

Minutes

Swim England South West Region

Water Polo Committee

Date: Monday, October 6th, 2025

Time: 6.30 pm Location: Zoom Conference Call

Present:

Mike Coles - SESWR Water Polo Manager
Steve Williams - SESWR Regional Manager
Geoff Pearce - SESWR Finance Director (departed at 7:00 pm)
Jim Robinson - SESWR Water Polo Finance Officer
Chris Selby - Wiltshire ASA Rep
Toby Hogg - Cornwall ASA Rep
Glen Mitchell - Dorset ASA Rep
Laura Kania - Gloucester County ASA Rep
Sue Webb - Assistant Girls' Coach
Nick Hume - Girls' Head Coach
John Spicer – Boys' Head Coach
Phil Whiting - BWWPL Representative
Becky Bellett - Girl's Administrator
Dominic Granville - Boy's Administrator

1. Welcome

1.1. In the Chair's absence, Mike Coles (MC) welcomed all attendees to the meeting and thanked them for their time. The meeting was unanimous in allowing Mike Coles to chair the meeting in the absence of Simon Tomlinson, the SESWR Water Polo Committee Chair, who gave his apologies. Apologies were also received from Kit Greenslade.

2. Declaration of Interest

2.1. There were none.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

3.1. The minutes from the meeting held on Monday, July 7th, 2025, were reviewed and approved as a true and accurate record. Proposed by: Jim Robinson, Seconded by: Sue Webb Decision: Approved.

4. Matters Arising

- 4.1. County Reps promote the region's Regional Academy: This was completed, with MC noting a significant increase in interest, particularly from Cornwall.
- 4.2. Email confirmation of trial dates: This was completed. The trial date was moved from November 15th to November 8th due to a booking cancellation by Millfield School.
- 4.3. U18 Inter-Regions: This is now confirmed as cancelled by the organisers. (See item 5).
- 4.4. Inter-County Entry Form: The form reflecting the U11 festival format was successfully reissued.

5. Updates from the Groups

- 5.1. MC reported that he had been invited to Swim England's Leadership Group meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, October 8th, 2025, in which Claire Coleman and Richard Blackshaw would give a presentation on the Future of Water Polo.
- 5.2. MC will continue to push for online delivery of Table Official and Referee courses at the leadership group, citing much higher attendance (40 delegates online vs. 8 in a classroom).
- 5.3. Nothing to report on the Water Polo Calendar.

6. Reports from the County Representatives

6.1. Cornwall: Toby Hogg reported that Cornwall ASA, unfortunately, did not manage to raise any teams for the inter-counties this September. This was due to a combination of Newquay Water Polo hosting a tournament on the same date and insufficient interest in

the age groups participating in the competition.

With Penzance returning to water polo activities, the three Cornish clubs are looking to collaborate and organise joint Cornwall sessions. This will allow us to build bonds between the clubs and also enable our juniors to train with more individuals in their age group.

Counties' individual club reports

Penzance Swimming Association and Water Polo Club offer an enthusiastically supported junior session that runs for two hours on Sunday afternoons, three times a month. The session is attended by about thirty players with great potential, spanning two one-hour sessions, aged eight to sixteen years old. We have had two players attend the regional academy at Millfield so far. We are keen to collaborate with other clubs on the development of water polo in Cornwall.

Newquay Water Polo continues to have a good number of juniors playing weekly and training on Wednesday evenings. They have recently introduced a Ladies and under-19s session, which has made a good path of progression for our elder juniors and the opportunity to have Ladies running again at the club. Their men's section is continuing training and competing in 1-day tournaments and will look to take part in the Devon league next year.

St Austell Water Polo's Juniors continue to grow, now with 11 players, and are reaching out to the local community to encourage new players. They continue to work with the Newquay club to provide joint training sessions, which I have helped support. For the senior team, we have worked hard for the last 12 months and now have 12 senior players attending training each week. With more women attending, I see it as an outstanding achievement.

MC is in discussion with Tim Kendall (Penzance) regarding exciting development plans, including the possibility of running Level 1 Teacher and Coaching courses in Cornwall to support local clubs.

6.2. Devon Report: Kit Greenslade's report was as follows:

League and Tournament Updates

Junior Polo (U13): The U13 tournament is nearing completion with two events left this year. The season has been very successful so far.

Men's & Ladies' Polo: The leagues are in their final weeks and will conclude by the end of the month.

Devon Winter League: This new competition, rebranded from the "knockout cup," will feature a fast-paced format with 30-minute games. It has received strong entries with 5 men's teams, 5 U15 teams, 3 ladies' teams, and 3 U17 teams.

Competition Results

Inter-counties: Devon teams performed exceptionally well, with the U13 Mixed, U15 Girls, U15 Boys, and U17 Girls all securing 1st place. The U17 Boys finished in 2nd place.

Bristol and West League: In Division 1, Exeter Men finished 1st and Newton Abbot Men finished 2nd. In the Ladies' Division, Exeter has a few games left to play as they defend its title.

Recognition and Future Plans

International Recognition: Jo Lamont Tuckett represented the U18 Girls at the European Championships in September.

Future Development: A new website for the Devon league will be launched next year.

6.3. Dorset Report: Glen Mitchell had nothing to report on for the Dorset Water Polo Committee.

6.4. Gloucester County ASA Report: Laura Kania reported that:

Juniors

International Representation: Four Gloucestershire players (Lily Ross, Hattie Bates, India Knights-Hume, and Georgia Haines) were selected for the Great Britain U18 Women's team, which finished 11th at a tournament in Malta.

GB Trials: Over 12 county players recently attended the U20 and U18 Great Britain trials in Coventry, with results expected soon.

Local Tournaments: Cheltenham and Bristol have teams competing in the Bristol & West Water Polo League (BWWPL) junior tournaments.

Seniors

European Competition: The Cheltenham Senior men's team is competing in the Polish Cup for the second time.

National Leagues (BWPL): The new season has started, with several county teams participating across different divisions:

Men's Div 1: Cheltenham

Women's Div 1: Cheltenham

Men's Div 2: Cheltenham Spartans

Men's Div 3 & Conference League: Bristol Women

6.5. Somerset ASA, Brad Poole reported as follows:

Somerset had a busy September with the inter-county championships. A key achievement was fielding a team in every boy's age group for the first time in recent memory. They were close to forming a girls' team but were short a few players, though some girls were able to compete by joining another team.

Overall results were mixed, with many defeats, particularly in the older age groups.

However, there is optimism that as the well-developed younger squads progress, the county will become more competitive in the coming years. The standout performance of the tournament was the mixed under-11s team, who fought hard against Devon to secure a draw after a penalty shootout.

Thanks were extended to Bence Bisztritsanyi for assisting with the U17s, the well-organised Taunton coaches, and all team managers and assistants.

Looking ahead, a combined Frome/Weston team has entered the upcoming U17 Bristol & West Water Polo League (BWWPL). Additionally, the county anticipates that Charlie Hinder and Bence Bisztritsanyi will soon qualify as Level 2 coaches, which will be a significant asset for Frome, Weston-super-Mare and Somerset water polo.

6.6. Wiltshire ASA: Chris Selby had nothing to report.

7. **Diversity and Inclusivity Updates**

7.1. MC reported on a push by Swim England to recruit more female referees for the BWPL and their events. He continued that the South West had already successfully encouraged this in the region.

8. **Finance Report**

8.1. Geoff Pearce (GP) provided a comprehensive update on the region's financial position. Overall Position: GP explained that the budget is managed across all disciplines, not as separate pots. He has met with all disciplines to discuss finances. The key challenges are rising costs, especially for pool hire (£21k for three weekends), and the need to increase revenue.

Revenue: The main income stream outside of events is affiliation fees, which have seen a £16k increase this year. However, 95% of this income has already been received, meaning the current year-to-date profit of £11k will turn around in the last quarter.

Budgeting Process: Budgets are being rebuilt from a zero base to ensure sustainability. A full budget proposal will be presented to the board around the 21st-23rd of October. This will likely include a combination of price increases, savings, and adjustments.

8.2. Water Polo Budget: Jim Robinson (JR) noted that from a water polo perspective, the group is slightly under budget, and any savings are returned to the central regional pool.

8.3. MC confirmed he and JR had met with GP to propose ideas for increasing funding, which will be considered in the new budget.

Action: GP to arrange a follow-up call with MC and JR to finalise discussions before the budget is presented to the board.

9. **Updates from the coaches**

9.1. NH gave a comprehensive report but also apologised for his absence at recent regional academies due to his work with the national team. He reported challenges with date clashes with GB programmes. He thanked Phil Whiting and Glen Mitchell for stepping in to help coach. He stressed the long-term need to recruit more coaches for the programme. Player numbers remain strong.

JS experienced technical issues with his connection, resulting in no audio.

Action: JS to email his report to MC for circulation to the committee.

10. Competitions & National Events

- 10.1. U18 Inter-Regional Championships 2025: MC confirmed receipt of an email from Joanne Mountfield stating the 2025 event has been cancelled due to "calendar congestion," specifically referencing GB trials and camps.
- 10.2. The proposal is to revert to the original timeframes in 2026, with U18S (for players born 2009+) taking place in Jan/Feb 2026.
- 10.3. The committee expressed disappointment. A discussion was held about hosting a tri-region replacement event, but it was deemed financially unviable due to pool hire costs (approx. £2,000). The consensus was that players were resigned to the fact that it was cancelled.
- 10.4. U14 Inter-Regional Championships 2025: Sue Webb raised the need to book hotels for the U14 Girls' event (6th-7th December) at Walsall, as prices are rising sharply. Permission was granted to proceed with booking hotels for both the girls' and boys' teams.

Action: Becky Bellett and Dominic Granville to email all U18 players and parents to confirm the event has been cancelled by the organisers formally and to express the committee's condolences.

11. Inter-Counties Championships

- 11.1. The U11s festival was declared a major success. The committee agreed to include the U11s festival in the programme for 2026.
- 11.2. The date for the 2026 Inter-Counties was confirmed as Saturday, 13th September 2026.
- 11.3. A request was made to award bronze medals for third place, in addition to gold and silver, to encourage younger participants.

Action: MC to request the provision of bronze medals from the Regional Trophy Controller.

12. Academy Dates & Logistics

- 12.1. The final two sessions for the current block are on October 11th and November 8th.
- 12.2. A provisional list of dates for 2026 has been secured with Millfield. A clash was noted for the January 10th session with a GB camp.

Action: MC will contact Millfield to see if an alternative date in January is possible but noted that availability is minimal.

13. Official and Coaches Courses:

- 13.1. MC reported that he was continuing to push for these courses to be taken back online.
- 13.2. Coaches' Courses were in progress, and MC was working with the IoS for future courses in 2026 across the South West.

14. Any other business

- 14.1. Swim England Club Health Tracker: Steve Williams requested that all clubs be encouraged to complete the online Club Health Tracker to provide the region with a better insight into the state of clubs and how to support them.
- 14.2. Steve Williams (SW) provided a national update. He clarified that new national plans are a "philosophical direction" and Swim England wants to work collaboratively with strong regions like the South West to develop the sport. He proposed that Claire Coleman and Richard Blackshaw from Swim England be invited to the next meeting to present their plans in more detail and begin a dialogue. The committee unanimously agreed.

Action: SW to invite Claire Coleman and Richard Blackshaw to the December 1st meeting.

- 14.3. GB Player Recognition: Nick Hume noted that five players from the South West represented Great Britain at the U17 European Championships. He requested that this achievement be formally recognised.

Action: Nick Hume to send the names and clubs of the five players to MC to minute and celebrated on social media.

14.4. Card Reader: MC confirmed the region now has a working card reader, which will be available at the next regional academy training session.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, 1st December 2025, at 6:30 pm via Zoom.

Then Monday, February 2nd, 2026;

Monday, May 18th, 2026;

Monday, September 7th;

Monday, December 7th, 2026.

Meeting Closed: 8:05 pm

International Recognition: The following players, referees and coaches have represented teams at England and GB Level:

Darcey Tomlinson, Exeter and Taunton Deane.

Jo Lamont Tuckett, Exeter Water Polo and Swimming Club

India Knights-Hume, City of Bristol

Hattie Bates, City of Bristol

Georgia Haines, City of Bristol

Lily Ross, Cheltenham Swimming and Water Polo

Sophie Leveridge, Cheltenham Swimming and Water Polo

Katy Cutler, City of Bristol

Tom Manley, Newton Abbot Swimming and Water Polo Club

Kamz Powell, Exeter Water Polo and Swimming Club

Tom Hunt, Cheltenham Swimming and Water Polo Club

Craig Figes, City of Bristol

Max Gerasimor, Cheltenham Swimming and Water Polo

Nick Hume, City of Bristol

Sue Webb, Newton Abbot Swimming and Water Polo Club