



Swim England
Hertfordshire



ANNUAL REPORT

2023

General

The annual report covers the calendar year 2023.

The county swimming championships and age-groups competition took place in January 2023. Disappointingly, Swim England Hertfordshire did not have a team at the National Inter-County Team Championships at Ponds Forge in October 2023. A full team of athletes was available, but, despite huge efforts by the swimming manager over many weeks, no commitment could be found from coaches and team managers. Artistic swimming held age-group competitions within regional competitions in 2023, have run a successful grading day in the county, and are progressing with the set-up of a development squad. Water polo competition was provided in the Hertfordshire & District Water Polo League and a successful junior water polo competition was held, organised by the water polo section of Hitchin SC. The county's diving athletes competed at regional competitions, but there were no county championships in 2023. There were two attempts to organise a county masters competition in 2023, but unfortunately in the end, it did not happen. A team from the county competed at the Swim England East Region Inter-County Masters Championships in October 2023. Open water championships were held within the regional championships.

With training and development being provided online when required, a specific county development weekend was not organised in 2023. Disability athletes had access to development through the regional training sessions. Two 1-direction swimming development camps took place in 2023.

As at 31st December 2023, there were 34 clubs in Hertfordshire. Beaumont Diving Academy and Dacorum Diving deliver the discipline of diving. Aqualina (Stevenage), Dacorum and Potters Bar are the artistic swimming clubs, and artistic swimming is also delivered through Hatfield Swimming Club. The discipline of water polo is delivered by Watford Water Polo Club, and through the Hertford and Hitchin Swimming Clubs. There is one club specifically for masters swimmers – that is St Albans Masters. There is also the Hertfordshire Aquatics Club, which has been set up by the county in conjunction with the 50m pool project. Following national changes, the synchronised swimming clubs in Hertfordshire are now known as Artistic Swimming Clubs. A new swimming club joined the county in 2023 – Rickmansworth SC.

Committee and Management Board meetings have continued to be held online, because of the saving of room hire cost, and also the saving of time spent travelling to those meetings. Through Swim England and Swim England East Region, online theory training has been possible for volunteers and officials, and forums and development have also been available online.

The Management Board has met four times in the year. There were three vacancies on the Management Board following the Annual Council Meeting 2023. There is no doubt that the management of the county affairs would be better served with a full complement of Board members. At present the governance of the county lies in the hands of twelve members of the Management Board – this is not ideal in any way. There are only four meetings (2 hours maximum), plus the Annual Council Meeting, and so the time-commitment is minimal. It would be SO helpful to have a full complement of members and be able to share the load and responsibilities. It is hoped that the vacancies will be filled at the Annual Council Meeting.

Unfortunately, the perception is that a wealth of experience is required. This is definitely not the case. What *is* required is people with positive ideas and a commitment to the development of swimming, in all its aspects, in the county. If the few people, who do bother to contribute, did not do so, then our athletes would have no competitions and development! The idea that other people know far more than you, should not be a factor in making a commitment. Knowledge and experience are built up by doing a job, and full support to a newcomer would most certainly be given by those who have the experience and knowledge. The time-commitment for a member of the Board or a committee is minimal over the year, and any role undertaken to help organise events need not be onerous timewise if the load can be spread.

The artistic swimming committee and the swimming committee have met online during the year. Minutes of the meetings which were held are available on the website. There has been no county disability committee this year, although Jackie Harvey continues as the disability manager, and competition and training is provided through the region, with the county having a link to the regional disability committee. There has been no water polo committee this year, and no water polo manager either. There has also been no diving committee or diving manager. The disciplines of water polo and diving in Hertfordshire, whilst having no county committee, are, however, well-engaged within regional groups.

Club and Coach Forums and Swimming Officials' Forums were held during the year.

With development and training available now online, and club support being available through the region and nationally, the Management Board decided that there was at present no real need for the Club Development Group. The Group has therefore been disbanded for the time being.

In line with the drive from Swim England to ensure that there is correct governance in place throughout its constituent organisations and associations, governance in the county is being addressed. Members of the Management Board have attended Swim England information sessions and workshops, and a group has been set up to work on ensuring that Swim England Hertfordshire complies with the governance standards required by Swim England.

Sadly, during the year two long-serving members of our county passed away.

Dave Cook: Dave was heavily involved over many years at Hitchin SC in the discipline of swimming and in water polo, and was also the county president in 1981, and a member of the county executive.

Derek Beaumont: The discipline of diving is heavily indebted to Derek for his years of work not only at his club, Beaumont Diving Academy, but also in the former districts, then in the regions, and also nationally and internationally.

Jane O'Brien became the Swim England Hertfordshire President in March 2023.

Ian Mackenzie has continued as one of the Directors of Swim England East Region. Counties no longer have county-specific representatives, but there are three elected members on the Regional Operations Committee. These members are elected by the Members of the Members' Forum who come from all the counties in the region. Sheila Mackenzie is one of those elected members of the Regional Operations Committee.

Craig Hunter continues making a very significant contribution to our sport on the international stage, and is now Chairman of World Aquatics - Swimming.

Swim England Hertfordshire has a county representative on the Swim England East Region leadership groups for disability, masters and open water, whilst artistic swimming, water polo and diving leadership groups are open to representatives for all the clubs of those respective disciplines.

Clubs in the county continued to benefit from the supportive work of the regional staff, and online forums have been provided for club and county volunteers. Training for officials, coaches and team managers has been available online. The Swim England Hertfordshire website and various social media channels continue to be used by the county to engage with the membership.

As we move to through the rest of 2024, please consider carefully whether you could contribute by giving a small amount of your time to your county, either on the discipline committees or on the Management Board.

Hertfordshire Aquatics - the 50m pool project

During 2023 the core project team continued to meet weekly with the whole team meeting monthly. Progress feels slower in the last 12 months, with a lot of work focussing on working out what the college actually want from the project. There has undoubtedly been a change of emphasis from them which has caused some rethinking of the project.

We have requested the production of a glossy brochure from the architects, with a view to being able to use it to put before potential financial backers.

Some discussion has been had within the team about potential other locations in the county in case the preferred location falls through – we are not anticipating it will, but it is sensible to cover such eventualities.

Energy costs and the costs of raw materials are likely to have changed our predicted build costs and as such we need to keep an eye on market trends and also be aware of timescales to be looking for funding.

We discovered in the second half of the year that there had been another change of personnel at the college, with a new Finance Manager coming on board. We have not had the opportunity to speak with him yet. We intend to set up a meeting with the college in March/April to discuss the project again and see if we can agree its unique selling points with them.

The team will endeavour to keep the county updated with our developments, so please keep it in your minds. This literally is a once in a lifetime opportunity for us to take control of our own facility to serve our membership.

SwimMark and Club Affiliation

All clubs are required to have SwimMark or Club Affiliation.

The SwimMark accreditation is regarded by Swim England as a mark of a well-run club, with systems in place for the support and benefit of its members, especially its athletes. The following clubs were SwimMark accredited as at 31st December 2023:-

Aqualina (Stevenage) Artistic SC	Beaumont Diving Academy
Berkhamsted SC	Bishops Stortford SC
Borehamwood SC	Cheshunt SC
City of St. Albans ASC	Dacorum Diving Club
Harpenden SC	Hatfield SC
Hemel Hempstead SC	Hertford SC
Hitchin SC	Hoddesdon SC
Letchworth ASC	Potters Bar SC
Royston SC	Stevenage SC
Tring ASC	Verulam ASC
Ware SC	Watford SC
Watford Water Polo Club	Welwyn Garden SC

There is no doubt that the governance and succession planning of the club benefit from the accreditation, and this then benefits the athletes.

A Club Affiliation is more basic accreditation than SwimMark and requires fewer governance processes to be in place.

The following clubs had Club Affiliation at December 2023:-

Borough of Broxbourne Swim Squad	Broxbourne SC
<i>Buntingford SC (Did not renew for 2024)</i>	Bushey ASC
Dacorum Artistic SC	Hertfordshire Aquatics Club
Kings Langley SC	Potters Bar Artistic SC
Rickmansworth SC	St Albans Masters SC

Awards

Roy Rogers Memorial Trophy

The trophy is awarded to the person, team or club who has made a significant contribution to the sport of swimming.

At the Annual Council Meeting in March 2023, the Roy Rogers Memorial Trophy was awarded to Ware Swimming Club.

The President's Plate

The trophy is awarded, at the sole discretion of the President, for conspicuous service to Swim England Hertfordshire .

At the Annual Council Meeting in March 2023, the President's Plate was awarded to Josie Hoare, county development coach.

The Wilkinson Sword

The sword is awarded annually for achievement in the sport of swimming.

At the Annual Council Meeting in March 2022, the Wilkinson Sword was awarded jointly to Louise Fiddes, Grace Harvey and Martyn Walton for their great achievements at the Commonwealth Games 2022.

President's addendum

I took a quick peek at last year's President's message as I started writing this, and thought Bryan has already used all my lines! I too am looking back at another year that has gone by in a whirl, and it's been an eye opener for me.

I was very surprised and of course honoured to be asked to President for this year, and, although officiating for swimming events has still taken many of my weekends, it has been a great opportunity to learn a bit more about the other disciplines. Amongst these I was wowed by the strength and skills that I saw in Artistic Swimming; had a great evening at the Junior Water Polo tournament (luckily the weather was good!); learnt about the need to manage toe nails for Open Water swimming; and that it would be wise to keep well away from the pool edge when watching Masters swimmers (and I thought the younger swimmers could make a splash). Through all of these there were common themes of great competitive, but mainly friendly rivalry, hard work and fun, plus a huge body of amazing coaches and volunteers who support our athletes and work incredibly hard to put on great events.

Another surprise was being asked to produce a message of support for, and then tracking the progress of, the amazing Watford Ocean Warriors - a team of swimmers aged between 13yrs and 15yrs who completed a phenomenal cross-channel relay swim in just 9 hours 40 minutes, raising over £15,000 for the Rennie Grove Peace Hospice, and winning four Channel Swimming Association awards, including fastest relay swim for 2023. I was

lucky enough to be at the presentation evening where these swimmers were awarded certificates for their achievements.

At Regional events I've enjoyed meeting Presidents from other Counties, sharing medal presentation duties, and learning a bit about the different ways we all work. I have also welcomed to our County events both our Regional President and very recently the Swim England President who visited our County Championships Relay event.

Unfortunately I had to miss out on the National Inter-County Team Championships this year and also the Regional Diving Competition, as I managed to get Covid at that time, but maybe someone could invite me along next year!

My last major event for the year has been the County Swimming Championships and I wasn't at all sure how I would enjoy it when the principal referee told me she wouldn't been using me as an official for the two main weekends but, when it came to it, I really enjoyed having the time to simply be there to soak up the atmosphere, try to help out for occasional odd jobs, talking to many of the coaches and team managers, and most importantly congratulating so many of our fantastic swimmers as I presented them with their medals.

As I'm writing this I'm still making visits to the 16 clubs in the County whose swimmers have been awarded salvers for their achievements in the Points Awards at the Championships. Whilst sometimes a challenge logistically, this is proving to be yet another great experience, visiting clubs at presentation events, training sessions or at their own internal competitions, and in many cases explaining to other swimmers and or parents what these awards are all about, and hopefully encouraging more swimmers to train well over the next year to see if they can take awards at next year's Championships.

So finally, as I hand over the chain of office to Greg Coe, I can look back on my year where I've witnessed so much that is good in our sport. I've been able to observe events from a different perspective, and seen just how well everyone can work together for the good of the athletes and, whilst we don't always see this, I've had a glimpse of how much those athletes also appreciate the efforts of their coaches and all the others working to support them.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Appreciation

The county could not function successfully if it were not for the many volunteers who give their time freely to support our athletes. As always, the support of volunteers working in their clubs and/or working on county committees, is greatly appreciated.

Finally, sincere thanks to all the officers, Board members and others elected to the various committees, who have given their time and expertise, and have made great efforts to continue to ensure that support and initiatives are in place, for the ultimate benefit of our athletes.

For, and on behalf, of the Swim England Hertfordshire Management Board
Sheila Mackenzie
Secretary



Swim England

Hertfordshire

www.swimherts.org

Keep up to date with what your county is doing

Forums – Club, Coaches, Officials

Committees – Artistic Swimming

and

Swimming, including Masters and Open Water

Events: Courses: Contacts: Galas: Competitions