

Chairman's report 2021-22

1. A club needs four things:
 - (1) Members
 - (2) Coaches
 - (3) Pool time
 - (4) Volunteers.

Members

2. It's been a good year for our members. We've had no lockdowns, were able to hold our Okehampton gala again for the first time since the pandemic, plus our long-distance club championships. Our sprint club championships will take place in November. Many members have been able to swim in a gala for the first time.
3. Our more experienced members have been doing very well too.
 - (1) Sixteen swimmers qualified for the county championships, in too many events to count, and seven qualified for regionals, in 22 events.
 - (2) Also success in open water and combined events, including two international gold medals for Sam Lake.
 - (3) Forty-eight club records were set, an astonishing 20 of them by Hannah Walker – but that still leaves 28 by other club members.
4. However, our membership numbers have been dropping.
 - (1) We had 85 swimmers as at the last AGM (November 2021); it is 73 now.
 - (2) This is largely down to not enough people joining, rather than too many leaving. We had 15 new members and two former members returning. Back in 2018-19, we had about 36 joiners. In 2019-20, it was about 20. So it has been dropping, and that is a problem.
 - (3) There is also a slight problem with holding onto people who join. We had seven people leave who had been in the club for less than a year. This could be viewed as indicating an extremely effective recruitment policy, but does also suggest that maybe more could be done to integrate people when they join.
 - (4) We are likely to face further challenges in the year ahead, as Fusion have started offering Learn to Swim stages 7-9, where previously children left swim school and joined us at stage 6.

Coaches

5. The Swim England South West awards were announced on Thursday, with head coach James Lake winning "Coach of the Year". Very many congratulations to him.
6. Congratulations too to Gareth Davis, who has upgraded his Coach qualification to Assistant Coach and to Claire Small, who has qualified as an Assistant Coach.

7. Sadly, Izzy Teague has retired as a coach, after several years of very valuable help. So we now have James, plus two coaches and six assistant coaches. We are very grateful to all our coaches. Coaching is much harder work than it looks and the club could not exist without them.

Pool time

8. This has improved since last year. We have one hour/ week more at Meadowlands (morning sessions are now 1.5hrs, rather than 1 hour) and the timings are more convenient than they were. This – and the generosity and dedication of Pete France – has meant we've been able to reintroduce land training.
9. Long-course training remains slightly unsatisfactory. During the week, 50m pool availability starts at 8pm, so we have just one hour, 8-9pm when we'd much prefer 1.5hrs. There is time available at weekends, but these are often taken up with galas.
10. We did experiment with separately arranged Saturday sessions, but only managed to fit in two during the year. (A third was cancelled due to illness.) There is potential there, if we could find someone to organise them.

Volunteers

11. Katrina Shipp, as treasurer, and Hazel Walker, as competition secretary, will be stepping back from those roles this year. Very many thanks to both of them for several years of invaluable work for the club. We have been lucky enough to have Mel Oxborough come forward to take Katrina's place as treasurer, but we do not yet have a competitions secretary. No competitions secretary means no galas and no club championships, so we desperately need someone.
12. The other thing we need for competitions is officials and team-managers. A big thank you to Katy Paynter, who is well on her way to qualifying as an official, and the seven people who have qualified as time-keepers. However, we urgently need more volunteers. Galas are already being cancelled because there aren't enough officials; others will suffer the same fate if we aren't careful. If your child competes, you should be looking to volunteer either as an official or a team manager. It's not as bad as you think; indeed, it is in many/ most ways, much better than being a spectator.
13. Finally, thank you very much to the committee members and everyone else who has helped over the past year. It's me who send out the bulk of the emails, but there are plenty others working behind the scenes.