

Minutes

Swim England South West
Swimming Committee held on
Wednesday, October 7th, 18:30 to 20:48
via Microsoft Teams

Attendance

Name	Role
Mike Coles	Regional Chair
Andrew Ryczanowski	Swimming Committee Chair
Kelly Podbury	Somerset ASA Representative
Lisa Atkinson	Gloucester County Independent Representative
Belinda Caslake	Cornwall ASA Representative
Stacey Millett	Regional Club Development Officer and Swimming Manager
Steve Williams	Regional Manager
Richard Smith	Swimming Events Manager and Wiltshire ASA Independent Representative
Nicola Vause	SESW Officials' Secretary
Jill Beard	SESW Regional Officials' Training and Development Coordinator
Barry Alldrick	Dorset ASA Independent Representative
Jason Quiterio	Cornwall ASA Independent Representative
Andrew Smart	Dorset ASA Representative
Lily Lowe	Gloucester County ASA Representative and Swim Manager
Martin Walters	Devon ASA Representative
Rachel Aldington	Somerset Independent Representative

Apologies

Roger Downing, Regional Vice Chair; Emma Hindell, new SESW Licensing Officer; Sandra Yeoman, Wiltshire ASA Representative; Lesley Leffers, current SESW Licensing Officer; John Bryne, Devon ASA Independent Representative.

Belinda Caslake advised she needed to leave at 18:55 for a county meeting.

Committee business and reports

1. Welcome and declarations of interest

- 1.1. Mike Coles opened the meeting and handed over to Andrew Ryczanowski as the new Swimming Committee Chair. The Chair emphasised that the committee should deliver practical improvements to development and competition in the interests of swimmers. No declarations of interest were made.

2. Minutes of 15 July 2026

- 2.1. The minutes were approved subject to three corrections: paragraph 4.5 should state that safer recruitment procedures would be followed for the Licensing Officer appointment; Belinda Caslake should be added to the attendance list; and the spelling of Martyn's Law should be corrected. Mike Coles agreed to amend the record. Post Minute Note: Belinda has now been added to the minutes of 15.07.2026.

3. Matters arising

- 3.1. Licensing review: The review of Devon's proposals to remove first-come-first-served entry arrangements for Level 3 meets and address Level 4 meets clashing with county events remained outstanding. The action was carried forward for the Licensing Subcommittee and Roger.
- 3.2. GL1 Leisure Centre: Steve Williams reported that work to resolve facility issues was ongoing and undertook to update Lily Lowe. Lily reported contact with the area manager, Mr Nick Charton, a few weeks ago, and he said they are not putting the slide into Barton Pool. They are going to meet to discuss open meet flow, so they can consider it during their refurb of the changing rooms.
- 3.3. Martyn's Law: Steve Williams reported that further national guidance was being developed. Members were advised to follow the circulated interim guidance, establish venue headcounts, maintain good relationships with operators and clarify hire agreements and promoter conditions. Regional representatives would attend the National Development Day on 14 October; a fuller update was expected in the following weeks.

4. Swimming Managers' report

- 4.1. Stacey Millett and Lily Lowe reported work on volunteer recruitment and operational planning for the Winter Championships, including ticketing, security and improvements arising from previous events. Lily's volunteer FAQ explained roles and opportunities to help for shorter periods. It would be amended to state that volunteers must be Swim England members for insurance purposes.
- 4.2. Committee members were asked to register their availability to support regional events. Lily offered to coordinate volunteers and subsequently agreed to work with the events team on online sign-ups, allocations and recruitment to unfilled roles. An update on live streaming was requested from Steve Williams; no substantive update was given during this item.

5. Events Manager's report

- 5.1. Richard Smith reported that the para swimming meet at Hengrove had run well overall, but wheelchair access, changing-room mobile phone use and camera-enabled glasses had required attention. The glasses issue had been escalated to Swim England and guidance was awaited. Hiring the additional tank could improve access, but cost, classification rooms and alternative venues also needed consideration.
- 5.2. The revised Winter Championships programme aimed to spread racing across three days and improve the event experience. Jason Quiterio and Martin Walters raised concerns about Friday racing during term time, particularly for swimmers travelling from Cornwall and Devon. The programme would be reviewed after the event, taking account of travel and school absence; the nationally specified championship weekend was also identified as an issue to raise with Swim England.
- 5.3. For the proposed 8 × 25m medley relay, safety concerns were raised about diving over a finishing backstroke swimmer. It was agreed that backstroke legs would start in the water. The relay was described as outside the licensed competition, with no ranking use for its times.

6. Officials county licensing and development reports

6.1. Officials' reports

- 6.1.1. Jill Beard reported that officials' training continued to progress well; no separate training report was presented. Nicola Vause confirmed 14 officials for the Open Masters on Sunday 11 October. Only 14 had so far signed up for the Winter Championships, despite extensive circulation of requests. Late sign-ups placed considerable pressure on volunteer Technical Directors. Members discussed the need to encourage earlier commitments and consider incentives, particularly where officials had no swimmer competing.
- 6.1.2. Nicola would forward para meet feedback to Richard Smith, the Regional Office and Adam Clarkson. Accessibility, simultaneous use of the venue and the provision of classification rooms were highlighted for future planning.

6.2. Secretary and Masters reports

- 6.2.1. No separate Secretary's report was presented. No Masters representative was present, and no additional Masters report was given.

7. County reports

7.1. Reports from all counties were noted. Mike confirmed that the Chair had been added to the circulation list and would recirculate Wiltshire's late report.

7.2. Cornwall ASA Report

7.2.1. We attended the Swim England National County Teams Champs last Sunday. All swimmers selected accepted their place. Our team staff reported that everyone had a great. We are massively proud of everyone that competed and all those that supported the team to get to Sheffield.

Planning for County Champs 2027 is well underway. QTs and consideration times have been published. All venues have been booked. We will be applying for a licence in the next few days. This year we have shortened the qualifying window to since 1st March 2026.

Planning for our CDP has not progressed, however we do still intend to run this for 26/27.

We are organising a team to enter the Inter Masters comp.

We have reconvened our meetings with GLL. Meetings so far have been positive building a good relationship to improve swimming in Cornwall by working together better.

We have our planned and booked pools for our Junior Inter-club, Masters and Rising Stars competitions for 2027.

7.3. Devon ASA Report presented by Martin Walters:

7.3.1. The County held its Masters Event at the beginning of September, which, although well attended by swimmers from across the Country, was poorly supported by technical officials.

The County Team swam at the Inter-county event, with most swimmers inexperienced at national events. Most swims resulted in new PBs; however, against tough opposition, Devon finished in the bottom 4 this year and will compete in Division 2 next year. Despite this, the Team had an enjoyable time.

Do other Counties have issues with selecting their teams in that swimmers decline their place so they can attend a meet elsewhere in the country happening at the same time? If so, what do they do about it?

Dates for 2027 County Championships confirmed by venue and dates sent to Clubs. CT this year has been made stricter to try and prevent a repeat of last year's scratching. This has meant that some younger age groups have faster CT times than older ones. Licence application has been sent.

County is still discussing the FCFS meet format with Roger and prefers not to have any in the County. Training of new J1 officials is ongoing, and while some embrace their new qualification and attend many meets, others disappear.

7.4. Dorset ASA Report given by Andrew Smart:

7.4.1. Competitions: Dorset para swimmer Isabella Haynes (Swim Bournemouth) competed at the Commonwealth Games for Team England, while Halle Harris (Poole) was selected to represent Sierra Leone. At the English Summer Nationals, Zack Sturgess (BCS), though not officially competing as a para swimmer, broke the British Para Record (S14) for 1500m Freestyle by 9 seconds; the record will be ratified once his International Classification is ratified.

At local level, the annual Dorset Development Competition for 9-18 yrs was held on 3-4 October, rescheduled from its usual July slot to try and revitalise interest in the competition. Entry numbers increased markedly compared to 2025, but there is still capacity for swimmers to take part. Positive feedback has been received from clubs and swimmers. Dorset, like the others within the Region, attended the National Inter-County Team Championship at the weekend, coming a creditable 6th in Division 2. Many swimmers produced PBs on the day. Questions were raised as to why the officials were not marched on.

Achievement: The World Masters Rankings 2025, which were published in June 2026, show that four Dorset Masters are ranked in the top ten for ten events. At the British Masters 2026 four Dorset Masters brought home a total of nine national medals.

Masters achievements include Catherine Turner (Poole) who successfully swam the English Channel in 13.39hrs in July, Katy Jones (Poole/Poole Bay) who swam Loch Ness (36km) in August, and Jade Matos Carew (Poole) who swam the Bristol Channel.

Development: The first full-day camp of the County Development Programme was held at the end of September. Swimmers from all competitive clubs attended, for a total of 36. The next camp, a half-day event focusing on 200 IM, will be held in January before the start of County Championships. A one-day camp for 13- 15-year-olds who are not selected for the RDP is also planned for Spring 2027, together with a development programme for 12- 15-year-old OW swimmers comprising both pool and lake sessions.

Question: We, as a county, have a question: Do other counties have difficulty with venues in terms of dates or even accepting bookings? It's Littledown really - 1610 is cooperative in terms of dates but not start times - but Littledown makes it almost impossible to move dates or get additional dates, more so for Swim B than us. But it can affect us too. I've been trying to secure a date in Sept 2027 for the master's Open/Champs. Blanket refusal to accommodate. Can't take on any more pool bookings. Yet Mountbatten Centre Portsmouth is also BH Live and they will accommodate far more meets per year than Littledown.

7.5. Gloucester County ASA Report presented by Lily Lowe:

7.5.1. Gloucester completed a strong end to the 2025/26 season, highlighted by significant representation and success across National Championship events:

British National Championships
27 Swimmers. Top 10 Finishers: 12

English National Championships
36 Swimmers. Top 10 Finishers: 44

Welsh National Championships
8 Swimmers. Top 10 Finishers: 15

Irish National Championships
1 Swimmer

Planning for the upcoming County Championships is currently underway and progressing as scheduled. Further details and draft entry schedules will be circulated once finalized.

Gloucester wishes to table the following licensing queries for consideration.

Feedback from multiple clubs within Gloucester ASA indicates that recent regional licensing changes — specifically restrictions on First-Come, First-Served (FCFS) meets, rigid Level 3 upper time limits, and bans on joint-club meets — are creating severe operational, financial, and athlete retention challenges across the region.

Key Concerns & Operational Impacts

Restrictions on First-Come, First-Served (FCFS) Meets

- **Host & Club Uncertainty:** Limiting clubs to one FCFS meet per year removes entry certainty. Non-FCFS meets require long waiting periods for acceptance, making planning difficult for parents, coaches, and host clubs.
- **Deadline Pressure:** Late rejections leave swimmers with no alternative meets to enter before County or Regional deadlines.
- **Financial Risk:** Gloucester clubs experience reduced entries and financial

instability as clubs avoid non-FCFS meets or seek competitions outside the county and region.

- **Misconception on Workforce:** County experience does not show FCFS meets struggle more with officials; official shortages are a region-wide issue unrelated to entry format.

Upper Limit Times & Age Mismatches for Level 3 Meets

- **Age Mismatch (Age on Day vs. Age at End of Year):** Level 3 meets run on "age on day," whereas County and Regional qualifiers use "age at end of year". Restrictive upper limits create up to a two-year mismatch, forcing developmental swimmers into Level 2 meets.
- **Disadvantage to Mid-Tier Swimmers:** Late-maturing swimmers (ages 12–16) and those just outside Regional Qualifying Times risk being scratched from Level 3 (too fast) and Level 2 (too slow), creating a high drop-out risk.
- **Overcrowded Level 2 Meets:** Pushing swimmers into scarce Level 2 meets increases financial costs for parents and creates unnecessary entry competition.

Restrictions on Joint-Club / Closed Meets

- **Loss of Grassroots Collaboration:** The restriction on joint Club Championships (e.g., Keynsham & Gloucester / BSG) prevents larger clubs from supporting smaller clubs.
- **Reduced Opportunities:** Closed joint meets offer a relaxed, low-pressure environment for younger swimmers to achieve County qualifying times without impacting other regional clubs.

Official Shortages & Over-Engineering

- **Administrative Burden:** Broad restrictions and heavy regulations add substantial administrative overhead for unpaid volunteers.
- **Workforce Thresholds:** Required official ratios and team manager/coach qualifications are overly stringent at grassroots levels, leading to meet cancellations.

Potential Options for the Committee to Discuss Going Forward

- ☐ **Flexibility on Entry Formats:** Re-evaluate FCFS restrictions to allow host clubs the autonomy to run Level 3 meets in the format that best fits their financial and operational needs.
- ☐ **Standardise & Align Qualifying Times:** Adjust Level 3 upper limits to account for age-group mismatches between Level 3 meets and County/Regional Championship age requirements.
- ☐ **Permit Multi-Club Closed Events:** Allow collaborative 2-to-4 club meets to support smaller clubs and foster regional development.
- ☐ **Simplify Grassroots Governance:** Streamline official requirements, reduce entry criteria complexity, and adopt a bottom-up approach that supports club sustainability.

7.6. Somerset ASA Report by Kelly Podbury:

7.6.1. Somerset & Gloucester Masters meet at Millfield ran well on June 7th, 2026.

Plans are to run jointly again in 2027 at Hutton Moor.

Relay Day went well on September 19th, 2026, with a fantastic team parade around the pool to kick off the afternoon event. The only real issue I have is relay name declarations being accurate. What do other Counties do?

The National County Teams Competition held on October 4th, 2026, went well again for Somerset. Team selection was tough this year with quite a few dropouts. We stayed in the same hotel, which has served us well for three years and Taunton School for the coach. The results for the region were as follows:

Cornwall Div 2, 18th, 207.5 pts
Devon Div 1, 19th, 196 pts
Dorset Div 2, 6th, 406 pts
Gloucester County Div 2, 7th, 392pts
Somerset Div 1, 11th, 313pts
Wiltshire Div 2, 17th, 217pts

Well done to all regional clubs.

Future events for Somerset ASA are as follows:

17-18/10/26 Development meet. Entries have just closed.

14 & 21/11/26 TJB (The John Bolton) long distance event in November; conditions have been published.

2027 County Qualifying times have been published. Lots of comments on Facebook about our County times. These times will remain the same for 2027 & 2028 to give the County swimmers some stability in what they are working towards. We will review them after SCC 2028 and adjust accordingly. I'm in the process of writing the program, and then we will be applying for the license.

7.7. Wiltshire ASA Report by Sandra Yeoman:

7.7.1. We have just held our Wiltshire League A and B Finals for 2026 at Bath. 15 clubs competed, and for the first time both finals were licensed. This was welcomed by the coaches. For many of the swimmers, it was their first time competing in a long course. There were the usual hiccups which occur at Bath regarding equipment which does not get much usage in a competitive gala, but it was a most successful day and enjoyed by all. Many thanks were due to the work on the day of our superb Event Team

We have been hard at work tying up all the ends' of 2026 competitions and completing planning for 2027. Always a manic autumn, but we have just released the event pack for the 2027 Championships/Age Groups, which is probably the earliest we have ever managed!!

7.8. County qualifying times: Jason sought advice on assessing Cornwall's times. Members described using county rankings, available pool time, previous entries, regional qualification rates and comparable counties. Richard offered to share his approach and supporting data. Time setting remained a county responsibility; no regional standard was adopted.

7.9. County Team Championships: Members reported mixed experiences of swimmers accepting selection and concerns about competing open meets, coaches not passing on invitations and the relative value swimmers placed on individual racing. Suggestions included earlier selection, copying club secretaries into invitations, refunds for swimmers withdrawing from open meets following county selection, stronger promotion and consideration of licensing clashes. The importance of swimmers receiving invitations and making informed choices was emphasised. No new selection or licensing policy was agreed.

8. Licensing report and appointment

8.1. The report recorded 292 licensed meets across the calendar year, prompting concern about the volume of competition. Following safer recruitment interviews, Emma Hindell of Swim Bournemouth had accepted the Regional Licensing Officer post and would take up the role in due course.

8.2. The committee thanked Lesley Leffers for her many years of service and continued commitment. Andrew Smart proposed formal recognition of her contribution; Mike Coles agreed to take the matter to the Board. The outstanding Devon licensing issues would remain with the Licensing Subcommittee.

9. Coaches and development reports

9.1. Rachel Aldington reported positively on the first Regional Development Programme day on September 20th, at Taunton School. Activities included underwater video feedback,

individual screening and personalised pre-pool exercises. The intention was to expose swimmers to new ideas to discuss with their home coaches. Recruiting coaches had been challenging, but a strong team had supported the day.

- 9.2. Places remained available on the programme for 14–16-year-olds. Swimmers unable to attend the October day could attend the April residential only, at a reduced cost, by contacting Stacey. Stacey would make this option clearer in publicity.
- 9.3. Steve Williams outlined the Connected Aquatics Day on November 29th at Taunton Rugby Club, including coaching behaviour, motivation and cooperation between coaches, committees and parents. Members were asked to promote it when details were released. Barry Alldrick's coach education work was acknowledged, including a Wiltshire backstroke-start clinic attended by 16 coaches.

10. Competition conditions and decisions

10.1. Winter Championships eligibility

- 10.1.1. The committee considered an approach concerning two swimmers at a school in the region who had competed in another region's Summer Championships. The published conditions prevented entry where a swimmer had competed in another region's championships in the same calendar year.
- 10.1.2. Members broadly supported reviewing the conditions to accommodate genuine changes of school, residence or club. Options discussed included a swimming season beginning on 1 September, separate summer and winter restrictions, and a documented exceptional-circumstances provision. Members also stressed the need to prevent participation in equivalent championships in multiple regions and to apply eligibility requirements consistently.
- 10.1.3. The events team explained that the disputed wording had been added following licensing advice. Members discussed the difficulty of checking entries against other regions' results and the need for consistent national guidance. Concerns were raised about changing published conditions close to the event, displacing eligible swimmers and exposing the promoter to protests.

10.2. Votes and resolution

- 10.2.1. An initial vote on retaining the conditions and refusing the entries did not produce a clear conclusion; the Chair stated that there was no clear direction.
- 10.2.2. Andrew Smart then proposed allowing the two swimmers to take part as exhibition swimmers; Chris seconded the proposal. The Chair confirmed that the proposal was carried by 13 votes to 3. Jill Beard, Martin Walters and Nicola Vause opposed it because of the published conditions and the risk of protest.
- 10.2.3. The permission was discussed and confirmed on the basis that space remained in the events. Heat allocation and practical arrangements were referred to the events team. The proposal to place exhibition swimmers in the first heat was not adopted as a specific committee requirement.
- 10.2.4. Jill advised that, notwithstanding the vote, a Technical Director would have to uphold the promoter's conditions if a protest arose. The committee therefore agreed that Swim England should be approached urgently about whether an amendment could be made to the current conditions.

10.3. Final decision and wider review

- 10.3.1. The final decision was to seek Swim England's approval to amend the conditions so that the eligibility year would begin in September, rather than January. This would allow swimmers enrolling for a new school year in the region to be eligible to compete, despite participating in another region's Summer Championships earlier in the calendar year. Chris undertook to contact Swim England on Friday 9 October and email the committee with the response. If approval was received, the conditions would be amended, recirculated and republished. Approval had not yet been obtained.
- 10.3.2. Steve Williams undertook to raise the need for consistent eligibility guidance with Swim England. Stacey offered to compare other regions' conditions. Martin agreed to put Richard in touch with the Swim Wales contact who could explain transferring Sportsystems entry data into HY-TEK.

- 10.3.3. Following the Winter Championships, the events and regional team would review the competition conditions in detail and return them to the committee for ratification. The review would address genuine moves into the region, duplicate regional participation and practical eligibility checking. Martin also requested that future qualifying-time tables be accessible to people with colour blindness; this was noted.
11. **Other business and future meetings**
- 11.1. **Licensing Subcommittee membership**
- 11.1.1. Lily Lowe asked whether membership could be broadened beyond licensing officers to provide additional perspectives on county concerns. Mike Coles advised that membership would remain restricted to licensing officers.
- 11.2. **Expenses policy**
- 11.2.1. The committee confirmed that the expenses policy currently published on the regional website would apply to the Winter Championships. It had been reviewed without change; another review was expected. No increase to a 55p mileage rate had been agreed.
- 11.3. **Dorset venue support**
- 11.3.1. Barry Alldrick sought regional support over a centre's limited flexibility on competition dates. Mike suggested that Steve Williams and, if needed, Mike himself could assist. Barry would contact them with the details.
- 11.4. **Future meeting dates**
- 11.4.1. The agenda listed Tuesday 9 February, Tuesday 11 May, Tuesday 10 August and Tuesday 9 November 2027. Members raised concerns that these dates, although aligned to Board reporting, did not adequately support decisions before the Summer and Winter Championships. August was also considered unsuitable.
- 11.4.2. Mike Coles agreed to liaise with the regional team on Monday 12 October to identify more suitable dates and update the calendar, while preserving timely reporting to the Board. The listed dates were therefore subject to review; no replacement dates were agreed at this meeting.
12. **Close**
- 12.1. The Chair thanked members for their contributions and closed the meeting at 20:48.

Action record

Dates are shown where agreed or stated during the meeting. Otherwise, timing remains to be confirmed.

Ref	Action	Owner	Timing
1	Amend the July minutes for safer recruitment wording, Belinda's attendance and Martyn's Law spelling.	Mike Coles	Completed
2	Carry forward Devon's Level 3 entry and Level 4 clash proposals for review.	Licensing Subcommittee / Roger	Carried forward
3	Continue GL1 facility follow-up and update Lily.	Steve Williams	Not specified
4	Add the Swim England membership requirement to the volunteer FAQ.	Lily Lowe	Before further circulation
5	Register availability to support regional events; coordinate Winter Championships volunteer recruitment and allocations.	Committee members; Lily Lowe with events team	Before Winters
6	Forward para meet officials' feedback to Richard, the Regional Office and Adam Clarkson.	Nicola Vause	Not specified
7	Review para meet access and venue arrangements, including costs and classification rooms.	Events team with Adam Clarkson	Future event planning
8	Review the Winter programme, including travel and school-absence concerns.	Events and regional team	After Winters
9	Ensure backstroke relay legs start in the water.	Events team	Winter relay planning
10	Recirculate Wiltshire's county report.	Mike Coles	Following meeting
11	Share the county qualifying-time methodology and data offered to Jason.	Richard Smith	Not specified
12	Recognise Lesley Leffers' service to the Board.	Mike Coles	Not specified
13	Publicise the April residential-only option and reduced cost; continue programme promotion.	Stacey Millett	October promotion
14	Promote the Connected Aquatics Day when information is released.	Committee members	Before 29 November
14	Promote the Connected Aquatics Day when information is released.	Committee members	Before 29 November
15	Seek Swim England's approval to start the eligibility year in September, enabling new-school-year entrants to compete; email the committee with the response.	Events team / Chris	Friday 9 October

16	If Swim England approves, amend, recirculate and republish the conditions.	Events and regional team	Following approval
17	Inform the club of Swim England's response and confirm the swimmers' eligibility and entry arrangements under the resulting conditions.	Events and regional team	Before Winters
18	Raise consistency of regional eligibility requirements with Swim England.	Steve Williams	Not specified
19	Compare other regions' conditions to inform the review.	Stacey Millett	Before conditions review
20	Introduce Richard to the Swim Wales contact on Sportsystems and HY-TEK compatibility.	Martin Walters	Not specified
21	Review competition conditions in detail and return them to the committee for ratification; improve colour accessibility of qualifying-time tables.	Events and regional team	After Winters / before future publication
22	Review 2027 committee dates against competition planning and Board reporting, then update the calendar.	Mike Coles with regional team	Monday 12 October liaison
23	Provide Dorset venue details to Steve and Mike for regional support.	Barry Aldrick	Not specified
24	Live streaming: an update was requested	Steve Williams	Before Winter Champs