



## Swim England East Region

### Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors

1<sup>st</sup> September 2026 at 19:00, via Zoom

|                 |                        |                   |
|-----------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Present:</b> | Stewart Murray (SMu)   | Regional Chairman |
|                 | Keith Belton (KB)      | Finance Manager   |
|                 | Gerry Metcalf (GM)     | Vice-Chairman     |
|                 | Ian Mackenzie (IM)     | Director          |
|                 | Sheila Mackenzie (SMa) | Director          |
|                 | Helen Stephens (HS)    | Director          |

**Also in attendance:** Fran Vesztrocy (FV), Regional Welfare Officer  
Lottie Thompson (LT), Specialist

#### 26/108 Apologies and introductions

26/108.1 Apologies were received from James Salmon (JSa).

#### 26/109 Declarations of conflicts of interest

26/109.1 No conflicts of interest were declared.

#### 26/110 Safeguarding and Welfare report

26/110.1 FV provided an update on national safeguarding and welfare developments, including the significant changes to Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) arrangements. The changes had been communicated across the Region and had generated some enquiries from club welfare officers. The regional team had reviewed the Government guidance, which was considered clearer in some respects than the initial information received through Swim England governance channels.

26/110.2 The National Welfare Forum is now meeting more regularly. Following discussions involving the East, London and South West Regions with Fiona Walpole Bourne, National Safe Aquatics Development Officer, it had been agreed that regional officers would have greater involvement in the content of the national forum. It was also understood that permission would be sought to allow presentations from the forum to be shared through the welfare officer network. This was welcomed as a means of reducing



duplication and ensuring that useful national material reached welfare officers who had been unable to attend individual forums.

- 26/110.3 FV reported that Charlotte Cotton had started at the end of June as the East Zone Safeguarding Officer, covering the East Region and London Region. The original arrangement of monthly updates had been challenged because the Region did not have direct access to the case management system. Weekly update meetings had consequently been established, with flexibility to cancel an update where there was no new information.
- 26/110.4 FV reported on an Active Sports Partnership event she had attended in July. It had focused on inclusive activity. The learning was considered useful and would inform future regional welfare activity and potentially the next regional welfare conference.
- 26/110.5 The national safeguarding team had experienced further staff turnover following two resignations shortly after the team had become fully staffed. Recruitment had taken place and one replacement had started. Work was continuing to clear the backlog of cases.
- 26/110.6 As of 24th August, seven safeguarding cases remained open, of which two were being dealt with by an external agency. In response to a question from SMu as to whether these were recent or historical cases, FV confirmed that three were recent. Historical cases were being worked through, particularly where outcomes or sanctions had previously been difficult for clubs to manage. The Region was seeking to be involved in the consideration of outcomes so that any requirements placed on individuals were practicable for the club if the individual returned.
- 26/110.7 FV identified a regional concern arising from some welfare and safeguarding matters being reported to committee members rather than to the club welfare officer. In some cases, the information had not been passed on promptly. One case had resulted in serious consequences and the committee member concerned had stood down.
- 26/110.8 FV advised that safeguarding was a responsibility of the whole committee, but that committee members were not always given sufficient guidance to distinguish welfare matters from safeguarding matters. She had discussed the issue with Fiona Walpole Bourne, National Safe Aquatics Development Officer, and was seeking clearer written guidance for committee members. It was hoped that this would be incorporated into the next edition of WavePower or, if necessary, issued separately.
- 26/110.9 FV reported that regional data for quarter two, to the end of June, showed 46 referrals compared with 57 in quarter one. Eight of the 46 referrals had been referred through the Region to Swim England Safeguarding for triage or independent investigation, and all eight



had been retained by Swim England Safeguarding. Ten cases were categorised as 'other', including information-sharing, racism and social media enquiries.

- 26/110.10 SMu asked whether FV was confident that newly appointed club welfare officers were aware of the links to the Regional and County Welfare Officers. FV advised that she was not completely confident. She had a document prepared for new welfare officers but did not always know when a club had appointed a replacement. The process therefore relied partly on handover by the outgoing welfare officer, attendance by FV at the start of regional Time to Listen courses, and regular communications to club welfare addresses.
- 26/110.11 SMu noted the turnover of welfare officers and questioned whether relying on the regional newsletter was sufficient given its limited readership. FV advised that she sent communications to county welfare officer and that engaged clubs generally passed her details to new welfare officers but accepted that there was no fail-safe mechanism.
- 26/110.12 IM asked whether Swim England Membership advised FV when a club registered a new welfare officer. FV confirmed that it did not. She also noted that personal email addresses could result in Swim England communications being filtered into junk folders. Club welfare email addresses established through club management systems were more reliable and professional.
- 26/110.13 SMa asked whether the Active Sports Partnership course attended by FV had involved a cost. FV confirmed that attendance had been free.
- 26/110.14 SMa asked whether 'East Zone' was the current terminology for the relevant matrix or squad arrangement. FV confirmed that Swim England uses 'East Zone' and also refers to the Matrix /Squads. She generally used 'East Zone' for clarity.
- 26/110.15 The Board noted the safeguarding update and the need for clear routes of communication to new welfare officers. No additional Board action was recorded from the discussion.

## 26/111

### Minutes

- 26/111.1 The minutes of the Board meeting held on 14th July 2026 were considered.
- 26/111.2 SMa queried paragraph 26/104.3, noting that it stated that the proposal had been agreed without identifying what the proposal was. It was clarified that the wording should record that the proposed regional awards categories and the awards document circulated had been agreed.
- 26/111.3 SMa undertook to amend the wording when tidying the minutes.

- 26/111.4 Subject to this amendment, the minutes were approved as an accurate record.

**26/112 Matters arising – Action Log**

**26/112.1 Stock insurance**

KB confirmed that he had completed part of the insurance proposal process but had been unable to obtain the quotation until information about the construction of the storage building had been confirmed. He had requested the information and followed it up. KB confirmed that the process of obtaining quotations for insurance of the contents remained ongoing.

**26/112.2 SumUp machine**

KB reported that he had not yet made contact with Ian Rollinson regarding the SumUp machine. He intended to progress the matter as soon as possible.

**26/112.3 Water Polo costume stock**

The remaining stock had been advertised. No sales had yet been reported, which KB considered unsurprising during the summer period. The stock would continue to be promoted as swimming activity resumed and would be offered more widely, including for training use rather than only to Water Polo participants. SMu proposed retaining the item in the newsletter for a further period before considering whether unsold stock should be written off.

**26/112.4 2027 affiliation fees**

The Board confirmed that the matter was to be dealt with under financial planning for 2027. The figures discussed at the previous meeting had been developed further by KB for confirmation and approval.

**26/112.5 His Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) mileage rates**

SMu confirmed that Swim England had communicated that its mileage rate remained at 45 pence per mile. The Region's established position was to follow Swim England's guidance. KB noted that adopting a different rate could create inconsistencies between staff and volunteers and confirmed that, for budgeting purposes, the current position should be followed for the next year.

**26/112.6 Water Polo Inter-Regional finance**

KB had sought clarification about money received into the Region's account from Inter-Regional activity, including door takings and associated costs such as card fees and the movement of equipment. The response received had not clearly established the governance arrangements or the destination of funds. KB had also queried a bank account appearing on documentation branded as Swim England. The account did not appear to be a Swim England account. IM identified the historical connection with West Midlands Region but confirmed that the current position required further



clarification. KB and IM agreed to take the detailed investigation offline, and KB would locate and review the relevant documentation.

**Action:** KB and IM to investigate inter-regional finance issues

26/112.7 **Bursary document**

The Board noted that the bursary criteria and application form had now been combined into a single document, so that applicants would see the eligibility criteria and application requirements together.

26/112.8 No other outstanding matters from the Action Log were raised for further Board decision at this meeting.

**26/113 Ratification of Items agreed since 14<sup>th</sup> July**

26/113.1 No items required formal ratification. The 2027 financial proposal was considered under item 26/115.

**26/114 Finance**

26/114.1 KB advised that, because the meeting had been brought forward to 1st September, there had not been sufficient time to circulate a full August budget report. The July report had been circulated and showed some areas requiring further review. KB noted that some expenditure, including Luton pool hire, had now been incurred and that the August position would provide a more meaningful basis for assessing the current year forecast.

26/114.2 KB explained that the timing of expenditure and the receipt of invoices made forecasting more difficult at this point in the year. Some budgeted activities had not yet taken place, or the corresponding invoices had not yet been received. Further review would therefore be required as the relevant activity and invoices came through.

26/114.3 Board members were invited to raise detailed questions on the July and forthcoming August reports directly with KB.

26/114.4 Stock insurance quotations remained outstanding for the reason recorded at 26/112.1. KB confirmed that he could not proceed with the quotation until the required building information had been obtained.

**26/115 Financial planning for 2027**

26/115.1 KB presented the proposed changes to the regional affiliation fees following the work agreed at the July meeting. The proposal considered the existing Club Train, Club Compete and fixed club fee structure.



- 26/115.2 KB advised that the fixed £35 club fee had generated approximately £4,270 in 2025. Eight organisations paid only the £35 element - five were leagues and a small number were organisations with specific membership structures. The analysis indicated that removing the £35 fixed fee and adding £2 to each of Club Train and Club Compete would result in only a small number of very small organisations paying less, while increasing regional income overall.
- 26/115.3 KB estimated that the proposed change would generate approximately £35,000 additional income per year, representing around 70% of the current budget deficit. If the £35 fee were retained, the equivalent contribution towards the deficit would be around 75%. The Board therefore considered that the financial effect of removing the fixed fee was not materially different to retaining it in terms of the overall deficit position, while the revised structure would spread the increase across the relevant activity fees.
- 26/115.4 SMu noted that Swim England was also considering an increase to its own membership fees for 2027, understood at the time of the meeting to be somewhere between 5% and 10%, closer to 5%, although this had not yet been formally published or confirmed. He considered that this did not materially alter the Region's proposal, given the historic lack of increase in regional fees.
- 26/115.5 KB noted that one regional fee had not been increased since 2013 and another had not been increased since 2020, while Swim England's fees had increased more regularly. The Board recognised the need to address the Region's underlying financial position.
- 26/115.6 SMA sought clarification as to whether the proposal meant that the £35 club fee would be removed. KB confirmed that it would.
- 26/115.7 The Board agreed the proposed 2027 affiliation fee structure to be an increase of £2 to Club Train, an increase of £2 to Club Compete, and removal of the separate £35 club fee.
- 26/115.8 The Board also considered the wider review of event entry fees, and spectator charges. KB reported that the charges for the different disciplines had been collated, with Water Polo the remaining area still to be incorporated. The data was showing opportunities for greater consistency, particularly in spectator charges, while recognising that event-specific costs and formats would continue to justify different entry fees.
- 26/115.9 KB confirmed that the fee analysis would be an input into the next Regional Operations Committee (ROC) meeting so that the Leadership Groups could consider areas where a degree of consistency could be achieved.

- 26/115.10 The Board discussed the timing of the next ROC meeting. A proposed date of 14th September at 19:30 conflicted with another meeting in the Board calendar. Given the limited preparation time and the need for meaningful budget input, the Board agreed that the ROC meeting should be postponed and rescheduled for a later suitable date.

**Action:** FV to remind JSa and the relevant team to reschedule the ROC meeting and to ensure that the existing ROC members receive a cancellation of 14th September meeting

- 26/115.11 The Board agreed that the revised affiliation fee structure should form part of the 2027 financial planning and budgeting process.

## 26/116

### Minutes from the Leadership Group meetings

- 26/116.1 The Board considered the Leadership Group papers circulated for the meeting. The papers available comprised two Diving meetings, one Artistic Swimming meeting, and one Masters meeting.

- 26/116.2 Diving: The Board reviewed the two Diving Leadership Group sets of minutes. No questions were raised on the substance of the minutes and no actions required escalation to the Board. The actions recorded were being managed within the Group.

- 26/116.3 Artistic Swimming: The Board considered the June Artistic Swimming minutes, which were noted to be comprehensive and detailed. SMa reported that the Group continued to experience concerns about the rollout of courses, competition judging processes and communication. Despite these difficulties, the Group was working constructively and providing detailed input.

26/116.3.1 The Board revisited the previously raised concern regarding the presentation of medals and recognition for the East Region Artistic Swimming Squad. SMu noted his concern about the treatment of winners and the return of medals. IM confirmed that he had not yet been able to progress the matter because of overseas competitions. SMu confirmed that regional recognition for the squad was being arranged and that the President was expected to make a presentation at a suitable event.

- 26/116.4 Masters: The Board considered the Masters minutes. No substantive questions were raised on the minutes. KB provided additional information concerning arrangements for entries and a previous exchange relating to an athlete in Ireland.
- KB advised that he was no longer undertaking the entries work and that Bernie Buck had volunteered to undertake the process, with Emma Winter (EW) having accepted this arrangement. KB recommended close monitoring of the entry process because timing difficulties in the previous year had arisen from issues with the system and the timing of entries.



GM confirmed that she would not attend the forthcoming meeting because of other swimming commitments and that IM would attend instead. SMu asked IM to raise the timing issue and seek assurance that the event timetable and entry process would be appropriate, given the difficulties experienced in the previous year.

26/116.5 The Board approved the Leadership Group minutes considered.

## **26/117**

### **Risk Register and risk assessments**

26/117.1 The Board reviewed the Risk Register and Issues Log in light of the matters discussed during the meeting and the Leadership Group minutes.

26/117.2 No new risks or issues were identified. The Board considered that the existing Risk Register remained valid.

26/117.3 The Board noted that financial planning, affiliation fee changes and the wider review of income and expenditure continued to provide the principal mitigation against the Region's identified financial risk.

## **26/118**

### **Regional Manager's report**

26/118.1 FV summarised the Regional Manager's report prepared by JSa. Under Club Affiliation, one club had not yet completed all the required elements and was being supported to complete them.

26/118.2 The first club support drop-in session had been held in Norwich at the end of July, hosted by Sarah Barrow and JSa. Two clubs attended. Although attendance was limited, useful discussions took place and further communications were subsequently made with clubs by members of the team.

26/118.3 Regional Awards nominations continued to be promoted through social media and email signatures to improve awareness and encourage nominations.

26/118.4 FV provided an update on the new Sport:80 membership management system. Weekly training sessions were being delivered and recorded. The recording allows clubs and volunteers to catch up if unable to attend. A Teams channel was also being used for questions and implementation feedback. Questions raised by the regions were considered useful to the implementation team.

26/118.4.1 The implementation team was reporting that the system remained on schedule for go-live on 19th October. Extensive testing had been underway for several months and included representation from regions, clubs and counties.

26/118.4.2 SMu asked whether the Board should be confident that the new membership management system was progressing satisfactorily and that club liaison and communications were adequate. Fran



advised that the implementation team remained confident in the 19th October go-live date.

- 26/118.4.3 KB raised significant concerns about the financial implications of the new system. He understood that the system would take over elements of financial management and fee collection and that regions and counties would need new Stripe accounts. He questioned why a new account was necessary and raised concern that transaction fees would reduce the proportion of affiliation income retained by clubs, counties and the Region.
- 26/118.4.4 KB also noted that he had experience of setting up a Stripe account for the Region and that the process had previously been lengthy and difficult. He was concerned that the requirements had not been communicated clearly to counties and that, in his capacity as a registration officer for Norfolk, he had not received sufficient information about the implementation.
- 26/118.4.5 SMu asked whether KB was feeding these concerns back to the implementation team. KB confirmed that he had received an email from an implementation team member and intended to respond with questions seeking an explanation of why the Stripe account was required, what the implications would be if it were not established, and why charges would now apply to fee collection.
- 26/118.4.6 SMu considered that the issue overlapped with the wider digitalisation, governance and 'one membership' work being undertaken nationally. He agreed that the financial implications should be challenged and requested that KB copy him into the correspondence so that the issue could also be raised through the appropriate regional and national governance channels.
- Action:** KB to seek clarification from the membership system implementation team regarding Stripe requirements, fee collection charges, the effect on regional/county/club income and the consequences of non-compliance, and to copy SMu into the correspondence
- 26/118.4.7 SMu agreed to raise the matter through the relevant national/regional forum and to establish whether other regions and counties had received the same information.
- 26/118.5 SMa asked whether Colchester Phoenix had met the deadline at the beginning of September in relation to its affiliation requirements. Fran was unable to confirm the position. SMu noted that an extension had previously been provided over the holiday period and that the outstanding matters related principally to welfare, Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS), and OMS requirements. The matter remained under review, with Jo Stalley expected to monitor progress.

**26/119**                      **Any other business**

- 26/119.1      No additional business was raised.

**26/120**                      **Confidential Items**

- 26/120.1      A governance update was scheduled for consideration by the Board as a confidential item.  
The Board stopped the meeting recording before the confidential discussion. The transcript therefore contains no substantive record of the governance update. In accordance with the confidential nature of the item, no further detail is included in these minutes.

**26/121**                      **Next Board meeting**

- 26/121.1      The next Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2026 at 19:00 via Zoom.

DRAFT