



Swim England East Region
Minutes of the Artistic Swimming Leadership Group Meeting
12th September 2026 at 10am, via Zoom

Present: Amy Davis (AD)

Swim England East Region
Artistic Swimming
Manager

Sheila Mackenzie (SM)

Swim England East Region
Director

Tom Brennan (TB)

Aqualina

Karen Brennan (KB)

Aqualina

Kerri Clewlow (KC)

Aqualina

Kath Downes (KD)

Norwich

Helen Poletti-Taylor (HPT)

Potters Bar

Laura Neary (LN)

Chelmsford

Polly Chapman (PC)

Dacorum

Emma Winter (EW)

Regional Administrator

26/23

Welcome and apologies

26/23.1

AD welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was noted that the Dacorum representative was attending the Group for the first time.

LN contributed to the meeting via the Zoom chat, and points raised in the chat were relayed to the Group by AD.

26/23.2

Apologies were received from Amy Bryant (AB), Hatfield.

26/24

Declarations of conflicts of interest

26/24.1

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

26/25

Previous minutes

26/25.1

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th June 2026 had been circulated. No amendments were raised and the minutes were agreed as a correct record.

26/26

Plan and budget

26/26.1

AD reported that there had been no significant change to the plan and budget since the June meeting, as no events had taken place during July and August. The



plan and budget for 2026 remained on target and AD was not concerned about the position.

26/26.2 AD noted that further income was expected from the forthcoming October competition.

26/26.3 AD reported that the sign-up for the Regional Games had been good and had generated strong income, although the number of swimmers was slightly lower than in the previous year.

26/26.4 AD advised that the plan and budget for 2027 would need to be considered at the next meeting.

26/27 Grading Days 2026

26/27.1 New Swim England grading structure

AD asked whether members of the Group were clear on the new grading structure introduced by Swim England, and invited any questions. AD acknowledged that she was still working through the new arrangements herself and had made notes from both the papers and the national meeting.

26/27.1.1 AD advised that, in her understanding, some grades could now be assessed in club but that most clubs would still need the Region to offer most grades at regional grading days, with the focus on those grades which can only be assessed regionally (the higher figure and routine grades). AD noted that larger clubs with sufficient judges may choose to assess more of the grades themselves.

26/27.1.2 AD and TB noted that Grades 1 and 2 had become larger because they now incorporate both routine and figure elements, and that some swimmers may not yet have practised all the new elements. Figure Grades 3 and 4 were understood to be largely unchanged, with Figure Grade 5 slightly different.

26/27.1.3 AD commented that the new structure had been released at an awkward point in the season and noted that Swim England had indicated there could be changes again in January, pending decisions by World Aquatics on Figures.

26/27.2 Grading alongside regional competitions

26/27.2.1 KB asked whether grading could be incorporated into the Region's own Figures competitions, given that panels of judges were already in place. Swimmers' scores could be recorded on one sheet, with a separate record for those wishing to achieve a grade. These athletes would pay an additional fee. and their scores would be retained.

26/27.2.2 KB noted that some clubs would not have enough judges to run the grades themselves and suggested that offering a grade at the Figures competitions might encourage more people to train as judges.

26/27.2.3 TB advised that Swim England had issued no guidance either permitting or prohibiting this approach and that Swim England would need to be formally notified that a grading day was being held on the same day as a competition. KB understood that Swim England had said this would be permitted and noted that it would apply only to Grades 3 and 4.



26/27.2.4 AD agreed that the suggestion made sense. She noted that the main consideration would be ensuring that the panels contained judges of the appropriate level. AD explained that she generally used Level 2 judges for Figure Grade 3, using Level 1 judges only where necessary.

27/27.2.5 AD stated that she had only seen it written that grading could be run in a competition-style format, not at a competition itself. TB agreed to double-check the position.

Actions: AD to seek clarification from Swim England on whether grading can be offered alongside regional competitions, including the grades and judge levels which would apply. TB to double-check the position separately

26/27.2.6 HPT asked whether grading would be offered at the October competition. AD said she would look into it but advised the Group not to rely on it.

26/27.3 **Judge levels for grading**

TB drew attention to the Swim England presentation, which stated (with the word 'new' in capitals) that Level 1 judges can now judge up to Figure Grade 3 and Routine Grade 4.

The Group discussed whether this meant that only newly qualified Level 1 judges could do so, or whether 'new' referred to a new criterion or step. AD noted that her own notes recorded Figure Grade 3 as being judged by Level 1 judges at maximum, with no reference to new Level 1 judges.

AD further noted that the newly trained Level 1 judges had not yet completed their shadowing, and that the papers she had provided to Jenny Gray for the Level 1 course covered Grades 1 and 2 only, so it was unclear whether new Level 1 judges were being trained to assess Grade 3. The point was not resolved.

Action: AD to seek clarification from Swim England on whether existing Level 1 judges, as well as newly qualified Level 1 judges, may judge Figure Grade 3 and Routine Grade 4, and whether the new Level 1 training covers Grade 3.

26/27.4 **Number and timing of regional grading days**

26/27.4.1 AD advised that in recent years the Region had held one grading day in November and one in December, both of which had been well attended. AD noted that the December day had run smoothly and quickly. AD stated that she would prefer to hold one larger grading day in November, but she was willing to hold a December day if there was a requirement for it, and she invited the views of the Group.

26/27.4.2 AD advised that the venue could offer a large amount of pool time at low cost and was able to accommodate any Saturday or Sunday afternoon in November and December.

26/27.4.3 AD asked whether there were any dates on which members of the Group were unavailable. The following points were made:

- Aqualina's Sunday sessions finish at 1.30pm, and

HPT confirmed that Potters Bar's Saturday sessions finish at around 5pm, so that a Saturday day starting from 5pm would be possible.



- AD noted that she was committed until 5pm on Saturdays but that the Group could run a day without her.
 - HPT advised that Potters Bar has a training camp in Malta at the end of October involving 16 swimmers, which ruled out an October date.
 - KB advised that she was unavailable on 28th November.
 - TB noted that Regional Games training is scheduled for 22nd November.
- 26/27.4.4 LN suggested that the higher grades be held in December to give swimmers more time to practise, and that the days could be split, with the lower grades on one day and routines and the higher grades (Grades 4 and 5) on the other. AD felt that this could work. TB confirmed that the lower grades could be accommodated but that any Grade 4 or 5 entries would require the judge allocation criteria to be met. AD noted that clubs would need to confirm early which judges they could provide.
- 26/27.4.5 Dates were discussed. AD agreed that 7th/8th November could work if members of the Group were available and that 5th/6th December could be retained for the second day. It was agreed to hold both sets of dates provisionally.
- Action:** AD to confirm pool availability and the grading day dates (7th/8th November and 5th/6th December 2026) and notify clubs
- Action:** Club representatives to inform AD promptly of any issues with the dates and to confirm the judges they can provide when entering
- 26/27.5 **Judge requirements for regional grading days**
- 26/27.5.1 TB advised that, under the new standards, a grading day assessing Grade 4 or Grade 5 must have a minimum of two panels. Each panel comprises three judges, who must come from at least three different clubs and be Level 2 or above, so that a minimum of six qualifying judges would be needed on the day. AD queried whether the requirement applied to the panels or to the six judges as a whole. TB clarified that each panel of three had to be drawn from three different clubs and that the same three judges could not cover all the grades.
- 26/27.5.2 AD felt that the Region had enough qualified judges overall, if everyone who had indicated they would attend actually attended.
- 26/27.6 **In-house assessment of Grades 1 and 2 and sharing of judges**
- 26/27.6.1 PC asked whether clubs could now manage Grades 1 and 2 locally, or whether it was still necessary to arrange judges from other clubs. AD confirmed that these grades could be assessed entirely in-house provided that the club had a suitable judge. LN confirmed via the chat that only one judge was required and that a Level 1 judge was sufficient for Grades 1 and 2.
- 26/27.6.2 AD and TB noted that this contrasted with the requirement for three judges from three different clubs at the higher grades. TB's understanding was that the panel requirement applied to grades that qualify swimmers for national competitions such as National Age-Groups (NAGs) and Championships, whereas lower grades could be signed off by a single judge.
- 26/27.6.3 KC expressed reservations about the arrangement, noting that responsibility for approval was moving from Swim England National to regional managers and



clubs, and that it relied on clubs applying the standards honestly. AD noted that the Region would follow the guidance issued.

- 26/27.6.4 KD asked whether there was anything to prevent clubs from borrowing one another's judges to assist with in-club assessments, or from 'buddying up' where a club did not have enough judges for a panel. AD confirmed that this was entirely permissible and encouraged clubs to do so where helpful.

KD noted that Norwich has qualified judges and around three candidates on the Level 1 judging course.

26/27.7 **Assessment of splits**

- 26/27.7.1 AD asked whether the split mark in Grades 1 and 2 was reported separately from the average score. TB was unsure. AD checked the grading spreadsheet and confirmed that the split element does feed into the overall score, which is calculated to two decimal places.

- 26/27.7.2 TB noted that a score can now be awarded for splits of up to 50cm, where previously the score was zero. KC noted that for Grades 3 and 4 splits are assessed as a separate, standalone element.

26/27.8 **Grading day on Saturday 26th September 2026 – pre-assessment of splits**

- 26/27.8.1 TB advised that he would be hosting the first grading day under the new structure in Hertfordshire on Saturday 26th September 2026. AD noted that this was not a regional grading day and thanked TB for trialling the new approach on behalf of the Region.

- 26/27.8.2 TB explained that when he planned the day and booked the venue, the plan was to assess routines only, which do not include splits, so no studio had been required. Under the new combined Grade 1 and 2, splits must now be judged. TB understood that Grades 1 and 2 now carry 14 assessment criteria, including splits.

- 26/27.8.3 Assessing splits on the day would require a studio and an earlier start of 4pm rather than 5pm, which could cause an operational problem because swimmers would still be training in the water at the venue.

- 26/27.8.4 TB confirmed that the day would offer the combined Grades 1 and 2 and the Grade 3 and 4 routines.

- 26/27.8.5 TB proposed that clubs assess the splits before the day and submit the scores to him, with sign-off from the club's highest-level judge confirming that the swimmer had achieved the standard, so that he could register the scores against the swimmers. TB noted that clubs could sign off splits in-club in any event and that Swim England was already relying on trust for in-house grading.

- 26/27.8.6 AD supported the proposal, suggesting that TB try it and see how it worked, and noted that the plan had been overtaken by changes made at short notice after the year had been planned.

- 26/27.8.7 KB emphasised that clubs were working on trust and had a responsibility to pass or fail swimmers honestly, as passing a swimmer who could not perform the required split would not be in that swimmer's interests, particularly at NAGs.



- 26/27.8.8 KC expressed concern that pre-assessment relied on the integrity of clubs and could be open to abuse. AD suggested that photographic evidence could be requested rather than video, which had proved onerous previously.
- 26/27.8.9 TB felt that the day would provide useful learning for the Region on how the new grades operate, and that a shared event, with judges pooled from several clubs, would be more efficient than a single judge assessing all of a club's swimmers in a one-hour club session.
- 26/27.8.10 TB confirmed that assessments on the day would mirror in-club practice, with a single judge deciding the outcome for each figure allocated, so panels would not be required. Judges would record the result for each swimmer number on a spreadsheet, as AD does at regional events, together with comments giving the reasons for any swimmer who did not pass. TB did not intend to use judges' slips as they would not suit the format of the day.
- Action:** TB to email head coaches confirming that splits should be pre-assessed and submitted in advance of the 26th September grading day. Club representatives to submit pre-assessed split scores, with sign-off from their highest-level judge, and to enter swimmers
- Action:** TB to send AD the results, comments and feedback following the 26th September grading day, for onward reporting
- 26/27.9 **Recording, results and certificates for in-house grading**
- 26/27.9.1 HPT asked whether there was a template or guide for recording in-house grading. AD advised that she had a results spreadsheet developed in-house, the grade spreadsheet; the 'all outcomes' judging sheet (which lists Figure updates rather than acting as a booklet); a conversion sheet showing where swimmers sit; and judge's slips. AD offered to send these resources to any club assessing in-house.
- 26/27.9.2 AD advised that clubs assessing in-house should send her an update on results each month. Assessments can be split across different sessions. AD will forward the update to Swim England, subject to confirming the correct recipient. AD reported that Swim England had previously asked that results be routed via its designated contact (Sarah Clark) rather than sent directly for upload.
- 26/27.9.3 AD reported that Swim England had confirmed that grading booklets were no longer in use, although information online had not yet been updated. Feedback to swimmers would therefore be given on sheets or spreadsheets.
- 26/27.9.4 AD holds a stock of existing grading certificates and badges, which are to be used before any new stock is issued, and clubs assessing in-house should tell her if they need them. There had been discussion at national level that swimmers completing Grades 1 and 2 may receive both a Grade 1 and a Figure 1 certificate. Grading stickers have been discontinued.
- Actions:** Clubs assessing in-house to send AD a monthly update on results. AD to confirm with Swim England the correct recipient for onward submission. Clubs needing certificates or badges to notify AD



26/27.10 **Feedback on the new grading structure**

AD asked members of the Group to send her any feedback or issues arising from the new grading structure, in particular following TB's trial grading day, so that she could pass it on to the Swim England leadership team.

Action: All members of the Group to send feedback on the new grading structure to AD

26/28 Competitions for 2026/2027

26/28.1 **October 2026 competition**

AD confirmed that the October competition is the remaining competition for 2026. AD asked members to send their entries as soon as possible.

Action: Club representatives to send October competition entries to AD as soon as possible

26/28.2 **Venues for 2027**

AD reported that, with a view to trying different venues, she had approached Inspire: Luton, Chelmsford and Harrow Lodge. Inspire Luton had replied asking what was required, and AD had asked for deep water. Replies from Chelmsford and Harrow Lodge were awaited. AD had also confirmed that Stevenage was open and available to book for 2027.

It was noted that the February competition could still be held at Stevenage, which the Region knows works well.

26/28.3 **Provisional dates for 2027**

AD asked for views on dates for the 2027 competitions, noting that the February competition had previously been held in early February (6th February) and the March competition mid-month (20th March), before Easter.

February 2027: After discussion, the Group agreed to hold the competition on 13th February 2027.

March 2027: AD proposed 20th March 2027, which is before Easter. AD noted that NAGs had been held on 7th March and Championships on 25th April in 2026. The 2027 dates had not yet been confirmed by Swim England. AD would amend the regional date if necessary.

June 2027: AD proposed 19th June 2027. The Combo Cup is normally held at the start of July (3rd/4th July if the same weekend is used), and a later June date would fall in the last week of school.

26/28.4 **Format of the 2027 competitions**

26/28.4.1 AD asked whether the Group was happy with the same format as 2026: February as a warm-up for NAGs; March as a warm-up for Championships; and June ahead of the Combo Cup.

26/28.4.2 AD reminded the Group that the February competition includes Figures, 12yrs and under solos and duets, and mixed duets and free teams, and that ungraded Figures were to be moved to March following the busy February 2026 event. February would cover Grade 1 Figures and above.



Members of the Group were content.

- 26/28.4.3 AD asked whether holding combination routines in March, giving two practice opportunities before the Combo Cup, was too early or whether they should be left until June. KC and KD felt that it was helpful to give swimmers two opportunities. AD agreed to retain combination routines in March.

Actions: AD to update the Group on venue availability for 2027 and to confirm the 2027 competition dates once venues and Swim England's NAGs and Championships dates are confirmed

26/29

Officials Courses

26/29.1

Level 1 Judge course

KD asked whether anyone had information on the Level 1 judging course being run by Jenny Gray, on which Norwich has three candidates, noting that the position was uncertain.

AD reported that Jenny Gray had emailed the previous week regarding the face-to-face element of the course and had proposed the weekend of 17th/18th October, which is the weekend of the October competition. AD had advised Jenny of the clash and was awaiting a reply. AD expected that the date would depend on Jenny's diary and might be confirmed at short notice. Jenny hoped to run the face-to-face element this year so that those booked on the course could finish it. AD apologised in advance if the date fell on a busy weekend.

Actions: AD to update the candidates booked on the Level 1 judge course as soon as a date is agreed with Jenny Gray, and to discuss arrangements for the next Level 1 course.

26/29.2

Coach courses

AD asked whether any clubs currently needed assistant coach or other coach training. KC indicated that Aqualina needs a Level 2 coach. AD noted that no coach courses appeared to be advertised at present.

AD noted that her own club was facing capacity issues, and that other clubs at the Combo Cup had reported the same concern, as many swimmers are lost to university, leaving no one ready to come through. AD acknowledged that there is a need for Level 2 coaches and observed that Swim England appeared to be concentrating on recruiting Level 1 judges rather than coaches.

Action: AD to ask Hannah (Swim England) whether any coach courses, including Level 2, are planned and to update the Group

26/30

Regional Games

26/30.1

TB reported that this season's Regional Games training would start the following day. 39 swimmers had signed up, compared with approximately 44 to 45 the previous year. It was still a good number. All the dates had been confirmed.

26/30.2

TB advised that the split of swimmers was uneven because in the previous year 12yrs and under swimmers had been brought in without notice. Of the 39 swimmers, 8 were in the 12yrs and under age-group and the remaining 31 were in the under 15 / under 16 (male) age-group. Ages are at 31st December 2027.



TB would have liked more under 12s but recognised that they would be assessed on Grade 3 figures, which is a considerable step for 11-year-olds. TB asked clubs to point any outstanding 11-year-olds who turn 12yrs next year towards the Regional Games.

Action: Club representatives to signpost any outstanding swimmers aged 11yrs -turning 12yrs next year -to TB

26/30.3 KC will be coaching, and TB confirmed that Olivia Taylor is joining KB as a coach and thanked her for volunteering.

26/30.4 KB reported that the squad had made a huge improvement in the previous year and hoped to maintain progress, although TB noted that gains become harder the further up the squad progresses.

26/30.5 TB asked AD to share, as quickly as possible, any amended rules released by Swim England, as the previous year amended rules had been issued at about this time, changing the criteria the squad had been working towards and being very disruptive.

Action: AD to pass on to TB and the coaches any amended Regional Games rules or criteria as soon as they are received

26/30.6 AD offered support if the Regional Games team needed anything and wished the squad well.

26/31 Any other business

26/31.1 Petition for GCSE and A level recognition

KD advised that Norwich had prepared a petition, addressed to Parliament, to have Artistic Swimming recognised for GCSE and A level. AD noted that it had previously been available as a GCSE. KD asked whether she could post the petition in the group chat so that members could pass it around their clubs and sign it if they agreed. The Group agreed. The Dacorum representative confirmed that Dacorum had already signed it. KD had also shared the petition on Facebook.

Actions: KD to post the petition in the group chat. Club representatives to share it with their clubs and sign if in agreement

26/31.2 KD advised that Norwich had lost access to its pool from 1st September 2026, earlier than expected because building work had been brought forward. Norwich had access to another pool, but it was not deep, and the club had therefore not yet committed to any plans. KD asked whether Norwich swimmers might be able to use other clubs' pools and offered Norwich's help to other clubs across the Region.

26/32 Confidential items

26/32.1 There were no confidential items.

26/33 Next meeting

26/33.1 The next meeting will take place on 14th November 2026.

26/33.2 AD proposed that the 2027 meeting dates be discussed at the next meeting. The 2027 plan and budget will also be considered then.