



Annual Report 2020

Introduction

This Annual Report, which covers the period April 2020 to December 2020, includes:

- A report from the Chairman, Joan Wheeler (pages 1 to 3)
- A Financial Report from the Finance Director, Keith Belton (page 4)
- A report from the Regional Development Manager, Leanne Brace (pages 5 to 7)
- A concluding message from the President, David Metcalf (page 7)

The report is written in the context of a worldwide pandemic, a change of financial year for the region, and changes to our governance structure as we move from an unincorporated association to a company limited by guarantee, with charitable status.

We have included a summary of the activity over the reporting period although members will be aware that the Region uses its website and social media to publish information about successes, achievements and events throughout the year.

There will be an opportunity to discuss the Report at our Special Council Meeting on 22nd April 2021.

Chairman's Report

Well, what a dreadful year 2020 was! The pandemic hit the UK in March, and we spent the next few months cancelling events and competitions that had been planned by our volunteers and staff across all disciplines, knowing that however necessary these decisions were, we were disappointing our athletes and those for whom our sport is a major part of their lives.

Our volunteers and staff rapidly became involved in the various working groups set up by Swim England to steer the sport through the pandemic and to provide virtual, rather than face to face, support for our athletes, coaches and volunteers. Many of our volunteers juggled demanding paid employment with long evening and weekend meetings, to ensure that the needs of our clubs and athletes were accommodated in the plans, and we thank them for their dedication.

One positive amongst many negatives, is that we have had to rethink how we communicate with our members, and with each other. Virtual communication, be it by Zoom, Teams or Facetime, has made us realise that we don't have to be together physically to 'meet', or to provide effective communication and development for our members.

On this theme, and faced with a substantial drop in income, particularly from regional swimming championships and licensed open swimming meets, the Board has decided that the expense of maintaining a Regional Office can no longer be justified, particularly as our staff can work as effectively from home. We will therefore be terminating our lease on the office at Lanwades Business Park, Kentford on 31st March 2021, and our staff's contracts have been amended to specify homeworking. We will maintain a storage facility at Kentford as this is central to the region, and reasonably accessible for those running events.

President

Faced with a very uncertain 2020, and with the agreement of both the President and President Elect, the Board took the decision not to appoint a new President at the 2020 Annual Council Meeting. David Metcalf will continue as President and will hand over the Chain of Office to Paul Kendall in April 2021.

Governance

At our Annual Council Meeting in September, the Members agreed that the association should become a company limited by guarantee. A small working group of Management Board members had worked hard on these proposals and had prepared the required Articles of Association and Regulations, together with the proposals for a new governance structure.

Following approval at the ACM, the new Board of Directors have worked towards implementing the new structure. A Members Forum, comprising representatives from each of the six counties, has been established to take office from 1st January 2021. An Audit, Risk and Probity Committee has been appointed, and Nominations Committees also appointed to oversee the various elections. Elections for the Regional Operations Committee (ROC) will take place in two phases early in 2021, firstly for the Member Nominated Committee Members and then for the Independent Committee Members. The Management Board will continue in office until the ROC takes office in April 2021.

Staffing

And then there were two. Although outside the reporting period, our Swimming Talent Officer, Kevin Pickard, recently left the Region to explore opportunities as an external consultant. Kevin, who had been with the Region for almost four years, was passionate about the development of swimming and will be missed by coaches, swimmers and parents.

Kevin's resignation, following on from the loss of our Regional Development Officer, Amy Bryant, in April 2020, does leave a capacity issue in our staffing team. Although recruitment is currently on hold, when things get back to some kind of normality, we will reconsider our staffing structure in the context of the current regional development plan. In the meantime, we are very fortunate that our remaining two members of staff, Leanne Brace, Regional Development Manager, and Jo Stalley, Regional Administrator, are experienced, knowledgeable and hardworking. During the pandemic, they have both had to take on roles that are outside their normal duties, and have done a fantastic job.

Clubs

2020 has been a hugely challenging year for all our clubs, who have had to contend with lockdown after lockdown, restricted access to some pools, no access to others, Covid rules and risk assessments, demotivated athletes, parents and coaches, financial pressures, increased paperwork and never ending Zoom calls. Clubs are the backbone of our sport and we are extraordinarily grateful to those who manage the clubs in East Region for their dedication and resilience throughout the past year and for their willingness to rise to the challenge for the benefit of their members.

Our adult athletes have had a particularly challenging time and, despite pressure on national government from Swim England, they have endured more restrictions than other sections of the membership. Inevitably, the pandemic will have an impact on our membership numbers, and it may take some time for these to recover.

Throughout this difficult period, an increasing number of our clubs have met the requirements of SwimMark. Currently 80 of 126 clubs have reached this standard, with others working towards the requirements. In 2019, Swim England announced that, from 1st January 2021, all clubs would be required to meet a minimum standard in order to continue to affiliate. Although, initially some clubs were concerned at their ability to meet the requirements of Stronger Affiliation, with much help and support from regional staff, the vast majority of clubs have now met these conditions.

The ability of East Region clubs to rise to this challenge was greatly helped by the fact that, knowing that Stronger Affiliation was in the pipeline, the region had started an audit of all club constitutions to ensure that they were compatible with the Swim England Model. Our Membership Officer, Chris Galer, has become an expert on constitutions and I thank him for the many hours he has spent supporting clubs in finding solutions that are right for their members.

Joan Wheeler
Chairman

Finance Report

Accounts

The figures below are the ones that the Management Board have signed off. The full set of accounts will be published separately.

	1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020	1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020
Income	90,813.06	278,679.69
Expenditure	94,587.47	358,208.96
Surplus (Deficit)	(3,774.41)	(79,529.27)
Fixed Assets	5,548.45	8,894.58
Current Assets	282,755.25	283,358.86
Current Liabilities	901.31	1,076.64
Total Assets	287,402.39	291,176.80

Included within the Current Assets is £1,296.00 of prepayments. The amount is a deposit on a pool booking and refunds for the same pool as a result of cancelled events. In this reporting period, the Financial Year end was changed to 31 December so the table above compares 9 months against a full year. However, the main reason for the significant differences between the periods is the cancellation of activities due to the pandemic.

Regional Membership fees were set at the 2019 level of £35 per club, £5 per category 1 member and £6 per category 2 member. There is no charge for category 3 members.

Financial Impact of the Pandemic

As with clubs, the pandemic has also had an impact on the region's finances. Although the bulk of the 2020 Membership Income was received before the pandemic hit the UK, the number of people joining clubs during the year has been minimal, which has impacted of the predicted overall membership income. In addition, there has been no income from competitions, particularly regional swimming championships and licensed open meets, which in a normal year would bring in a combined income in excess of £50k.

The drop in income has been offset by a reduced expenditure on development, although some development activities have taken place virtually. The region has received a one off business interruption grant and has taken advantage of furlough grants whenever appropriate to do so. The Regional Development Officer post has been frozen since May 2020.

Clearly there is a concern about income for 2021 and possibly beyond. We anticipate a drop in membership income, are uncertain about income from licensed swimming meets and may have to face increased costs from running development events and competitions. However, the balances show that these, hopefully temporary, factors can be accommodated in the short term.

Keith Belton
Finance Manager

Report from the Regional Development Manager

Workshops and Courses

Whilst Covid-19 has provided the region with many challenges, it has also provided us with opportunities. Traditionally our workshops took place in hired venues around the region and learners would travel on an evening or weekend to attend. Swim England quickly adapted the workshops to enable online delivery, allowing the region to deliver a much more accessible programme for our volunteers.

The table below shows in the last six months the region has achieved 81% of the total number of learners for the whole of the previous year, despite the Team Manager Module 2 not being available to deliver at the time. This increase in delivery has enabled our clubs to continue to develop and upskill volunteers at a time when other activity had to stop.

Workshop	April 2019- March 2020	April 2020- December 2020
Team Manager Module 1	15 (178 learners)	11 (143 learners)
Team Manager Module 2	6 (43 learners)	Not available online at the time
Time to Listen	2 (16 learners)	4 (48 learners)

In addition to the workshop delivery, the region has delivered a number of other online opportunities to help our members continue to learn and share best practice with each other at a time when communication was more important than ever.

The regional programme has been designed to complement Swim England activity to provide an engaging programme of online learning opportunities for all our disciplines. One example was the great disability online programme for athletes, coaches and parents, delivered by Swim England with administrative support from the region. In addition to this, the online support for artistic swimming has been tremendous, with 18 engagements including a costume design competition and a national online workout.

Working with Clubs and Counties

In order for the region to provide the right support to the right clubs, a survey was sent out to get the best picture possible. Through using this insight, we were able to directly provide useful support to those that needed it most. This included discussions with operators, providing local funding opportunities, and risk assessment logistics.

Throughout the reporting period, the region has endeavoured to provide the support and advice its clubs and members wanted, without replicating what was being offered by the national governing body. Activities facilitated by the region included:

- Support and guidance to our Club and County Chairpersons through a Club Chairs' Forum. We held four meetings during the six months, with between 45-100 attendees.

- The region hosted a Covid-19 Lead training opportunity for those volunteers that were ensuring a safe return to the water on behalf of their clubs. This training saw 101 volunteers upskilled and supported by the region.
- Our Diving Committee piloted a diving specific Chairs' Forum to see if our volunteers felt bespoke opportunities were valuable.
- Knowing that coaching can be a lonely job, even under normal circumstances, the region provided a regular coach drop in service for our swimming coaches. This enabled coaches to meet online with like-minded people to share ideas, and useful hints and tips with each other. We have held twenty seven drop-ins, with each attracting between 15- 35 coaches. Coaches also receive regular communication via our quarterly newsletter, which currently reaches an audience of 364 coaches.
- Our water polo clubs have been getting together online to share some great ideas and work together to build plans for the sport in the east. Keeping in touch has proved vital for the wellbeing of our coaches and committees that miss the pool so much.
- We have developed a series of podcasts to help our members feel supported through this pandemic, particularly the regional podcast series 'Lockdown'. There are seven episodes designed to engage, inspire, and motivate our members.
- Club Newsletters continue to be published on a monthly basis to highlight any useful resources, updated guidance and key dates for our members. The mailing list for this has now reached 530 members.
- Stronger Affiliation was a large part of the regional focus during these 6 months. With a deadline of 1st December, we had forty seven clubs to guide through the minimum governance standards. Via individual meetings and calls, we were able to support our clubs in becoming compliant. East Region was commended nationally on the support we provided our clubs through this process.
- SwimMark support also continued, and on the whole, volunteers embraced the time to 'get the house in order'. The region began this period with 74 clubs accredited and ended with 80 clubs accredited.
- Welfare Workshops was another area where the region hosted an opportunity to learn and share ideas. This initiative was aimed at club Welfare Officers and Chairpersons to understand the party roles in an internal dispute, and how to deal with one effectively. The region hosted 2 of these workshops during this time.

Working with Athletes and their families

- The traditional Swimming talent camp, aimed at 12 year olds, was not able to run in its usual form, however this did not stop the region from engaging with, and providing learning opportunities for our members. We pre-recorded 3 online presentations delivered by professional practitioners in their field, then shared these links with our clubs to cascade to any 12 year old they thought might benefit. By using this method, the key messages reached over 200 young swimmers (636 downloads overall), compared to the 36 athletes previously selected. After the athletes had listened to the presentations in their own time, they were invited to an online Q&A session with each practitioner. This attracted over 200 log-ins.
- We recognise that the sport can, at times, be baffling to parents so have looked at how we can support clubs in providing helpful information to parents, particularly in the absence of parent talks at regional and county championships. An interview with Caroline Peaty, mother of Adam, was produced to help parents understand the ups and downs of being a swimmer parent, and highlighting some useful tips for the journey. This has had 636 views so far.

- The Regional Diving Committee hosted a fantastic online diving workshop with 47 athletes signed up to the 2 day event. This provided our divers with a great opportunity to learn and develop during lockdown.

Leanne Brace
Regional Development Manager

Message from the President

When asked whether, due to uncertainty caused by the pandemic I was willing to continue as Regional President, I did hope that it would mean that I had the chance of attending regional and national events and meeting more of our athletes, volunteers and coaches. As it turned out that has not been the case, and although I have previously had that opportunity, I know that for many of our athletes the time away from the pool and competitions will have been a significant blow in a year of many other disappointments, frustrations and regrets.

As I write this report, it does seem that the green shoots are not only in the garden, that the signs are that pools will re-open in the near future and our members will be back doing what they enjoy most.

On behalf of Swim England East Region I thank all our clubs and volunteers for their sterling work in keeping the sport going through the pandemic, and our athletes for finding ways to maintain fitness and have fun and I look forward to seeing everyone back on poolside as soon as possible.

David Metcalf
Regional President
March 2021