

Tavistock Swimming Club (est.1990) ("the Club") AGM

Sunday 17th November 2024

Meadowlands Leisure Centre, 5.15pm

Present

Caroline Furze (chairman), Sarah Payne (parent of two members), Jamie Balment (member), Elena Brogden (parent of two members), Holly Cloke (14, member), Gareth Davis (member and head coach), Lisa Dawson (parent of a member), Sue Dunstan (president), Ian Higham (trustee), Lindi McKechnie (trustee), Michael Maguire (parent of two members), Stuart Mathieson (member), Mel Oxborough (treasurer), Claire Palmer (trustee), Evie Palmer (15, member), Katy Paynter (member), Charlotte Walker (member), Hazel Walker (member).

Apologies

Jon Cox, Lisa France, Liam Sebag-Montefiore,

Minutes of 2023 AGM

1. The minutes of the 2023 AGM were approved with no matters arising.

Chairman's report

2. The chairman summarised the attached report, printed copies of which were made available during the meeting.

Treasurer's report

3. The treasurer, Mel Oxborough, gave a brief report. The accounts had been circulated by email before the meeting and printed copies were available.
4. The Club had made a profit in 2023/24, which was wholly attributed to the gift aid received on membership fees. Without the gift aid, the club was approximately breaking even.

Election/ re-election of trustees

Re-election of trustees: background

Under the constitution, one-third of the elected trustees in post on the day of the AGM retire each year but are eligible for re-election. Those retiring are those who have been longest in post since election or re-election (in the case of equality, the choice is made by agreement or by drawing lots).

The trustees retiring were Sam Lake, Ian Higham and Lisa France. Sam Lake was not standing for re-election but Ian Higham and Lisa France were.

Resolutions

5. To re-elect Ian Higham as a trustee of the Club. Passed unanimously.

6. To re-elect Lisa France as a trustee of the Club. Passed unanimously.

Election of a trustee: background

Caroline Furze proposed Katy Kelly as a new trustee of the Club, and this proposal was seconded by Mel Oxborough. Clause 36(3) of the constitution requires that two weeks' notice of any nomination be given to the secretary. However, under clause 36(4) the members at the AGM have the power to waive that time limit.

Resolution

7. To waive the time limit specified in clause 36(3) of the constitution and elect Katy Kelly as a trustee of the Club. Passed unanimously.

AOB

There was none.

There being no other business, the chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 5.25pm.

Chairman's report 2023-24

1. This report covers the period from 1st September 2023 to date.

Coaching

2. Our head coach of over 10 years, James Lake, left in February. Losing a head coach can be catastrophic for a club and had long been top of my list of threats which we faced. That we have come through it as strong, if not stronger, is thanks to:
 - a. James himself, who introduced us to Jacob Cacchione before he left;
 - b. Jacob, who has shown enthusiasm, skill and a willingness both to learn and to endure a long commute for our benefit;
 - c. Nathaniel Rookes, a former club member and coach, who has returned to mentor and support;
 - d. Other TSC coaches, including Amber, Izzy and Ieuan, who have either committed to sessions (sometimes unpaid) or stepped in to cover occasional gaps; and
 - e. Most of all, Gareth who, showing mind-blowing commitment to the club, took on the head coach role for no pay and in addition to his full-time day job. We are extraordinarily lucky. His dedication and work ethic are exceptional, it is an absolute pleasure to work with him, Jacob and the others and I am excited by their enthusiasm and ideas.

Membership

3. There have been 30 joiners since last September, 10 more than during the same period last year. Total swimming membership, including university students who swim with us when they can, is now 82, an increase of four from last year. Last year it was up five from the year before. These increases are small, but small increases add up.
4. We also have 27 members who have joined us for competition purposes only. These are Plymouth College students who need a Devon Swim England club while waiting for Plymouth College's own club to gain affiliation. They pay the membership fee of £18/ month, but do not train with us or draw on any of our resources apart from creating a little extra work for me as competition secretary and Mel as treasurer. The arrangement is expected to end soon.

Members' activities

5. The most important thing is that almost all our members are training regularly and, as far as I know, enjoying their swimming.
6. We took part in 10 main swimming galas over the year, plus Masters events. Eleven children swam in their first ever gala, and several went on to do their first gala at the Life Centre. We had 13 Devon qualifiers, four of whom then qualified for either the summer or winter regionals (or both). One of them, Chloe Sheil, was catapulted straight into regional level competition on receiving her formal "classification" which allows her to compete as a para-swimmer.
7. One of the galas was our Dartmoor Sprint Meet, back after a two-year hiatus. Formerly held at Okehampton, this year we joined forces with Exmouth and used their 6-lane pool, which allowed us to accommodate more competitors. It seemed to be a success – we received several enthusiastic emails – and we hope to make it an annual event, but next time we will tweak the date to avoid clashing with the Devon County Show and its traffic jams.
8. Swimming events go beyond conventional swimming galas. David Hopes took part in the Lake Windermere Chill Swim, completing the 11-mile course in just under five hours and placing an impressive 25th overall. He tells me it was quite an ordeal; I don't think he is queuing up to attempt a Channel crossing. We also have about 10 swimmers, including three of our newest, who compete in multi-sports events, ranging from entry level Pony Club competitions to national championships and beyond. To mention just a few, three competed in the National Schools biathlon championships; three others in the winter Pony Club triathlon national championships, with Rory and Lamora placing in the top ten; Miri was selected for the GB modern biathlon team to compete in Egypt; and Sam Lake has been winning medals wherever she goes.
9. Twenty-five club records were broken during 2023/24, by six different swimmers.
10. We didn't have any land-based parties this year, due both to a lack of anyone to organise them and to poor attendance at the 2023 Presentation Evening. Instead, we had a combined summer social/ presentation event at Adrenalin Quarry, which was well received.

Volunteers and fundraising

11. Swimming galas need officials, to time the swimmers and check they are obeying the rules of their stroke, and team-managers, to look after the swimmers on poolside. A fantastic 12 people qualified as timekeepers, which is the first level for officials and the one required to help at club championships. In addition, Katy Paynter qualified as a level 1 judge and Gavin Beard started training for that role. We are very grateful to all of them.
12. However, we have no new team managers. Almost all the team managing at galas is done by the same two or three people. We urgently need more volunteers. If your child swims at galas, please talk to us about training. It involves two online webinars and a DBS check.

Fundraising

13. Generous donations from Texaco Garage and Tavistock Lions allowed us to buy 30 new pairs of fins, which were much needed.
14. We also raised money from car parking in the Tavistock Primary School grounds on Goose Fair evening and from two bucket collections at Tesco.
15. We applied to the National Lottery for funds to buy equipment (the fins which have now kindly been provided by Texaco and Tavistock Lions) and to subsidise the Adrenalin Quarry outing, but our application was unsuccessful. We also had hoped to take part in the Tavistock Carnival – this would have given us free advertising, raised money and supported Tavistock Lions who have been very generous to us – but a lack of support from parents meant we had to withdraw. Instead, two of us ran a small stall at the Lions' "Fun Day in the Meadows". We believe it is important to support community events when possible.

Other activities

16. In the summer, we ran a free course of 10 x 45 minute sessions, entitled "Introduction to Club Swimming", as a way of encouraging children to discover what club swimming is like. We've always offered a free taster session but those tended to be taken only by people who already wanted to join. This longer course reached much wider. Making it free, which we were able to do thanks to a subsidy from Fusion and a grant from Swim England, was a crucial element. Eight children did the course, seven of whom went on to join the club. Buoyed by that success, we are running it again this autumn, reduced to eight sessions and without the grant from Swim England but still subsidised by Fusion. Eleven

children are taking part and feedback has been excellent.

17. By way of helping beyond the club membership, we also ran OCRA's Primary Schools' Swimming Gala and the swimming section of their aquathlon. The Schools' Swimming Gala in particular is a wonderful event with a tremendous atmosphere. Seventy-six children cheering on their friends make a LOT of noise.

What could be improved?

18. Membership: we'd like more members. There was a time when the club had over 100 swimmers. More members would mean fun things like relays and team galas.
19. We'd like to be making better use of our pool time. Our morning sessions are not well attended. We appreciate they aren't suitable for those at secondary school in Plymouth, but if your child is at Tavistock College please, please give morning sessions a go. We are limited in the amount of evening pool time we can get and the morning sessions are half empty.
20. We need more volunteers in all areas.
 - a. If your child swims in galas, please train either as an official or a team manager. Most of the existing team managers are parents of older swimmers; when they move on, our swimmers won't be able to go to galas because there will be no-one to look after them poolside.
 - b. Administrative/ management roles. I'm circulating a list of the tasks which keep the club running. The same names crop up too often. Please consider whether you can help.
21. Feedback. We welcome timely, actionable feedback. If your child says they don't understand what they are being asked to do in sessions, if you feel galas aren't sufficiently advertised, or if you aren't getting emails, tell us. It isn't going to get better unless you do. If there is anything concerning you about your child's training or you'd like an update, talk to the coach: the end of a session, while the next group are warming up, is often a good time or there is always email. Remember too that almost everyone involved in the club is a volunteer and a human being: tell us about good things as well.

Finally

22. Although I've asked for more help, there are lots of people who ARE helping

and without whom we couldn't function. Whether your contribution is giving up all your spare time to be head coach, being on poolside at a gala or baking a cake for the club championships cake stall, it is hugely appreciated. There are two things which keep me going: one is wanting the children to keep swimming; the other is the dedication of everyone else who helps. Thank you so much to you all.

Caroline Furze. TSC Chairman. 17.11.2024