Swim England East Region

Minutes of the Open Water Swimming Leadership Group meeting

16th September 2026, at 7pm via Zoom

Present:	Paul Kendall (PK)	Swim England East Region Open Water Manager
	Jacqui Kendall (JK)	Norfolk Representative
	Ian Murray (IM)	Bedfordshire Representative
	Helen Stephens (HS)	Essex Representative
	Stephen Westwood (SW)	Specialist
	Marion Westwood (MW)	Specialist

Also present: James Salmon (JSa), Swim England East Region Regional Manager

26/26 Welcome

26/26.1 PK welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. He explained that the meeting would cover a debrief of the 2026 Open Water Championships and the plan and budget for 2027.

26/27 Apologies

26/27.1 Apologies were received from Stewart Murray, (SMu), Director Representative and Emma Winter, (EW), Regional Administrator. James Salmon attended on behalf of EW.

26/28 Declarations of conflict of interest

26/28.1 No declarations of conflict of interest were raised.

26/29 Previous minutes

26/29.1 The minutes from the meeting held on 6th May 2026 had been circulated by EW prior to the meeting. PK noted that the minutes related mostly to the 2026 Championships, which had now concluded, and that elements of them would be revisited during the event debrief (26/32).

26/29.2 The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record without amendment.

26/30 Matters arising

26/30.1 **Minute 26/17.6: Jury of Appeal — planning for 2027**

PK advised that a jury of appeal was not put in place for the 2026 Championships, the Group having agreed that the event would proceed without one. He noted that it needs to be included in the planning for next year's event. PK did not consider that this needed

lengthy discussion at this meeting, but the following points were raised.

26/30.1.1 HS asked whether all regional meets now need a jury of appeal.

PK believed so. He explained that at pool events a jury can readily be formed because a large number of officials are available who are not otherwise engaged. Open water does not have the same surplus of officials, and jury members should play no part in the event, which severely limits who can be asked. PK stated that he needs everyone he can get at an event at present.

26/30.1.2 SW asked whether the requirement is specific to Swim England East Region or derives from Swim England.

PK replied that it is an Aquatics GB requirement, laid down under the Swim England rules and regulations, and that each region must be able to provide an independent arbitration service. Appeals are initially handled by the chief referee or the technical director. Only if a matter goes beyond a simple issue is an independent person or persons needed to arbitrate separately from those involved in the event. PK understood that other open water events, including Lake 86, are considering how to deal with this going forward.

26/30.1.3 JK asked whether the jury member must be uninvolved in the event for the entire day, or whether, for example, an official with no role in the 5K race, but working on the preceding or following races, could serve.

PK responded that ideally the person should have had no involvement in any element of the day so that they are completely neutral. He accepted that the only practical approach may be to use someone who was not involved at the point in the day when the issue arose, but stated that he would need direction from the Board on this.

26/30.1.4 SW stressed the importance of parity across all regions, since if some regions introduced a jury and others did not it could open up questions and issues.

26/30.1.5 HS asked whether the Group could liaise with another region so that officials from that region act as the jury of appeal, and vice versa.

PK thanked HS for the suggestion but explained that there are not enough officials for inter-regional involvement. He suggested that a jury member could be someone familiar with swimming, though not necessarily open water, who can consider the facts of an incident as presented and make a sensible determination. Some matters may have to be resolved after the event; however, anything affecting the conduct of the event must be dealt with swiftly, which is why appeals are first considered by the chief referee, with an independent body used only if that does not resolve the matter.

26/30.1.6 PK confirmed that it needed to be looked at for next year.

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Action: PK to seek direction from the Board on the jury of appeal requirement and include it in the 2027 plan

26/30.2 **Minute 26/19.5: Appeal for volunteers and officials**

PK believed that the prominent appeal for volunteers and officials in the regional newsletter and on the website was good. He noted that attracting volunteers is an ongoing challenge and that it is disappointing not to receive more from the local community around Whitlingham. Volunteers travel from across the Region and are very good, but a few additional local people who know the facilities would be welcome.

26/31 2026 Plan and Budget

26/31.1 **Financial report**

PK asked whether members of the Group had received the financial report for the 2026 Championships circulated by EW. Members had not, so PK read out the figures while JSa shared the statement on screen.

26/31.2 **Income**

26/31.2.1 **2026 Championships**

Entry fees: £12,575
County support: £1,800
Refreshment sales (barbecue): £1,402
Fine Designs clothing sales (income to the Region): ££1,566.20
Coaches' passes: £315
Total event income: £17,658.20

26/31.2.2 **Development Day**

Income from the Development Day participation fees was a further **£2,040**.

26/31.2.3 **The total income** received to date is **£19,698.20.**

26/31.3 **Outgoings**

26/31.3.1 PK updated the statement on the screen, as further costs had been identified. The safety canoe claim (£1,084) had been submitted late and was not paid immediately. The barbecue gas cost (£100.62) was also added, as no stock was available when the tank was first due to be replenished. Total outgoings to date are £19,173.50.

26/31.3.2 Excluding the Development Day fees and charges, event outgoings were £16,992.81, giving a profit of just over £665 on the Championships themselves. Overall, the year to date remains in a profit position of just over £524.

26/31.3.3 PK explained that the lake event also supports the development of the sport, and that the Development Day income helps to support the overall budget level.

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26/31.3.4 PK noted that further costs are still to be applied. A stopwatch is away for repair at just under £200, and several buoys need patching. If one cannot be patched it will need to be replaced at a cost of approximately £160.

26/31.4 **Car park marshalling — cost query**

HS asked whether a payment had been made for the people who managed the car park. PK could not see this on the statement and suspected that it had been included under one of the miscellaneous Championships costs, but had not seen the bill separately. JSa agreed to check with the finance team where it had been accounted for and to let PK know.

The operational discussion on car park management is recorded at 26/32.12.

Action: JSa to check with the finance team where the car park marshalling cost has been accounted for and advise PK

26/31.5 **Performance against budget**

PK compared the budgeted and actual income and outgoings. Income was just under 4% below expectation, and outgoings were around 10% below what had been anticipated. Overall the 2026 budget performed well.

26/31.5.1 The main variance was entry fee income, which achieved 93% of the budgeted figure, leaving it almost £1,000 short. On the outgoings side, refreshments were underspent by up to half of the amount budgeted, and the cost of officials' accommodation had been overestimated. PK advised that the 2027 budget can be managed by adjusting these expected outgoings and income.

26/31.5.2 PK stated that he could not identify why entry numbers were lower than expected. He explained that the budget had been set with the aim of matching the level of the sport's peak just before COVID.

26/31.6 **Entry fees for 2027**

PK noted that the entry fee for the major events and for the 1K swim has not changed for the past five years, while national inflation has risen considerably over that period. If take-up in 2027 is similar to 2026, fees may need to increase slightly so that income and outgoings balance.

26/31.6.1 HS asked how East Region's fees compare with those of other regions.

JK had researched this and reported that East Region's 1K fee (£25) is the same as London Region's 1K fee. East Region has charged £30 for the 2K, 3K and 5K for the last five years, whereas London's website showed £40 for those distances this year. East Region's fees are in line with the South West Region's event. JK had no information for the North East and North West Regions. The only event with fees significantly below East Region is the four-region Lake 86 event,

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which charges £15 per entry regardless of distance and made a profit of 78p across the four regions this year.

JK suggested leaving the 1K at £25 and increasing the longer events by £2 to £32.

It was agreed that the entry fee for the 2K, 3K and 5K events will increase by £2 (from £30 to £32) for 2027. The 1K fee will remain at £25.

PK advised that the increase is subject to Board agreement and that the figures will be put to the Board as part of the budget submission.

26/31.7 **Equipment maintenance, repair or replacement**

PK explained that the Region originally provided a grant to purchase the equipment currently in use. The cost has since been depreciated to the point where there is no depreciation charge in the budget. He was unsure where equipment replacement sits within the Board's processes. He anticipated that if the Board were asked to fund two replacement pencil buoys and the stopwatch repair, the cost would again be depreciated over around five years and asked whether a fund should be built up for replacing larger items. The buoys and stopwatches are the most expensive items. The remainder is incidental.

PK also reported that three or four chip timing transponders had not been returned to the timing supplier, at £55 each, and there is no explanation of how they went unaccounted for. He stated that the process for retrieving equipment from swimmers as they leave the water needs to be strengthened so that a charge for missing items is not incurred again.

JK noted that little more could be done on equipment unless the Board were asked about replacement items. PK agreed to raise this with the Board.

Action: PK to ask the Board about the funding, depreciation and replacement of equipment (replacement buoys, stopwatch repair, and a replacement fund for larger items)

Action: PK to strengthen the process for retrieving chip timing transponders from swimmers as they leave the water

26/31.8 **Next steps on the 2027 budget**

26/31.8.1 PK will populate a draft 2027 budget submission sheet, with comments alongside where values could be increased or decreased so that the budget balances as closely as possible. He will email it to members of the Group tomorrow.

26/31.8.2 PK will attend the Regional Operational Committee meeting the following week and so asked members of the Group to respond, before the end of this week.

26/31.8.3 SW asked that the sail banner for registration (see 26/32.4) be included in the submission.

Action: PK to email the draft 2027 budget submission sheet to members of the Group on 17th September 2026

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Action: All members to respond to PK by the end of that week, confirming whether or not they approve the draft budget

26/32 Open Water Championships 2026

26/32.1 **Feedback questionnaire — overview**

PK thanked the regional staff for collating the feedback and stated that, overall, it was not bad feedback. The numerical dissatisfaction and very dissatisfied responses were very low, and comments were much better than in previous years. PK summarised the report as follows.

Key strengths identified

- Excellent organisation and smooth delivery of the event
- A welcoming, friendly and inclusive atmosphere
- High standards of safety, with particular praise for the number and visibility of safety personnel on the water
- Positive experiences with registration, waste management and volunteer support
- Effective mentoring and support for technical officials, particularly those undertaking new roles
- Strong appreciation of the efforts of volunteers and organisers

Areas for improvement identified

- Reducing waiting times between race briefings and race starts, particularly for young swimmers
- Improving communication of medal presentation times so that competitors do not miss the presentations
- Enhancing public announcements and signage, particularly for merchandise collection and registration
- Reviewing race scheduling and wave spacing to minimise congestion during some events
- Expanding catering options, including additional hot food and drinks, and reducing queuing times
- Increasing the range of merchandise and improving signage for pre-order collections

The report concluded that respondents consistently described the Championships as one of the best organised open water events they had attended, praising the friendly atmosphere, smooth operation and professionalism of the volunteer team. It recommended that the feedback be reviewed and, where appropriate, incorporated into planning for future Championships.

26/32.2 **Waiting times and the 2K muster**

PK noted that the 2K swim attracted the most comments, although it was not the largest event. Respondents felt that the wait on the deck was too long once everyone had arrived and the deck was very busy,

which could be discouraging for some younger swimmers. PK advised that there is little that can be done to shorten this, as competitors must be mustered together and confirmed present.

26/32.3 **Medal presentations, county medals and photography**

26/32.3.1 PK reported comments that medal presentations were sometimes held ahead of schedule and that, if the announcement was not heard, competitors arriving at the scheduled time missed them.

26/32.3.2 Respondents also commented that county medals are presented on the deck rather than in the viewing area, making it hard for families to see results or return to the county desks, and asked for an area on the deck where families and non-participants could photograph medal ceremonies. PK noted that this is difficult to achieve because county medals are handled on the decking.

26/32.3.3 The Group had earlier discussed presenting all medals (regional and county) on the banking so that there is one location. However, the county desks are away from the crowd on the deck, and the infrastructure is not there to place county tables and medals outside the Whitlingham cover while an event is being swum.

JK explained that additional 3x3 gazebos would be needed on the banking and there is no space for them, so the county trophies must stay on the decking.

26/32.3.4 JK asked whether the county medals could be presented on the 1-2-3 podium on the banking, with trophies remaining on the deck. She suggested that, where a swimmer has also won a trophy, they could collect it from the deck afterwards, or alternatively the county representative could take the trophy up to present with the medal on the banking while all other trophies remain on the deck, so that families see the medal presented.

This arrangement would depend on having enough people to do it. At least two people would be needed per county, and volunteers are often already covering more than one role.

26/32.3.5 No decision was taken on the presentation of county medals. The Group noted the staffing implications for the counties.

26/32.3.6 PK advised that the medal presentation times are set in the schedule. If the efficiency of obtaining results allows medals to be presented earlier, he will go through the timing system with EW so that there is greater clarity on when presentations can take place and how this is communicated.

Action: PK to go through the timing system with EW to give greater clarity on when medal presentations can take place and how this is announced

26/32.4 **Signage, announcements and registration**

26/32.4.1 PK reported comments that parents queued for a long time in the merchandise tent believing it to be registration, which was further along the path. PK had not expected this to be an issue as the

registration signage deliberately says “Registration” and gives a direction arrow.

SW confirmed that the registration signs run from the split between the car parks, along the banking and then to the right towards the tent. He noted that the Group does not provide merchandise signage, as that is the supplier’s responsibility.

JK suggested that the merchandise queue had grown so long that it formed in front of the registration signs on the left-hand side of the path, hiding them, and proposed placing the signs on the opposite side of the path. PK suggested a larger banner at head height on top of the registration tent so that it is visible from further away.

26/32.4.2 SW suggested purchasing a sail banner saying “Registration” to stand beside the tent, and PK agreed. JSa estimated the cost at around £100.

PK stated that, as this involves branding, it needs to go via the Board. JSa advised that rather than submitting a deviation request now, the banner could be included in the 2027 budget, which the Board would approve, leaving plenty of time to order it.

SW asked if the Region might buy the banner which could then possibly be used at pool championships. JSa and PK advised that it would only be used at open water events.

It was decided that a sail banner for registration will be included in the 2027 budget submission for Board approval.

Action: PK to include the registration sail banner (approximately £100) in the 2027 budget submission

26/32.5 **Race scheduling, wave spacing and start-line congestion**

PK reported on comments about race scheduling and wave spacing.

26/32.5.1 Swimmers were reported to have caught up with the tail end of another wave, impeding their swim. PK noted that the first four boys in the first 2K wave reached the middle of the pack of a later wave (possibly the third), which hampered their race and confused some of the girls, some of whom had to tread water after the first 100 metres. PK has a video of this.

26/32.5.2 IM asked whether the remedy would be to lengthen rather than shorten the time between starts if swimmers were catching those from the previous wave.

PK clarified that the complaint concerned swimmers from the first wave catching swimmers from a later wave.

26/32.5.3 IM described a problem in one of the 2K girls’ waves. He explained that the swimmers were effectively on two “steps”, and that the swimmers on the second step entered the water and swam straight forward, pushing between the swimmers from the first step, instead of moving to the end of the line. This effectively put twice as

many swimmers in the same space. IM believed that this was confined to that particular wave.

SW confirmed that the wave had to be split because all swimmers could not physically enter the water at the same time. Swimmers were reluctant to spread along the rope at each start and wished to stay together. They were also reluctant to move to the left (the finish side of the lake) because they perceived it as a disadvantage, as they would have to swim further to cut back to the right.

SW suggested that the layout of the first part of the course be reviewed so that there is no perceived disadvantage in moving left. IM considered that the second group should have been directed to the end of the line already formed, and SW noted that the swimmers had been told to spread out and had ignored the instruction.

26/32.5.4 PK explained that the start rope is secured to a post on the banking beneath the spectator area and stretched across the full width, so there is scope to spread swimmers further to the right as they enter the water.

SW noted that this might require the starter to be on a boat or, if no boat is available, the start to be moved to the spectator banking with an area reserved for it. JK confirmed that at this event the referee was on a boat and the starter was on the bank on the finish side. SW pointed out that if the start is moved further right, the starter on the finish side could be double the distance from the start line. PK noted that a long start line with the starter distant from the swimmers is not unusual, and that the reeds at the new location would need to be cut back.

The Group agreed to look at extending the start line to the right to relieve congestion at the start of the larger races.

Action: PK to look at options for extending the start line to the right, including starter and referee positioning and reed cutting at that location, to relieve congestion at the start of the larger races.

26/32.6 **5K start delay**

26/32.6.1 PK asked whether there had been a delay to the 5K start.

SW initially thought the start was away within about five minutes but then recalled that there had been a problem. The intermediate turn buoy at the top end of the lake could not be retrieved, and he went out in a boat to resolve it. He could not recall the length of the delay but believed the event still finished on time.

26/32.6.2 PK noted that people expect open water to run like a pool event, with starts to the second, which is not always possible.

26/32.7 **Catering**

PK reported requests for expanded catering, including additional hot food and drinks, and reduced queuing.

26/32.7.1 HS asked whether a pizza van could be added to complement the ice cream van.

JK had concerns about a pizza van, as the event would not make a profit without the barbecue, and a pizza van would give the Region no income and would substantially reduce barbecue takings, to the detriment of the budget.

26/32.7.2 PK stated that the Country Park had licensed an ice cream van some years ago on the basis that it would receive a share of the income. The Park considered that it was not receiving the income it expected despite the queues, and, having created its own ice cream sales area separate from the Flint Barn, withdrew the van's permission to operate on the park. This was the Country Park's decision and cannot be controlled by the Group. JK suggested that event notes state that the ice cream van is no longer permitted on the park but that ice cream (soft-serve style) is available at the Flint Barn, so that participants know where to go. PK agreed that promoting the facilities available is all the Group can do.

26/32.7.3 JK reported that she had asked the local butcher what it would cost to make all barbecue meat gluten-free so that only gluten-free rolls needed to be provided. The butcher advised that this would increase meat costs by at least 25%, and gluten-free rolls are considerably more expensive than ordinary rolls, so it is not financially viable.

Dietary requirements are catered for individually for volunteers, coaches and other helpers, who are asked in advance, with named meals stored in the Pod 8 fridge. Members of the public with dietary needs will need to provide for themselves.

26/32.7.4 SW raised a wider point, that if summers continue as hot and dry as the last one there is a risk of being told that barbecues cannot be used, given the use of naked flames near bushes. JK confirmed that fire extinguishers and fire blankets are kept beside the barbecue and that she would need to take advice from Graham at the Country Park. SW noted that the barbecue is a significant income source and that the event may have been fortunate this year, and that the Group should keep it in mind.

26/32.7.5 SW commented that the Group cannot cater for everyone, and that anyone with a known condition should bring their own provisions.

26/32.7.6 JK noted that feedback on the food was better this year than previously. The Flint Barn café is open all day and offers alternatives, including gluten-free options. PK confirmed that both hot and cold drinks were available.

JK added that ice poles were bought and kept in the freezer because of the heat, with more bought during the day when stocks ran short.

26/32.7.7 It was decided that a pizza van will not be pursued because of the impact on barbecue income, and an entirely gluten-free barbecue will not be pursued because of the cost.

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26/32.8 **Accommodation, parking passes and event information**

26/32.8.1 PK reported a comment that participants had not realised that there was a campsite nearby. PK and IM agreed that it is not the Region's role to point out hotels and campsites, noting that this is not done for the regional pool championships.

26/32.8.2 PK reported a comment about free parking for coaches, team managers and volunteers. JK confirmed that all volunteers, including those organised by HS, receive a pass, VIPs receive one free, and coaches pay for parking. SW suggested that the comment might relate to the marshalling problem with people being misdirected into the paid car park.

26/32.8.3 PK reported a further comment that it should be clearer that team managers need to purchase a pass rather than use the free Swim England team manager pass.

PK confirmed that some people had turned up with the free pass, and JK confirmed that they were able to get in with them. JK acknowledged that the website could have been clearer about what team managers needed to buy.

26/32.9 **Other comments**

26/32.9.1 PK noted the comments thanking the organisers and volunteers, and one respondent who was disappointed that some Norfolk clubs were poorly represented or not represented at all. PK advised that this is a county matter and not one the Group can address.

26/32.9.2 PK reported criticism that Essex gave only medals, whereas the other counties presented trophies, hats and pennants, and that Essex did not even have a person to present the medals. HS explained that the Essex representative had been unwell and unable to attend.

26/32.9.3 PK reported a comment that officials missed some leg pulling in the water. PK stated that open water is an event where an official cannot be positioned over every swimmer, and that the officials do their best to ensure that the swim is conducted fairly. SW suggested that anyone with such concerns could become an official and help to monitor the event.

26/32.10 **Disqualifications for failing to touch the finish; support for participants with additional needs**

26/32.10.1 PK reported that some participants were disqualified for failing to touch the finish as briefed. He investigated several of these and was satisfied that there was no reason to assume that the swimmers had finished within a pack, as there were seconds between them and the nearest swimmers, and that no official at the finish could have failed to see a swimmer touch. Those who approached PK were effectively seeking an informal jury of appeal, and he was able to satisfy them that there was no case to answer.

26/32.10.2 PK also reported on an email passed on by JSa from the parent of a disqualified swimmer who had additional support needs

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(see confidential item 26/35). The tone of the email might have led to an appeal, but PK had pointed out that as the swimmer had not touched the finish, they would have been disqualified regardless.

26/32,10.2.1 PK noted that this highlights that swimmers with a condition not recognised by Swim England as a formal classification may nonetheless need additional support to participate, and that the Group should consider whether the medical declaration and conditions for future events should give swimmers the opportunity to make the organisers aware of such needs.

26/32.10.2.2 SW commented that had the organisers been informed, they would have provided support on the day. PK noted that the swimmer's medical form had not indicated any need for additional support.

26/32.10.2.3 JK explained, from her reading of the email, that in the pool the swimmer's own coach normally prompts him before he gets onto the blocks, but at this event the swimmer's coach was not present and the person present was a parent who was a coach for another swimmer.

Had the organisers been told, an official could easily have reminded the swimmer to touch the finish. JK noted that the swimmer navigated the course, including the start and all the turns, but forgot to touch the finish, and that quite a few swimmers, with or without additional needs, also forgot to touch.

26/32.10.2.4 IM described the measures his club takes with swimmers who need additional support, including ensuring that they understand the briefing beforehand and practising finish touches in pool training.

PK suggested reviewing the briefing so that there is a visual representation as well as a verbal instruction that swimmers must bring their hand up to touch the finish.

26/32.10.2.5 PK asked the Group whether, for a swimmer who needs close support before entering the water, an additional person such as a parent should be allowed on the deck, or whether the swimmer's coach should be responsible for that support. PK noted that the circumstances could arise at any event around the country and that other events should be made aware.

26/32.10.2.6 SW read out a clause added to the conditions of the London Region Championships which was added following a complaint at that Region's Championships in 2025 – the promoter is committed to providing an inclusive environment and will make reasonable adjustments within the rules of open water swimming to enable participation where possible, safe and practicable. Any competitor who believes that they may need additional support or a specific adjustment, for example (but not limited to) a support swimmer or other agreed assistants, must declare this at the point of entry and before entries close, and requests made on the day will not be considered.

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The Group agreed that this was a fair inclusion and would be a good addition to the conditions. SW noted that it would address the situation, because if a competitor makes the organisers aware, they can deal with it.

PK asked SW for a draft, and said that the 2027 conditions must be gone through with a fine-tooth comb.

Decision: An inclusivity clause along the lines of the London Region wording, together with an opportunity to declare support needs at entry, will be considered for inclusion in the 2027 conditions, subject to a draft from SW

Action: SW to provide PK with draft wording for an inclusivity / reasonable adjustments clause for the conditions

Action: PK to review the 2027 conditions and the medical declaration, and to review the race briefing to add a visual as well as a verbal cue for touching the finish

26/32.11 **Merchandise — Fine Designs**

PK had emailed Fine Designs ahead of the meeting for their response to the comments raised. They responded as follows:-

26/32.11.1 **Merchandise availability:** Fine Designs had brought East Region Championships 2026 hats and sold 61 and will do so again next year. Feedback had requested small, low-cost items such as fit mats, drawstring bags, key charms, water bottles and microfibre towels. Smaller items could be supplied, but they would only carry generic East Region branding rather than event or year-specific branding, and because Fine Designs does not buy in bulk, they would not be competitively priced. Smaller items have been taken to other events with poor take-up, so Fine Designs does not want to pursue this as a revenue stream.

26/32,11.2 PK recalled that the Group had earlier explored tote or swim bags, but the Board had decided against it (Minute 26/17.3) and stated that he may need to speak to the Board again.

26/32.11.3 **Pre-order collection and signage:** Several attendees reported long waits because of mixed-up lines, with the pre-order queue not clearly identified. PK asked whether Fine Designs could use high-visibility, head-height signage directing people to a separate pre-order collection point. Fine Designs agreed, and expect online pre-order take-up to increase as word spreads.

26/32.11.4 **Waste management:** A quantity of cardboard packaging and plastic bags was left behind, and as Whitlingham has no public waste facilities a volunteer had to take the rubbish home. PK asked that Fine Designs note on the event paperwork that all vendor waste must be removed at pack-down. The Fine Designs manager replied that they were extremely frustrated to hear this, that their staff knew there were no bins, and that they would emphasise the point next year. They apologised for the burden on volunteers.

26/32.11.5 PK noted the criticism that some merchandise cost more than at the Nationals, which he accepted was true, but explained that

the Nationals items are not personalised, whereas the Fine Designs items are a basic garment with individual transfers applied, each of which adds to the cost.

26/32.11.6 PK considered that Fine Designs had listened to the Region's complaints, and that the only point they cannot help with is smaller, more pocket-money-friendly items.

Action: PK to speak to the Board again about options for lower-cost merchandise items

26/32.12 **Car park management — Phoenix Events**

26/32.12.1 PK reported that Phoenix Events had been engaged to provide three car park marshals to direct officials and members of the public into the car parks, principally the main car park opposite the Flint Barn. PK had met Phoenix's senior administrator at Whitlingham a couple of weeks before the event to agree where the vehicles should be placed and how the day should be run. The plan was to fill the main car park opposite the Flint Barn first and then work back towards the head of the road at the Norwich end.

On the day only two of the three marshals arrived at the start, and they did not carry out the task as agreed. PK thought that they may have reverted to a process used for a different event at the venue. The two marshals struggled. People were put into the wrong car parks, and officials were misdirected into the paid area rather than the unpaid field. The third marshal arrived between one and one and a half hours late, by which time most of the morning arrivals had parked. PK suspected that the late arrival may have been related to England's semi-final the night before, but could not be certain.

PK submitted a letter of complaint via JSa one to two weeks after the event and had received no response from Phoenix. Without any feedback, PK stated that he was reluctant to invite Phoenix to perform the same task next year.

26/32.12.2 HS asked whether there were other companies who could do it.

PK replied that there was another company, but it was further afield and considerably more expensive.

JK noted that Graham (Whitlingham Country Park) had been very complimentary about Phoenix on other events, and had been surprised when told of the problems, having used them many times without difficulty.

SW doubted that a reply from Phoenix would now be forthcoming, and noted that when he dealt with them, they had set ideas about how to work. He suggested a conversation with Graham to establish whether he is happy with the signage and mark-up as it is done now.

26/32.12.3 PK stated that parking of the public in public car parks is increasingly something parents prefer to do themselves, and that if the Region places vehicles outside the lines it could be held culpable if a parking enforcement officer finds them. PK suggested that the only parking needed is maybe to direct officials and canoeists to the

Flint Barn grass area and ensure that it is used correctly for them, letting competitors manage themselves into the other car parks.

26/32.12.4 SW pointed out that signage does not mean people read and follow it, and that the Region's management of car parking had also kept people out of car parks that the Country Park itself did not want used, which was another reason it was managed. He added that if officials are directed only to the field, the gate would need to be locked once they are in and staffed all day to let late arrivals and dignitaries in and out, so a volunteer would still be needed.

26/32.12.5 SW clarified that managing car parking was a condition of hiring the venue when the event became larger, and that the Group had been following instructions from the venue rather than creating the task for itself.

26/32,12.6 SW noted that the first car park previously used for officials could not be controlled. He had closed it off, and the rowing club removed the barriers and parked there, as they consider it their car park on a Sunday morning. PK suggested the Region may have inadvertently encroached on the rowing club's arrangements and that they may have had other activity that they had not shared.

26/32.12.7 SW commented that this was the first year that the traffic management team had not been present in person at that car park to issue permits to officials and direct them in.

26/32.12.8 PK suggested the Region should stay hands-off any car park with marked lines and let it fill up, noting that the topic had absorbed a disproportionate amount of discussion.

26/32,12,9 SW advised that when the Region's own team managed the parking there had been no issues, and stated that he was not happy with how the decision not to use his team's services this year had been handled, though he did not wish to pursue the matter further.

He confirmed he was willing to step back from car parking. SW also cautioned that people being on site helps to prevent expensive, jointly-owned equipment from going missing, and that if the Region moves to marking up a public facility without stewards it must be prepared to replace not only SW's equipment but regional equipment if items go missing.

26/32.12.10 PK summarised that officials and guests need greater clarity about the parking arrangements - what is available, when, and when areas will be closed off, to prevent misuse by spectators and swimmers. PK concluded that some form of car park management will need to be provided and that the arrangements will be revisited closer to the 2027 event.

It was decided that car parking arrangements for 2027 (including the future use of Phoenix Events) will be revisited closer to the event, and clearer information will be provided to officials and guests.

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Action: PK to revisit car park management for 2027 closer to the event, including a conversation with Graham at Whitlingham, and to give officials and guests clearer information on parking

26/32.13 **Improvements to be taken forward for 2027**

Based on feedback and the debrief, the following were agreed or noted for the 2027 Championships:

- Sail banner for registration, with registration signage repositioned or made more visible (26/32.4)
- Review of the start line and start layout for larger races (26/32.5)
- Clearer communication of medal presentation times, and review of the timing system (26/32.3)
- Clearer website information on passes for coaches and team managers (26/32.8)
- Event notes to say that ice cream is available at the Flint Barn (26/32.7)
- Inclusivity clause in the conditions, a visual cue at the race briefing and an opportunity to declare support needs at entry (26/32.10)
- Fine Designs to use head-height pre-order collection signage and to remove vendor waste (26/32.11)
- Revised car parking information and management arrangements (26/32.12)
- Stronger process for recovering chip timing transponders (26/31.7)

26/33 Open Water Terms of Reference

26/33.1 PK advised that the draft Terms of Reference had been circulated by EW with the meeting papers.

26/33.2 JSa explained that the aim is to have commonality across the different Leadership Groups, so that their Terms of Reference are similar, with tweaks for each Group.

26/33.3 The document was discussed. PK considered that it reflected the Group's working process and provided sound guidance. None of the Group offered amendments.

26/33.4 The Open Water Terms of Reference were agreed as drafted They will be held as part of the Region's Terms of Reference documents.

26/34 Any other business

26/34.1 **Swim England open water qualification — Swimming Teachers' Association (STA) award**

26/34.1.1 IM reported that he had finally received an answer from Claire Coleman (Swim England) on the recognition of the STA open water award compared with the Swim England award.

26/34.1.2 The prerequisite for the Swim England award is a Level 2 coaching award. A Level 2 coaching award is not a prerequisite for the STA award, so STA holders have not been trained to plan training sessions.

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26/34.1.3 Swim England had also said that STA holders would be allowed to take a free Swim England course. After four weeks of trying to get Claire Coleman to explain how to apply, IM contacted the Institute of Swimming and obtained a voucher code for the last course this year.

She had also stated that the STA award is effectively valid until March next year.

JSa asked how IM obtained the free course, and IM explained that he had pressed the Institute of Swimming with Claire Coleman's email offering a free course, which appeared to have caused confusion within Swim England because others had not known of the offer. IM will send JSa a copy of the email.

Action: IM to send JSa a copy of the email from Claire Coleman, Swim England about the free course

26/34.1.4 East Region had removed his club from offering open water because he held only an STA award and not a Swim England award. He doubted that the free course had been communicated to anyone else.

IM said he had been unable to find how the decision on STA coaches was made and remarked that decisions appear to be made in Swim England without being communicated.

PK observed that, on the same reasoning, a nationally recognised school teacher or someone holding a higher teaching qualification would also be unable to use that qualification for this purpose.

26/34.1.5 PK understood that the teaching and training of officials and coaches is subject to a large ongoing review whose outcome may not be released until next year.

26/34.1.6 IM also drew attention to the East Region website's page on teacher and coach education, which lists the prerequisites for open water coaching (including STA Level 2 Teaching and Swim England Assistant Swimming Coach). IM advised that these are incorrect. It was on this website that he had originally read the requirements.

JSa thanked IM, agreed to get the page updated, and to check other pages.

Action: JSa to update the coach education page of the East Region website - open water coaching prerequisites and course title - and check the other pages

26/34.2 **2027 Championships date:**

PK confirmed that the 2027 Championships will take place on 11th July 2027 - the same weekend as in 2026.

26/34.3 **National championships qualification:**

26/34.3.1 IM asked how many regional qualifiers actually compete at the Nationals, noting that one of his club's swimmers had qualified in the 5K and that, as far as he could tell, only three of the regional qualifiers took part.

PK did not have the information to hand.

26/34.3.2 PK advised that a national discussion was due to be held on the following Monday about how participants are admitted to the Nationals. Swimmers may qualify through a pool 1500m time, and their open water performance can be affected.

The Region can send five swimmers. If two of them have qualified on a pool time, the Region can send only three through the regional event.

PK understood that the discussion may consider whether pool-qualified swimmers - declared before the open water season starts - should be discounted from the regional allocation.

PK also indicated that the Aquatics GB team's core age-group for next year is 17 and 18-year-olds, which are currently a combined age-group, and that a split into separate age-groups might be reviewed.

PK stressed that no decisions had been made and that he was only making the Group aware of possible developments.

26/34.3.3 IM asked whether there are problems with pool qualifiers at the events.

PK replied that some swimmers are exceptionally talented in the pool and achieve an outstanding 1500m time, but have no open water training or exposure, and at the open water venue their ability to navigate, cope with a pack, water temperature or reeds can be well below what was expected. This had caused issues previously with swimmers needing to be rescued.

JK stated that she has felt that pool qualifiers should be encouraged to swim in an open water event to gain experience but should not take a place from an open water swimmer.

IM commented that it seemed inconsistent that a Swim England open water coaching qualification is insisted upon while a swimmer coached only by a pool coach can take part in a national event.

26/34.4 **Noise complaint and audibility of the public address**

26/34.4.1 SW asked whether there had been any further news of the noise complaint received on the day.

PK replied that nothing further had been raised. The noise may possibly have come from the nearby rowing club using microphones or megaphones for training.

PK read out a related feedback comment that the best viewing area was away from the speakers. JK explained that spectators walk down the lake to where there is no tannoy coverage and can then not hear announcements. JK proposed asking Graham whether the height of some of the shrubbery on the banking where spectators stand could be reduced. PK recalled that the Country Park had previously wanted to grass that area further down but also to leave the bank of the broad in a natural state, and that both could not be achieved.

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Action: JK to ask Graham (Whitlingham Country Park) whether the height of the shrubbery on the spectator banking can be reduced for the event

26/34.5 **Recruitment of volunteers and officials:**

PK asked HS about measures which could help to attract more volunteers. HS explained that her approach is to wait until entries are in and then approach parents. PK noted that spectators could also have the seed sown that they could become involved, and asked that members share any ideas so that they can be considered closer to the event.

PK reported that two people from Lincolnshire had come forward for training, and that a further four people from around the country had indicated an interest in the training.

He stated that more officials are urgently needed so that the Nationals can be better staffed, as they were very poorly staffed this year. PK asked members to put forward any names of people wishing to become officials so that he can arrange training, and to promote that he is actively seeking new officials. The training process may change at some point, but for now it remains as it has been for a couple of years.

Action: All members to refer anyone interested in becoming an official to PK, and to promote the recruitment of new officials

26/35 Confidential items

26/35.1 PK advised that the only sensitive matter was the feedback and correspondence relating to a disqualified swimmer with additional support needs, which was discussed under 26/32.10.

No other confidential items were raised.

26/36 Next meeting

26/36.1 The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 3rd November 2026 at 7pm.

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