

South West Region

Annual Report 2020

January

Judge 1 Online Training Launch

The Officials J1 online training was launched on 27th January. This was an opportunity for prospective judges to be able to complete elements of their training in their own time online before organising time at the pool to complete further elements.

February

Regional Coaches on UK Coaching Performance Foundation Coach Support Programme



Four Coaches from the South West Region have been selected onto the UK Coaching's Performance Foundation Coach Support Programme.

A record number of seven swimming coaches have been selected three of these are from the South West Region; Greg King – Lamb (Mount Kelly), Rachel Aldington (Millfield) and Roberto Pavoni (Plymouth Leander). The swimming coaches will work with their counterparts from sports including athletics, boxing and gymnastics.

Simon Tomlinson (bottom right) was the only Water Polo coach in the UK to get selected onto this programme. Tomlinson will also work with coaches from other sports, potentially including athletics, cycling and gymnastics, to share ideas about high performance.

Staff Changes

Stephanie Gadd left us to start her maternity leave in February and Andrew Jack was her replacement for the duration of her leave.



Regional Success in Lisbon

The Lisbon International meet proved to be an ideal competition for the Region's 2020 overseas camp. The team won 18 medals altogether and brought home the Top Team Trophy.

Medalists were:

- Laura McNab, Bath University, Gold 100m freestyle, Silver 50m Freestyle
- Phoebe Kelman-Johns, Swim Bournemouth, Gold 50m Breaststroke, Bronze 100m breaststroke
- Tatiana Tostevin, Millfield, Silver 50m Backstroke, Silver 100m Backstroke
- Olivia Butler, City of Bristol, Silver 400m IM, Silver 200m Butterfly, Silver 200m Backstroke
- Charlotte Emery, Taunton Deane, Silver 200m IM
- Imogen Lambert, Mount Kelly, Bronze 50m Breaststroke, Bronze 200m Breaststroke
- Polly Painter, Millfield, Bronze 200m Backstroke
- Robbie Hemmings, Poole, Silver 100m Backstroke, Bronze 200m Backstroke
- Ladies 4 x 100m Medley Relay, Gold – Tatiana Tostevin (Millfield), Imogen Lambert (Mount Kelly), Caitlin Fry (Mount Kelly), Laura McNab (Bath University)
- Ladies 4 x 100m Freestyle Relay, Silver – Laura McNab (Bath University), Amy Pemberton (Plymouth Leander), Tatiana Tostevin (Millfield), Georgina Dennis (Mount Kelly)
- Mens 4 x 100m Freestyle Relay, Bronze – Reid Jones (Plymouth Leander), Josh Gammon, (Plymouth Leander), Ethan Rayment (Bath University), Freddie Ashley Sparks (Plymouth Leander)



The other team members were:

Aimee Brownridge – Plymouth Leander
Olivia Burrow – Exeter City
Bella Hodges – Mount Kelly
Sophie Main – Mount Kelly
Oriana Munden – City of Bristol
Flora Perkin – Dartmoor Darts

James Bartley – Mount Kelly
Alex Bryant – Poole
Sonny Chamberlain Hyde – Seagulls
Mark Edmundson – Team Bath AS
Calvin Fry – Millfield
Adam Hall – Tewksbury
Ben Penhale – Taunton Deane
Samuel Perks – Plymouth Leander
Joseph Russell – Mount Kelly

March

Personal Achievement Award winner



Suzanna Hext, from Swindon Dolphins has recently burst onto the scene in 2019 and is a freestyle specialist. Suzanna first competed in her long course competition at the 2019 BUCS Swimming Championships, where she set a S5 50m Freestyle British Record. Suzanna then went onto her first Swimming World Championships and International meet, where she won Silver in the S5 50m Freestyle and became a finalist in the S5 200m Freestyle where she swam a time of 3:02:50 and she achieved an 8.5 second PB.

Suzanna was recently awarded her Swim England South West Personal Achievement Award and Swim England National Silver Personal Achievement Award.

A huge congratulations to Suzanna!

Staff Changes

During March we welcomed the return of Stacey Millett from maternity leave. We also said goodbye to the outgoing Chair David Flack and welcomed Chrissie Robinson from her role as Treasurer into her new role as Chair.

On 20th March at 8pm an announcement went out that stated pools and leisure centers were to close that evening until further notice.

By the 23rd March the Government imposed a nationwide lockdown and the office was closed with staff moving to work remotely from home until further notice.

April

COVID-19 and the Regions Response

Throughout this uncertain time both Swim England and the Region will endeavour to keep you up to date with latest information and guidance relating to aquatics and running your clubs during this time.

The Regional team are working on a number of areas to ensure that clubs are given the best advice and are able to continue throughout this period.

Here is the advice we were giving:

- Keep visiting our website and Swim England's website for the latest news and updates.
- Have a browse through the Swim England FAQs which have been compiled by the National Clubs Team.
- There is work on developing a support package for coaches and athletes the first videos discussing this are available by clicking [here](#).
- We are looking and waiting for developments on online training in the interim. Further details on this to follow.

Introduction of Online Meetings and Learning

Due to the COVID-19 situation all face-to-face training had to be suspended.

During the interim we looked into running courses remotely. The first workshops we were able to offer online were Safeguarding and Protecting Children. We had many of these workshops on offer and will continue to provide these to our members.

Alongside the workshops we also began to introduce online forums. These were initially available to Club Chairs and Club Coaches. This gave these people an opportunity to discuss with each other how their clubs were dealing with the situation and what they have been putting in place to keep their members engaged if they could.

May

Safeguarding Workshops

Throughout May we felt we needed to continue to offer training to our club workforce. We continued to provide safeguarding workshops free of charge to members to attend to keep in date or to upskill.

Open Water Swimming

Swim England issued the following statement after Prime Minister Boris Johnson unveiled the Government's plan to ease the country out of the coronavirus lockdown.

A Swim England spokesperson said: "Our interpretation is that open water swimming is considered a form of outdoor activity within the new guidelines coming into force from Wednesday (13th May).

"We recognise this will be welcomed by our open water community.

"However, we are advising that only competent and experienced open water swimmers use this form of exercise, whilst adhering to social distancing guidelines.

"Even then, we ask that swimmers consider the risks to themselves and others whilst participating in this activity as the majority of locations will not have lifeguards and there is a real risk of cold water shock at this time of year.

"We are working with British Triathlon and RLSS UK, as well as the relevant public health bodies, to ensure that any return to open water swimming can be done in a safe manner. These guidelines will be published shortly.

"The government guidelines state that you can only exercise with up to one person from outside your household. This means that any type of club activity would not be permitted.

Returning to the pool

Swim England CEO Jane Nickerson released a statement with regards to returning to the pool in mid-May.

On Sunday, the Government announced its Covid-19 recovery plan.

As part of this, there was a relaxation around some of the restrictions on outdoor activities which impacts on open water swimming..

On Wednesday, 13 May, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport released new guidance to enable elite sportsmen and women to return to training.

This is obviously a welcome step as we look to see a return of the sports we love, especially for the athletes that are on the British Swimming elite programme.

As the authority which is able to nominate athletes to represent Great Britain, British Swimming has the responsibility of identifying athletes and performance facilities which will be permitted to return at this time.

We will work collaboratively with British Swimming to understand the insight and learnings as they restart training and this will support the wider return.

We recognise that across all our sports, the vast majority of participants will not be on elite programmes.

We remain totally committed to working towards a situation where our recreational, club and talent programme swimmers, divers, artistic swimmers and water polo players can once again safely enjoy the water that we're all so desperate to return to.

To that end, we are continuing to work on guidance for clubs, to be issued ahead of the reopening of swimming pools.

The Government's Covid-19 recovery plan has said all pools will open no earlier than July, although it should be stressed there is no guarantee that they will open on that date. We will publish our guidance in advance of pools reopening.

To encourage as many people back into the water when the time is right, Swim England will also be supporting clubs by providing a communications toolkit to help engage members and a sector wide campaign to help increase confidence in returning to the water.

In the meantime, we continue to provide online content and engagement to support our members.

There is a real danger that due to the impact of the Covid-19 disruption, a number of pools may not reopen even when they are allowed to do so.

We are continuing to make the case to the Government about the importance of swimming pools for clubs and communities up and down the country and are pushing for financial support to help safeguard the future of these pools.

We have written to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, and MPs from across the political spectrum – some who have tabled a number of parliamentary questions on this issue.

We will continue to fight on behalf of our members and the wider swimming family.

June

Cancellation of all National Events

Swim England has announced all its remaining national events in 2020 have now been cancelled. The decision has been taken to allow the recognised national governing body to start planning for its competitions in 2021.

It will also ensure athletes do not rush back to full fitness and potentially put themselves at the risk of injury when pools are eventually reopened. Swim England had already called off events in all disciplines until the end of August because of the Covid-19 pandemic – which included the National Summer Meet.

Now it has been confirmed the following national competitions will not take place:

- September: Swim England Open Water National Masters Championships (Nene Park, Peterborough)
- October: Swim England National County Team Championships (Ponds Forge); Swim England Masters National Championships (Ponds Forge)
- November: Swim England Water Polo National Age Group Championships U15s Finals (Ponds Forge); Swim England Artistic Swimming National Masters Championships (K2 Crawley); Swim England Masters Swimming Inter County Team Event (various venues)
- December: Swim England Winter Championships (Ponds Forge).

George Wood, Swim England Director of Sport Development, said: “We know our athletes will be saddened to hear we’ve called off the remainder of our events this year – we’re extremely disappointed too.

“It was a decision we deliberated long and hard over but felt that with the current uncertainty still surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, and with no knowledge as to when mass gatherings will be allowed, we were better off starting to prepare for next year’s competitions.

Plan for the future

“We appreciate open water swimming is currently taking place but it would be difficult to stage the National Masters Championships due to the social distancing measures that are in force.

“We hope our members, clubs and competitive athletes in all disciplines will all be back in pools soon, enjoying the sports they love.

“But we have to be realistic and understand that getting ready for competitive action isn’t something that’s going to happen overnight, which was also a factor in our decision.

“Now at least we can start to plan for the future.”

The issuing of event licences is currently suspended and will continue to be so until further notice.

Any licences that have already been issued are provisional in status.

The Swim England Discipline Leadership Groups will publish guidance for the reintroduction of competition, licensed or otherwise in their respective discipline once appropriate information is known.

Meanwhile, the Swim England National Awards, which was scheduled to take place in November, has also been cancelled.

Land Training

It was announced that groups of up to 6 people were able to train outside together which resulted in many clubs getting their athletes outside into local parks and public areas to be able to train together.

This was a welcome addition to the online training which clubs had been participating in to keep their members engaged and active.

Online Team Manager Training Introduced

The Region were able to offer online Team Manager training to members, this was a new workshop that had been developed nationally and was rolled out across the country.

This involved upskilling some presenters to be able to deliver this workshop to our members.

This is a vital workshop that will be needed by those looking to support their clubs when attending competitions and events in the future.

Return to Pool guidance documents released

Swim England has published its comprehensive Return to Pools Guidance ahead of the Government easing the current lockdown measures.

Five detailed documents have been created and are based on the latest scientific advice and Government guidelines.

The guidance includes robust recommendations for operators, casual swimmers, lane swimming, family-fun sessions, club activity, teachers and those attending swimming lessons.

July

Reopening of Pools

July welcomed the reopening of some pools, Open air pools were able to open from 4th July and indoor pools were able to open a few weeks later on 25th July.

Not all pools were able to reopen though with some including Plymouth Life Centre remaining close until further notice due to maintenance problems.

Clubs were given the opportunity to return to the water and from the forums we have organized there were many discussions on who would be returning and what they return would look like.

August

Maintaining Communications across the Region

With some pools opening the Region continued to support clubs by providing Coach, Chair and COVID Lead forums through Zoom.

These forums resulted in interesting conversations being held, including talks around pool fees, timetables and available pool time along with plans clubs have implemented. There has been a general positive response to risk assessments and procedures which are being implemented at the clubs, with many clubs reporting positive feelings coming from their membership as they return to the water.

There was some bad news in Cornwall with only a few pools reopening resulting in Cornwall clubs needing alternative arrangements to be made. On the other hand clubs such as Mount Kelly and Millfield have opened their doors to allow more clubs to access more pool time.

September

Regional Pathway Programme

After an unsure start the 2020 pathway programme was altered to ensure that it could still be delivered during these COVID times. The sessions which would have usually been three pool based camps were adapted to become online sessions with both education and land training on offer. As a region we decided to host these on two mornings from 10am to 1230pm.

The region selected 36 12 year old swimmers (18 male and 18 female):

Female	Club	Male	Club
Augusta Maddox	Millfield	Finley Lock	Seagulls
Eva Lawson	Millfield	Roger Davis	Soundwell
Amelia Cripps	Tigersharks	Sebastian Gillett	Trowbridge
Jessica Huggins	Poole SC	Connor Sherriffs	Tigersharks
Neve Porton	Tigersharks	Nathan Apps	Paignton SC
Constance Logan	Mount Kelly	Harry Kerlake	Soundwell
Evie Linden	Taunton Deane	Ryan Sheahan	Tigersharks
Bryony Hayward	Plymouth Leander	Finley Mooney	Cirencester
Sydney Boyde	Millfield	Luca Gregory	Wellington
Anna Wilkinson	Mount Kelly	Alessandro D'Onofrio	Mount Kelly
Francesca Hanson	Taunton Deane	George Honor	Seagulls
Sofija Gelev	Exeter City	Cody Collins	Swim Bournemouth
Amelie Spicer	Soundwell	Riley Price	Clevedon
Freya Pearson	Plymouth Leander	Malakai Prothero	Bridgwater
Kelly Wynne-Jones	Mount Kelly	George Pearson	Sevenside Tritons
Florence Hadley	Paignton SC	Iskandar Rawbenheimer	Plymouth Leander
Maia Delin	Millfield	Kaleb Allom	Street & District
Annabelle Suffield	Millfield	Oscar Ryland-Day	Millfield

All were invited to attend two sessions via Zoom and these were delivered by the Regional Head Coach Emily Dart (Truro) and supported by the team of Skills Coaches: Neil Edwards (Mount Kelly), Lucy Walton (Tiverton SC), David Cousins (Bristol Penguins), Nathaniel Rookes (Dinnaton SC), Paddy Noon (City of Bristol) and Christopher Lee (Plymouth Leander).

Virtual ACM

On Sunday 6th September the Region ran their ACM via Zoom due to the restrictions from COVID-19. This was a successful meeting with many members attending from across the Region.

At this meeting we said goodbye to our 2019/2020 Regional President Mike Coles and welcomed the new President for this year, Roger Downing.

Mike ended his term in office with the below update from his presidential year and closing speech:

'Now, to start with, I would like to get something out into the open straight away! Yes, I was born on Friday the 13th, but this world-wide pandemic is not solely down to me!

At least my year in office will be a memorable one for many years to come, but maybe for all the wrong reasons! It started off well enough in September 2019! We came back from a nice holiday in Corfu, with nice sun tans, and was inducted into my term as President of Swim England South West Region. My father would have loved to have seen this!

My first event as president was a short trip up the road to Hutton Moor Leisure Centre in my home town of Weston-super-Mare. Hand out the medals they said, every competitor gets ones, they have been engraved, give gold to the men, and silver to the women... and that's when the fun started!

Myself and my wife Joy, or president's lady as I like to refer to her as, travelled to Sheffield's Ponds Forge, now sadly mothballed with a very strong campaign to get it back open! We were there for the National County Championships, as VIP guests of Swim England.

What a thrilling and well-run event it was, two galas running side by side, and with me a Somerset man through and through, presented me with a problem! Who do I support, especially being threatened with physical abuse by the Somerset present, Kelly Podbury, if I didn't cheer on my home county.

Anyways, dominant Devon romped home to their first ever National County Championship crown, ending Yorkshire's three-year dominance as Division 1 title holders. My beloved Somerset finished in a creditable sixth place, and well done to the other counties participating from the south west, Gloucester, Wiltshire, Dorset and Cornwall. You all did us proud!

The following week we were "Up North" again, this time for Swim England's annual council meeting. Again, this was an eye-opener to see the upper echelons of our governing body in action, although I could not sit on my hands as instructed when the subject of the dark side, water polo, was brought up!

I especially enjoyed the inductees into the 2019 Hall of Fame, and got to meet some swimmers I had always admired, Sharon Davies, Duncan Goodhew and Steve Perry, and it was good to see a Weston-super-Mare Swimming Club member, George Hearn, inducted into the Hall of Fame for his work as President of the Amateur Swimming Association, in the basic principles of FINA.

At the beginning of November, I was back to one of my local stomping grounds, Millfield School, for the South West Winter Championships.

Now call me naïve, but I found myself getting annoyed with the number of swimmers withdrawing from finals, whilst others were doing their best to get into them.

This goes against everything I have striven for in participating in all sports, but hey, I'm not a competitive swimmer anymore, so bow to their better judgement, and I'm sure the clubs were happy to pay the fines!

At the end of November, we returned to Millfield, this time for more familiar territory, the South West Inter-County Water Polo Championships.

We welcomed the presidents from Dorset, Devon and Cornwall, as well as the Swim England President, Ian Mackenzie, and his wife, and we all watched some fantastic polo across all ages.

My final event in 2-10 was to attend the Under-14s Inter-Regional Water Polo Competition in Walsall. I went, not as president, but as the region's water polo referee representative. However, it was a good job I had packed the gong, as I ended up presenting the awards on behalf of Swim England.

At the start of 2020 I made plans to go and see all of the county swimming championships in the region. The first of these being Wiltshire's, and then travelled across the border the next day to see Dorsets.

The following weekend we travelled to Gloucester's GL1 to see the Gloucestershire event, and then back to Millfield the next day for Somerset's.

In February we travelled to Plymouth Life Centre, another pool that is not scheduled to reopen until April 2021 with structural problems, to see the Devon Championships, and a quick hop over the River Tamar into Cornwall for their championships at Bodmin.

At the beginning of March, it was when everything started to go pear-shape. Everything was being cancelled and that was it!

I missed events for open water, artistic swimming, and diving. However, a silver lining I did lots of courses to improve my portfolio, and did get to meet an awful lot of people on line at numerous Zoom meetings. Now, where did that year go?'

Mike Coles

October



In October 2020 we welcome Paul Robins into the role of Vice Chair to support the Chair and the Region.

Level X Racing

An 'exciting new concept' where swimmers will pit themselves against others from across the country without leaving their home pool has been officially launched by Swim England.

Level X Racing gives club swimmers the opportunity to take part in a series of time-trials using all strokes at varying distances and then submit them to Swim England rankings.

Tom Baster, the chairperson of the Swim England Swimming Leadership Group, said the initial feedback from the pilot events staged had been well received.

He said: "We know our clubs and members that are back in the water have missed taking part in galas and events due to the coronavirus pandemic.

[Click here](#) to read more on the Swim England website.

SW Coach Shortlisted for Prestigious UK Coaching Award

Congratulations to Coach Emma Collings-Barnes from Mount Kelly Swimming who has been shortlisted for the UK Coaching Talent Development Coach of the Year. Emma has been at the helm of Mount Kelly's swimming programme for the past two years and has 178 students swimming on the national stage and achieving a number of successes.

She said it was 'overwhelming' to be shortlisted and praised the team of coaches and swimmers she works with.

"It's a total honour to hear the news of becoming a finalist in the UK Coaching Awards," said Emma.

"To be honest it's a little overwhelming. I coach because of my passion and pride for Mount Kelly Swimming, as well as seeing the journeys of positive change in the athletes, but to receive this recognition is such a wonderful boost.

"I am very lucky to lead an incredible team of swimmers and coaches and to work with them doesn't feel like a job at all. I am very humbled."

Emma is up against gymnastic coach Amy Moulton and canoeing's Trevor Hunter for the prize.



November

Young Volunteer Programme Launched

We launched the Young Volunteer programme with a virtual meeting for all those enrolled along with their mentors. Over 35 young volunteers and 10 mentors attended the induction meeting to learn about all the plans for the programme in 2021.

The programme will offer development opportunities for members in clubs aged 14-18 years of age, this is a great programme to engage with those who may be starting to think about dropping out of swimming or reducing their hours training. We offer workshops such as introductions to different disciplines and safeguarding workshops.

Seagulls SC in Dorset Crowdfunding Achievement

After Sport England announcing a £16.5mil Return to Play fun Seagulls SC in Dorset aimed to raise £7.5k in one month with a bonus of 50% match funding from Sport England provided the club reached 25% of their target, Chair David McWilliam took on a 96 mile bike challenge to visit all the home pools of Dorset Clubs.

Starting at Bournemouth Collegiate David cycled 96 miles across Dorset visiting pools such as Poole, Dorchester, Weymouth and Bridport with many other stops along the way.

The full ride took 6 hours 12 minutes, burning 3689 calories with a 1288m climb.

For all of the stops and to read David's full journey please [click here to visit the Dorset ASA website.](#)



December

Club Governance is improved through Stronger Affiliation and SwimMark Processes

Congratulations to the following clubs who have achieved either Stronger Affiliation or SwimMark this year.

SwimMark

A.N.T. Swimming Club
Academy Swim Team Burnham
Backwell SC
Barnstaple SC
Bath Dolphin SC
Blandford SC
Bridgwater Amateur Swimming Club
Bridport Barracuda
Bristol Henleaze SC
Bristol North SC
Bristol Penguin Olympic SC
Burnham-on-Sea SC
Calne Alpha Four ASC
Caradon SC
Cheddar Kingfishers SC
Chippenham ASC
Cinderford & District SC
City of Bristol SC
Clevedon SC
Corsham A.S.C.
Credon & District SC
Dartmoor Darts Aquatic
Dawlish SC
Devonport RSA
Dinnaton SC
Durrington Otters
Exeter City Swimming Club
Exeter Waterpolo & Swimming Club
Exmouth Swimming & Lifesaving Society
Honiton SC
Horton & Broadway Swimming Club
Keynsham SC
Kingsbridge Kingfishers SC
Launceston
Marlborough Penguins ASC
Melksham ASC
Mount Kelly Swimming
Newton Abbot Swimming and Water Polo Club
North Cornwall Dragons SC
Norton-Radstock SC
Okehampton Otters SC
Paignton SC
Penzance SA and WPC

Stronger Affiliation

Bournemouth Collegiate School SC
Bournemouth SC
Bradford-On-Avon ASC
Bristol Masters SC
Brixham SC
Brockworth Swimming Club
Bude Sharks
Camelford Stingers
Carn Brea and Helston SC
Cheltenham Phoenix Aquatics Club
Cheltenham S & W P Club
Cirencester SC
Devizes ASC
Dorset Synchronised Swimming Cl
DTs
Dursley Dolphins
Exe Masters Swimming Club
Exeter University Alumni Swimming
Frome SC
Gloucester City SC
Gloucester Masters SC
Heron Swim Team Somerset
Highworth Phoenix Diving Club
Ilfracombe SC
Ilminster Swimming Club
Kernow Artistic Swimming Club
Lydney SC
Malmesbury Marlins ASC
Marlborough College
Millfield School
Minehead & West Somerset SC
Newquay Cormorants SC
Newquay Water Polo Club
North Dorset Turbos SC
Portishead SC
Royal Wootton Bassett ASC
Seagulls Swimming Club
Sherborne Storm SC
Sid Vale SC
South Gloucestershire Water Polo C
South Wilts Clearwater Congers AS
Southwold Swimming Club
St Austell ASC

SwimMark Cont.

Plymouth Diving Club
Plymouth Leander SC
Plymouth Rn/Rm
Poole SC
Salisbury Stingrays ASC
Sevenside Tritons Swimming Club
Sidcot Swim Club
Soundwell SC
Street & District SC
Swindon ASC
Swindon Dolphin ASC
Taunton Deane SC
Tavistock SC
Team Bath AS
TeamBath Synchro Club
Tewkesbury SC
Tigersharks
Tiverton SC
Torquay Leander SC
Trident Swimming Club of East Devon, West Dorset and South Somerset
Trowbridge ASC
Warminster & District ASC
Wells Swimming Club
West Dorset SC
West Wilts Diving Club
Westbury ASC
Weston-Super-Mare SC
Yeovil District SC

Stronger Affiliation Cont.

St Ives Bay SC
Stroud Masters SC
Swim Bournemouth
SX3 Swindon Swim Squad
Teignmouth Swimming Club
Torrildgeside SC
Totnes SC
TR1 Swim
Truro City SC
University of Bristol SC
University of Bath SC
University of Bath WPC
Wareham & District SC
Weymouth & Portland WPC
Weymouth SC
Weyport Masters SC
Wincanton SC
Wroughton ASC
Bere Regis SC
Wellington SC

Congratulations to all of these clubs, it is a great achievement and shows that your clubs have all of the correct governance procedures in place in line with Swim England expectations.

Discipline Review of the Year

Water Polo

Water Polo was given the go-ahead to restart their Water Polo Academy, and they have now published dates for 2021. They have included a younger age group as part of their development plan.

Dates for the inter-region water polo competitions are hoped to be published soon and will take place in the latter half of 2021.

There is a new referee grading system being introduced for 2021 which includes a new level, Club, which is for those who want to officiate at training sessions or inter-club friendlies. Full details will be published in due course, and also dates for courses for table officials and referees.

The largest league in the South West, the Bristol & West Water Polo League, are making plans for a return to competition in the new year, with a new format which hopefully will start in Spring or early Summer, all things being well.

Open Water

Well, that was the year that wasn't! As with all disciplines, OW events were dramatically curtailed due to the Covid-19 outbreak and the 2020 Regional Championship Event did not take place.

Despite this, the region saw a large surge in open water swimming during the summer as all the pools were closed, with coaches and swimmers alike trying out what is a new environment for many. Hopefully they enjoyed their experience and will continue to swim outdoors in 2021 and try their hand at open water racing too.

The outlook for 2021, however, is looking much better. The Regional Championship Event has been scheduled for July 3rd at Lake 86 in the Cotswold Water Park near Cirencester/Swindon and a new regional Coach, Richard Smith (based out of Cromhall in Somerset), has been appointed. As we progress into the New Year, more details will follow through the usual channels.

Dr Brian Armstrong
Chair, Open Water Committee

Artistic Swimming

We have been unable to hold any Artistic Swimming events since March 2020

A new Facebook media page has been introduced to help all of our members keep in touch with each other It now has 500 members.

Our regional Artistic committee hold regular zoom meetings to discuss the overall administration of our sport and reports are sent out to every club following each meeting.

We have lost one of our clubs this year Chippenham Synchro have decided to fold.

Due to the unpredictable situation Swim England have unfortunately decided not to hold a senior trial for the 2021 competitive season. They will continue working with the current cohort of athletes that are on the Elite list and make a final decision for team selection when we have confirmation that the 2021 competitions will take place.

Daniella Lloyd from the city of Bristol has joined our Seniors Kate Shortman and Isabelle Thorpe as part of their training bubble.

Due to the restructuring of Swim England, we lost both Paula Brand regional Artistic Swimming Development Officer Sarah Darragh the National Development Officer Artistic Swimming.

Swimming Officials Summary

Of the 69 vouchers issued to candidates: 51 completed the online phase; of the remaining 18 - 2 candidates ceased to be members and 16 are still working through the units. It is heartening that only 2 candidates have given up swimming membership from the candidate cohort. This will go a long way to ensuring a current volunteer workforce to help officiate competitions throughout the region.

I am pleased with our progress as a Region and look forward to the remaining 16 candidates finishing the online stage in time for the much awaited return to poolside competition where mentored practice can take place.

Chairs Review of the Year

What a year to become Chair of a sporting organisation!

The UK was placed into a national lockdown on 23 March and I became Chair on 1st April!

I will start with thanking my predecessor, David Flack for his strong leadership, hard work and steady influence during his term in office. Making it an easy transition handing over the reins to such a friendly and well organised Region.

It has certainly been a steep learning curve with the first hurdle being Zoom; the new life line of the Region. This technology has enabled the Region to continue providing service and assistance to all of our members.

We have been able to provide nearly 50 Safeguarding courses online to our members, which equates to approximately 600 individuals either gaining this accreditation or renewing their accreditation. This will continue free of charge into the New Year but the cost will be assessed regularly.

We have also provided Time to Listen Workshops for your Club Welfare Officers and Team Manager training. All of this made possible over the internet.

There have also been Chairs, Coaches and Welfare Officers forums held on Zoom as well as Covid Lead forums. All of these to share information, updates and generally engage and support your club volunteers. As a Region we have been using this time to look at our own governance and we are working towards becoming an incorporated company limited by guarantee at our next Annual Council Meeting.

It has been difficult with furlough of Regional Staff, reorganisation of Swim England which resulted in us losing our Club Development Officer, but Chris Stacey and Jackie have really stepped up and continued to provide a constant source of assistance and knowledge to all of our Clubs and volunteers. (if they didn't know the answer immediately, they would always know someone else who did!)

Most Clubs have struggled with some pools not reopening immediately, some not at all. Pool time when offered not always being at a suitable time. Price increases. Covid19 restrictions which have reduced the number of swimmers allowed into the pool at the same time etc.

We have lost some clubs along the way, Oddicome, Kingsteignton, Tornadoes of South Dorset, West Wilts Force 5 and Chipping Campden due to Covid19, lack of volunteers and other factors but we have also gained clubs, Bristol University Synchro Club and Carrick Masters. Clubs have also been strengthened by looking at their governance and becoming accredited with Stronger Affiliations, some carrying on and getting SwimMark! All very positive achievements in a difficult year for everyone.

Let us all continue to build on all of the positives of this year and look forward to returning to competitions as soon as it is safe to do so. Making use of Level X time Trials if possible as well as Level X being introduced for Diving and Artistic Swimming in the New Year.

I will finish with a big thanks to you all, the volunteers, who make our Clubs the heart of our Region!