are used as a cheaper alternative which still allow annual engraving.

LW offered to research alternative suppliers when she visits Sports Form in Bedford to have the Bedfordshire Decathlon trophies engraved. LW noted that the male and female individual perpetual trophies came from that supplier.

EW confirmed that she has the male individual perpetual trophy and the female trophy is with Alison Fordham. EW will contact Alison Fordham to retrieve the female trophy for engraving.

The Group agreed to shop around before committing to a supplier for the new perpetual trophies.

EW informed the Group that a budget variation would need to be put to the Board before purchasing the trophies as it is not currently in the budget.

Action: LW to research alternative trophy suppliers at Sports Form, Bedford and provide prices to EW

Action: EW to contact Alison Fordham to retrieve the female individual perpetual trophy for engraving

26/19

Confidential items

26/19.1 No confidential items were raised.

26/20

Next meeting

26/20.1 The Group agreed that the next meeting will take place Tuesday 5th May 2026 at 19:00, via Zoom.

GM confirmed that she will be in Berlin for the World Para swimming event on that date and will arrange for a substitute to attend in her place.