



Swim England East Region
Minutes of the Swimming Leadership Group
12th April 2026
by Zoom

Present: Tom Baster (TB) Swimming Manager
Keith Belton (KB)
David Metcalf (DM) Officials Representative
Gerry Metcalf (GM)
Helen Stephens (HS)
Also present: Sarah Powell (SP) Incoming Licensing Officer

26/01 Apologies and introductions

- 26/01.1 No apologies were received.
- 26/01.2 TB welcomed Sarah Powell (SP) to the meeting. SP joined as the Region's incoming Licensing Officer, subject to ratification at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 22nd April 2026. SP introduced herself as a welfare officer and a J2 technical official for Linslade Crusaders Swimming Club, which is shortly to become Leighton Linslade Swimming Club.

26/02 Declarations of conflict of interest

- 26/02.1 None declared.

26/03 Previous minutes

- 26/03.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were circulated and screen-shared by TB.
- 26/03.2 TB noted two corrections to the previous minutes:
- (i) GM and HS attend the Swimming Leadership Group as members of the Group, not in the capacity of Directors.
 - (ii) KB attends as a member of the Group, not in the capacity of Finance Manager.
- TB requested these amendments be made.

26/04 Matters arising

- 26/04.1 25/13.2 – Welfare Officer at Regional Championships: TB confirmed that a welfare role at Regional Championships had been reviewed. It was agreed that the requirement does not sit with the Championships. TB holds the Safeguarding Aquatics qualification and has relevant professional background. The conditions of the event confirm that safeguarding and behaviour concerns are referred to TB as Promoter, and if the concern relates to TB, it is escalated to a Director.
- 26/04.2 25/14.2 – Risk Assessment updates: TB confirmed that all risk assessment actions had been completed. The Luton risk assessment had been updated to include signage requirements, clarifications regarding para-swimmers, and an updated risk matrix with numerical scoring. The Norwich risk assessment had been updated to include the underwater camera (Toblerone placement), starting



platforms, and awards podium and medals. Both updated risk assessments had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

26/04.3 25/14.3 – Basildon Sporting Village: TB reported that the meeting with Basildon Sporting Village (BSV) took place but that all representatives from BSV who attended that meeting had subsequently left the company. The matter has no current bearing on future bookings. A new manager – who previously held the post some years ago – is now in post.

26/04.4 25/19.1 – Licensing Review Panel: TB confirmed that following Simon Gee's decision to stand down as Licensing Officer, the review panel was no longer required. SP has been recruited to the role.

26/04.5 25/20.3 – Technical Director (TD) roles for 2026 Championships: DM confirmed that TD roles for all 2026 championships have been allocated.

26/05 Coach Forum update

26/05.1 KB provided a brief update on the most recent Coach Forum. Attendance was quiet. The forum coincided with the opening of entries for the Long-Course Championships, and coaches in attendance were asking some questions – raised by Carl Cooper (CC) – relating to national-level matters, which the group could not answer. The meeting was broadly flat in terms of engagement.

26/05.2 TB noted that concerns had previously been raised about the Championships, and steps had been taken to address those. TB suggested that there is now an opportunity to move the forum forward towards a swimming development focus. He noted that several other Regions are taking teams away to development events, though he remained uncertain whether this represented genuine value from a development perspective or whether it detracted from clubs' own programmes.

TB observed that something beyond the current format of discussing Championship logistics is now needed from the Coach Forum.

26/06 Risk assessments

26/06.1 TB presented the updated risk assessments for both Championship venues (Luton and Norwich), which had been circulated in advance. He proposed that both documents be adopted for use at the 2026 Championships and that copies be distributed to all Technical Directors for working knowledge.

26/06.2 Norwich risk assessment – Spectator gallery for athletes:
TB drew attention to a new provision within the Norwich risk assessment regarding the potential use of the spectator gallery as an overflow athlete area in the event of poolside overcrowding. This arrangement has been used at county-level competition but not previously at regional level. TB expressed reservations about directing swimmers up and down iron staircases, noting the added slip risk from wet feet, despite non-slip surfaces, and uncertainty about how it would operate in practice with multiple clubs involved.

TB indicated he may trial it for one session on Day 3 of the Norwich weekend to assess its viability.

KB suggested that the current approach of managing numbers by tightening qualifying times and splitting sessions is more effective.



The Group agreed that the gallery provision is retained within the risk assessment as a contingency measure only, not as standard practice

- 26/06.3 Luton risk assessment – Changing facilities - TB clarified the policy:
The group-change area is designated as an additional space available to female athletes who wish to use a fully female-only environment, for example to avoid concerns about privacy or camera risk. It is not a mandatory changing area. Athletes may use cubicles or the group-change area according to their preference.
TB noted that in practice, very few athletes use the changing areas at all, as most arrive ready to warm up. Forcing athletes into the group-change area risks increasing changing on poolside, which is undesirable. The risk assessment now states in bold that it is the athlete's choice whether to use the cubicles or the group-change area.
TB indicated he is considering purchasing 6–8 portable privacy changing booths for the group-change area, to provide complete privacy to those who wish it.
The Group decided that HS will brief all door volunteers clearly on the policy – that athlete choice governs which facility is used.
- 26/06.4 TB reminded the Group that officials who are not Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) checked must not pass through the changing rooms.
DM confirmed that this is covered in his officials' briefing as standard practice.
- 26/06.5 HS reported that two coaches routinely enter via the officials' staircase. A discussion took place regarding whether it is appropriate for coaches to use the same entrance route as officials.
HS asked whether there should be a notice at the top of the officials' stairs clearly stating that it is for officials only and directing coaches elsewhere.
TB suggested that two entrance points to poolside are preferable, recognising that coaches cannot reasonably be directed through changing rooms. He proposed that both entrances be made available, clearly signed.
It was agreed to have signs stating 'accredited personnel'. HS will ask Emma Winter (EW) to produce appropriate signage for both entrance points.
- 26/06.6 HS raised that there is no reference in the risk assessment to signage warning taller athletes against touching the diving boards, which are positioned above lanes 5–7.
It was decided that TB will add signage instructions regarding diving boards to the Luton risk assessment. HS confirmed that signs are already available and will be placed accordingly.
Action: TB to update the Luton risk assessment to include a requirement for signage warning swimmers not to touch the diving boards in lanes 5–7
- 26/06.7 The updated risk assessments were approved for use at the 2026 Championships subject to the above amendments.
Action: TB to distribute finalised risk assessments to all Technical Directors



26/07 Championships survey

26/07.1 TB reported that a participant survey is planned for this year's Championships. He had outlined the proposed approach two weeks prior to the meeting and had not received responses.

A discussion took place around the participant survey.

26/07.2 GM and HS confirmed that they share TB's concern that receiving such data places the Group in a position where they could be considered to have knowledge of children's identifiable views without proper consent frameworks.

26/08 Long-Course Championships 2026

26/08.1 TB provided an update on entries. Entry numbers are broadly similar to those in previous years. The target is approximately 2,000 female swims and 2,000 male swims, across seven days of competition, plus two evening sessions. Current figures show approximately 1,900 male and 1,800 female swims – a difference TB described as within acceptable range.

The 1500m event is popular and has a similar number of entries to last year. Tighter qualifying times introduced for 2026 have had a positive effect in some events, particularly reducing entries in the 50m and 100m events. This is expected to allow a reduction from three warm-up sessions to two at the Luton weekend, giving athletes a longer warm-up time. Entries in the 400m events have also been cut significantly, which will reduce the runtime on the third weekend. Relay entries remain lower at this stage but typically come in later.

TB noted that payment difficulties have occasionally arisen, but these have been resolved by allowing payment the following day, with no entries lost as a result.

26/08.2 GM reported that catering has been arranged for Luton and that timings will be confirmed once the final programme is set. GM is experiencing difficulties accessing the Norwich catering system and is working to resolve this. The contact at Norwich is aware of the likely order requirements based on last year.

TB noted that Jo Stalley (JSt) and EW have been asked to send the standard email to coaches regarding food requests for officials. Numbers are historically very low (one or two).

26/08.3 GM reported that car-parking arrangements have been confirmed with Luton. Volunteer and official vehicle details must be submitted to Luton by the Wednesday before each event weekend. The Region will pay for parking directly at a reduced rate. Volunteers attending all sessions on all days will have parking costs covered. Those attending for one session only will be expected to pay for themselves.

GM confirmed that this will be communicated clearly in the officials' briefing.



- 26/08.4 GM shared the current officials sign-up figures. Luton numbers are satisfactory. Norwich numbers are considerably lower and give cause for concern. At the time of the meeting, numbers had increased by nine over the previous two days (from 18), but TB noted that further recruitment is needed across most Norwich sessions, with approximately 8–10 additional officials required per session to make each viable.

It was agreed that following the close of entries on Tuesday, KB will publish entries and simultaneously push for officials and volunteer sign-ups for all three weekends, specifically highlighting the Norwich weekend. This communication will go on the website and be linked to Facebook/X.

- 26/08.5 HS noted that she will not be present on Saturday 10th May. A discussion took place regarding who could manage the medals and trophies in her absence. TB agreed this should be managed in-house.

- 26/08.6 TB raised the need to consider succession planning for the Promoter role. He noted that he will become Swim England President and that there may be future Championships where he is unable to fulfil the Promoter role. TB suggested that the third weekend of the current Long-Course Championships (Luton) could be used as an opportunity for a suitable individual to shadow him or take on an expanded role, with TB stepping back to another position on that occasion.

TB to consider whether Day 3 of Norwich could be used as a formal shadowing opportunity, with a suitable person identified to begin learning the Promoter role.

26/09 Short-Course Championships 2026

- 26/09.1 TB reported that the Short-Course Championship documentation had been circulated prior to the meeting. He does not propose changing the order of events, which has been refined over many years.

- 26/09.2 TB proposed a change to the organisation of the finals, as there are only two evenings of finals. TB suggested that presentations could be extended to create a structured 10-minute break in the middle of the finals programme, providing recovery time for athletes who may be competing in multiple events. The 1500m and 800m freestyle events at the end of each session act as a natural break for relay swimmers. TB suggested formalising an additional planned break during the shorter finals.

Action: TB to submit the Short-Course Championship conditions to Licensing, including the 10-minute break provision in the finals programme

- 26/09.3 KB noted a discrepancy between the Long-Course and Short-Course Championship conditions regarding the use of entry times. The Long-Course conditions include a clause confirming that the time submitted at entry is the time used. This clause is absent from the Short-Course conditions.

Action: KB to email TB regarding the entry time clause for inclusion in the 2026 Short-Course Championship conditions



- 26/09.4 TB noted that the Short-Course Championships currently generates a small profit. The entry fee has been held at £9 per swim, making this the lowest-priced regional championship in the country. TB does not propose increasing the fee for 2026 but anticipates a fee increase will be necessary for 2027, noting that the Region's facilities are comparatively modest. TB will bring a proposal to a future meeting.

26/10 Licensing

- 26/10.1 TB introduced the licensing item, noting that Sarah Powell has been recruited as the incoming Regional Licensing Officer, subject to ratification at the AGM on 22nd April 2026. For SP's benefit, TB provided context on the financial significance of licensing income to the Region.
- 26/10.2 TB outlined the intended scope of the Licensing Officer role going forward. EW will be asked to run a central report on licensing numbers, eliminating the need for manual data input. SP's role will focus on analysing trends and patterns in that data and providing strategic feedback to the Group – for example, identifying whether officials are consistently absent, whether meet organisers are struggling to write compliant event conditions, or whether there are systemic issues in specific areas.
- TB confirmed that SP is not expected to fulfil this role immediately and that the transition from the outgoing Licensing Officer will be managed carefully.
- KB confirmed he is willing to support SP through the transition period and will be available for Zoom meetings or email correspondence as needed.
- Action: EW to be asked to produce a central licensing income report to support the new Licensing Officer**
- 26/10.3 HS raised the question of whether clubs are fulfilling the risk assessment requirement on licensing applications. She noted that the licensing form requires applicants to confirm that they have a risk assessment, but evidence from recent discussions suggests that risk assessment quality and currency varies significantly across the membership.
- TB observed that the concern is less about the existence of a risk assessment and more about its currency and practical application – i.e., who has seen it, who implements it, and whether it is reviewed regularly.
- TB therefore does not propose requiring submission of risk assessments to the Region but considers it important to raise awareness through club training, the regional newsletter, and member forums about the need for live, actively used risk assessments.

26/11 Any other business

- 26/11.1 GM reported that officials from the Swim England London Region have on several occasions asked whether they may attend the Swim England East Region Championships to observe the Region's working practices. A discussion took place regarding how to handle such requests.
- TB confirmed that this is acceptable in principle. TB suggested it would be preferable to direct London observers to Luton rather than to Norwich, given that Norwich is a comparatively weaker facility. TB further suggested that a formal



exchange arrangement could be considered, whereby a member of the East Region attends the London Region Championships and a London Region official attends the East Region Championships, with expenses covered on a reciprocal basis.

GM will respond positively to Swim England London Region's request, directing them to the Luton weekend, at their own expense, unless a formal exchange arrangement is agreed.

26/12

Confidential Items

- 26/12.1 One confidential item was discussed.

26/13

Future meetings

- 26/13.1 To be decided

DRAFT