

The Swim England South West Region Water Polo Committee Meeting held on Monday, October 21st, 2024 via Zoom

Attendees: Simon Tomlinson, Chair of SESWR Water Polo Technical Committee (CT)
Mike Coles, SESWR Water Polo Manager and SESWR Director (MC)
Chrissie Robinson, SESWR Director and SESWR Chair (CR)
Jim Robinson, Finance Officer for Water Polo (JR)
John Spicer, Head Coach Boys (JS)
Nick Hume, Head Coach Girls (NH)
Sue Webb, Talent Centre Administrator and SESWR Coach
Phil Whiting, BWWPL Administrator (left the meeting at 7.45 pm) PW
Glen Mitchell, Dorset Representative (GM)
Chris Selby, Wiltshire Representative (CS)
(LK)
Dominic Granville, Boy's Administrator SESWR (joined the meeting late).

1. **Welcome from the Chair and apologies. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss and make decisions on various matters related to the SESWR Water Polo Technical Committee and associated stakeholders.**
 - 1.1. ST welcomed those who had joined the meeting, giving up their time.
 - 1.2. Apologies were received from Adrian Smart, Board Representative; Paul Robbins; Deputy Chair, SESWR; Becky Bellett, Girl's Administrator for SESWR; Geoff Pearce, Finance Director, SESWR; Toby Hogg, Cornwall's Representative; Bradley Poole, Somerset's Representative.
 - 1.3. It was noted that there still needed to be an appointment for a representative for Devon.
Action: MC will write to the Devon ASA County Secretary to express the concerns of the SESWR Committee.
Post Meeting Note: MC had received a reply from Devon ASA, who said they were also very concerned with the situation and that it was on the agenda to discuss at the next meeting.
2. **Declaration of Interests**
 - 2.1. ST declared an interest with Wyvern Swimwear regarding equipment supply. This declaration is important as it ensures that any discussions related to this topic are conducted in a fair and unbiased manner.
3. **Approval of the meeting minutes held on Monday, June 24th, 2024.**
 - 3.1. These were formerly agreed upon as an accurate record of that meeting. A copy can be downloaded [here](#).
4. **Matters arising from those minutes.**
 - 4.1. No matters were arising — everything was covered in the agenda.
5. **Updates from Groups (noted as read):**
 - 5.1. **Swim England Water Polo Leadership Group** met on October 9th, 2024, but the minutes had yet to be published. MC gave a verbal report at the meeting, which included the failure of many of the RTCs around the country. MC explained that in the South West, we looked to get at least 100 attendees at the RTC, whilst most around the country were lucky if they got between 30 and 50. He was able to report back on the success of the South West's RTC and also the close ties that the region has with the local Talent Centre, working closely with them to avoid clashes of dates. He further reported that he suggested that Assistant Coaches and Coaches courses be held nationally online and that the candidates take their practicals locally with the RTCs. The minutes will be circulated when available.
 - 5.2. **Swim England Competition Calendar** ([click here](#)). SW mentioned that the Under-18s Inter-Regional competition in January had been removed from the National Calendar.
Action: The regional manager will email the competition organisers to inquire about what is happening.

Post Meeting Note: Joanne Mountfield replied to this email saying she was unaware of why and who had removed the details but would contact Swim England to see what was happening and why it was removed.

5.3. Swim England South West Region Board Update: MC updated the meeting on what had been discussed at the last board meeting.

6. Diversity and Inclusivity Updates.

6.1. MC reaffirmed our commitment to diversity and inclusivity in all our training and competitions. This includes providing competitors with a “quiet room” if they wish to use it, ensuring everyone feels comfortable and included in our events.

6.2. Further updates will be provided at the meeting in the future.

7. Finance by the Finance Officer, JR. As the Finance Officer, JR is responsible for managing the financial aspects of the Water Polo Committee, including budget planning and reporting.

7.1. JR reported that he was struggling to organise another meeting with the Regional Finance Officer, Geoff Pearce, to arrange for the budgets for the coming year. MC reported that the budgets had been agreed in principle at the last board meeting but found it strange that no meeting had occurred. CR noted that the budgets had been decided, but GP and JR would arrange a meeting to discuss them. This open discussion about the challenges we face in financial planning keeps everyone informed and involved in the process.

7.2. JR explained that he had been able to piece together a proposed budget by using the information given to him over the year, which would form the basis for the coming year. He would send this out to ST and MC in the coming week.

7.3. MC congratulated JR on being elected as the new BWWPL treasurer this week.

Action: JR will meet with GP at the earliest convenience to discuss the budget.

8. Codes of Conduct

8.1. MC explained that Swim England had issued new Codes of Conduct and that he was formulating them into Google Forms, which would be sent out to all who needed to complete them.

9. Updates from Coaches

9.1. NH commented that in the South West, we were lucky with our close ties with the regional Talent Centre and RTC. This also helped with having SW and Lou Betts, who worked with the Talent Centre, on the RTC coaches list. He thought it would help if we involved more younger coaches across the region by inviting them along to help at the RTC, maybe some of the players who had moved out of the age groups to come back and coach. It also enabled players to get more access to quality coaching, especially if they were in both the Talent Centre and RTC, but the biggest problem was cost. He then continued to participate in recent competitions, with the latest being the Under-18 girls, who represented the region on the weekends of September 28th and 29th. The South West finished a creditable third place in the competition at Haberdashers. NH commented that he'd have liked to have done better. The team is very young and suitable for future years, and the levels can improve. The main thing was to stay in the top division and compete.

9.2. JS handed over to PW, the Head Coach for the Under-18 Boys, who also competed at Haberdashers on the weekends of October 12th and 13th, with GM as his assistant. He reported losing the two most demanding games on the first day, losing to London Region 22-10 and Ireland 19-7. On the second day, they found their “shooting boots” but lost 10-7 to the North West, a game they should have won. They beat East Midlands in their final match, which gave them fourth place. He thanked GM and Nicky Morgan for managing the team. JS continued that he was coaching the 07s when, in the previous competition, we got through to the top five in a penalty shootout, so to finish a place above fifth was progress. He further commented that it was a shame that the competition clashed with our own RTC. At the next RTC, he will select the next regional boys' team for the Under-14s Competition at the end of November. He emphasised the importance of getting younger players at the RTC and introducing them to competition at a national level, not just a local level.

10. Updates on forthcoming Inter-Regional Competitions.

10.1. as previously mentioned, the following competitions were the Under-14 Boys on November 30th and December 1st, 2024, at Walsall Gala Baths, and the Under-14 Girls on December 7th and 8th, also at Walsall Gala Baths.

10.2. MC said that he would hold off publishing the two teams once selected until closer to the competition because of the problems faced with the Under-18s after problems due to the selection of a player outside of the postcode area for the South West, and another player being unavailable due to injury. It was expanded on the fact that the inter-regional

competition has a condition that players mainly come from the region according to postcode rather than club. MC had raised the problem with the competition organisers and Chair of the Swim England Water Polo Leadership Group, Ian Mackenzie, but they would not budge.

11. 2024 Inter-County Championships at Millfield on September 21st.
 - 11.1. MC published the full results and circulated them to the county representatives. He was thanked for all the hard work put into organising the competition and officials. However, the number of entries was disappointing, especially amongst the senior teams, although some of this was due to the clashes with national competitions.
 - 11.2. Discussion occurred regarding whether the senior team's competition should be removed from the competition and, in 2025, concentrate on just the younger sides. The competition had tangible benefits to the Under-13s, etc., which was promising. Also, holding the competition for just one day paid dividends in terms of the number of spectators attending. After much discussion, it was agreed to concentrate on Under-17s, Under-15s, and Under-13s, reduce the competition to just one day, look at the calendar, and try to choose a free weekend in September.
12. SESW Regional Training Academy and updates on Talent Centre in the South West.
 - 12.1. There was just one more date left in 2024, on November 16th, at Millfield, from 5.00 pm until 9.00 pm.
 - 12.2. The dates for 2025 had been published, and MC and SW had worked together to ensure no clashes. Although with a full calendar, this proved difficult, especially as the 2025 dates were booked with Millfield at least seven months ahead, and competition dates had not been published then. The dates for 2025 were:
 - Saturday, January 18th, 2025, 5 pm – 9 pm
 - Saturday, February 15th, 2025, 5 pm – 9 pm
 - Saturday, April 5th, 2025, 5 pm – 9 pm
 - Saturday, May 17th, 2025, 5 pm - 9 pm
 - Saturday, June 21st, 2025, 5 pm - 9 pm
 - Saturday, July 19th, 2025, 5 pm – 9 pm
 - Saturday, October 11th, 2025, 5 pm - 9 pm
 - Saturday, November 15th, 2025, 5 pm - 9 pm.
 - 12.3. It was agreed to keep the fee at £15.00 per session. Players could pay for all sessions upfront, but it was recognised that this could cause hardship.
 - 12.4. DG asked who he needed to speak to regarding checking payments for both the RTC and also the payments made for the inter-regionals. He was told Geoff Pearce was away then, so CR would check the accounts and send him a printout.
13. Training Courses for Water Polo.
 - 13.1. MC reported that there were no plans for courses for referees and table officials, as they were still working on mentoring for the last batch of candidates. However, he and PW will review this over the coming months and look to set up a new course in the spring.
 - 13.2. the IoS planned Assistant Coach and Coach Courses, and MC worked closely with them to judge demand for courses across the South West, linking the practicals with the RTCs.
14. County Representative Reports.
 - 14.1. Devon: No report from Devon, as no representative.
 - 14.2. Dorset: GM said there was nothing to report from the county.
 - 14.3. Cornwall: No report.
 - 14.4. Gloucester County: Attached as Appendix I
 - 14.5. Somerset: No report.
 - 14.6. Wiltshire: Attached as Appendix II
15. Any other business.
 - 15.1. The chair suggested that we bring forward the January meeting due to the date of future competitions and not have the meeting in December. It was agreed that it would now be held on January 13th, 2025. Although there was a clash with Artistic Swimming Meeting, MC decided to host the meeting on his Zoom account.
 - 15.2. CR asked what equipment was stored by the region at Millfield, as the area had backstroke ledges that now needed replacing. MC commented that he was well aware that Millfield water polo was using the region's equipment, which had started up, but said the goals were the property of Millfield Pool. He would discuss the situation with the pool manager.
 - 15.3. NH informed the meeting that he had received an invitation from Sport England to attend Buckingham Palace to meet HRH Princess Anne for his services to water polo coaching by Sport England. The committee passed on their congratulations to him.

Dates of next meetings:

Monday, January 13th 2025

Monday, June 23rd, 2025

Monday, September 22nd 2024

Gloucester County Water Polo Report



Juniors

The South West Region Inter-County Championships were held at Millfield Swimming Pool on Saturday, September 21st, 2024.

Thank you to all referees, table officials, coaches, team managers and players.

The competition finished in a draw in the Under-13s Mixed between Gloucestershire and Devon.

In the Under-15s, Mixed Gloucestershire displayed their prowess by securing the silver. Notably, Gloucestershire also fielded a girls' team in this event, a testament to the burgeoning strength of women's polo in the county.

Due to a clash of events, our county Under-17 Boys was not as strong as it could have been; however, the side finished a respectable 3rd.

British Water Polo League (BWPL)

Cheltenham Men's 1st team

After two matches, the Cheltenham Men's 1st team is in a promising joint 4th position. They are poised to strengthen this position in the upcoming weekend in Aldershot, aiming to secure a Top 5 finish and qualify for the Super 5s competition after Christmas.

Cheltenham Senior Women's Team

After 2 weekends, the side sits 6, just one spot off the five placings. With one weekend left for the women's league, they hope two final wins will qualify the side for the Super 5s. This would be the first time a county women's side has competed in the British League's top flight and the South West's first.

Bristol Men's Team

Bristol drew one and lost one on the first weekend of the 2nd Division of the BWPL. Still, all to play for in this division and Bristol will still be hoping for a top 5 finish and a spot in Championship 1 after Christmas.

Cheltenham Spartans Men's Team

Two wins from their first two games see Cheltenham's 2nd men's team top of the 3rd Division of the National League. This side includes more than 5 U18s, which is good for the county's future.

Bristol Senior Women

Bristol was one of the teams affected by the reduction in divisions of the BWPL and entered the National Conference League. This league, while not as high-profile as the BWPL, has become a great substitute for the BWPL, and Bristol has had a strong start with three wins from 5 matches.

Tewkesbury Swimming Club

We regret to inform you that the Tewkesbury Swimming Club has had to disband its water polo section due to the unavailability of a level 2 coach. We appreciate the efforts of the club and hope for a positive resolution in the future.

Level 1 coaching course

Cheltenham are hosting a Level 1 water polo coaches course starting in early November.

International

We hope several County players will travel with the England senior men's team to the EU nations competition in early November, with the official team announcement due shortly.

Cheltenham's Elizabeth Ross and Amélie Perkins travelled to Zagreb (Croatia) to compete in the U19 European championship, where GB finished 9th, just one place off guaranteed world championship qualification.

Anna Kilb (Bristol) was selected to play for England U18s in an international tournament in Barcelona in early September. This was part of the build-up for the European championship next summer.

Laura Kania

Gloucester County Representative

Wiltshire Waterpolo Update Oct 2024



Playing Numbers

Numbers at all age groups, particularly [specify age groups], remain a constant issue. BOA relies on senior men's involvement from other teams to satisfy fixtures, whilst Swindon felt the extent of some senior men's injuries, which have been depleted for most of the season. Swindon's women's numbers took a hit last year with some players moving away from the area, stalling the women's team's progress into league competition.

Recruitment

As we approach the end of the season, both teams have started to see an increase in activity, primarily due to [explain reasons].

BOA's Club link programme has been a game-changer, leading to a significant increase in Junior numbers. With around 30 juniors currently registered, mostly at the beginner stage, the programme is making a great impact on their development. The recent BOA vs. Bristol game saw a number of these juniors in action, a promising sign for the future.

Swindon has seen a slight increase in senior numbers towards the end of the season, with a couple of recruits in both the senior men's and women's teams. They continue to post on social media for numbers in all teams and have seen a steady influx of enquiries. Swindon have also enquired about the Club Link programme, which they are hoping to start around December and will monitor the progress

The junior tournament held at Swindon's Marlborough College on the 13th of October was a resounding success. Teams from BOA, Swindon, Marlborough College, and Frome had a great afternoon, and all the kids enjoyed themselves. This is the 3rd tournament we have arranged, and it's clear that our efforts are making a positive impact on the community.

We are excited to announce that we will be sending out a questionnaire to all Wiltshire clubs. This is a crucial step in our efforts to understand why they don't offer water polo and to build some dialogue. We believe that this initiative, along with the taster sessions we plan to organize, will help us get more players involved. The questionnaire has been finalized and should be sent out shortly.

Chris Selby

Wiltshire Representative to the SESWR Water Polo Committee