

27 JUL 1993

SCOTTISH AMATEUR SWIMMING ASSOCIATION

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

AT PERTH

26 JUNE 1993

Present

Mrs Winnie Ferguson (President), Mr Ian Mason (Chairman), Mrs Helen Brunton (Vice President), Mr William Black (General Secretary), Mr W. Charles (General Treasurer), Mr Colin Pearson of the Scottish Sports Council, Mr Alistair Gray of Genesis Consulting Ltd (Consultant to the Steering Group), and Steering Group members Douglas Brown, Ian Dunn, Win Hayes and Murdo Wallace. A total of 156 people attended the meeting, including representatives from N (25), E (45), W (43), M (23) and LM (17).

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Life Members Ian Martin, Leslie Turberville, Cdr Gerald Forsberg, Norman Sarsfield OBE and Eric Amos, Jill Cochran, Elspeth Black (Hon. Legal Adviser), Helen Murray, Linda Cairns (Neilston), Ron Smith (Cumbernauld ASC), Margaret McLaren (Carnegie) and G. Laggan (Leith), and from Aberfeldy Sharks ASC, Gala ASC and Garioch ASC.

2. President's Address

Welcoming delegates, Mrs Winnie Ferguson said it was rewarding to see so many people present.

She pointed out that members had had the opportunity to discuss the Proposals for Change, and hoped they had taken advantage of the opportunity to ask the Project Team for clarification. Although delegates were being asked to accept or reject the whole package, comments would be noted.

3. Notice of motion

Mr Ian Mason (Chairman Steering Group) introduced the motion that:

"The Association approves the proposals contained in the Report of the Governing Body Development Initiative Steering Group and authorises Council to proceed to implement the appointment of a Board of Management and to delegate responsibility to the Board of Management to implement the proposals, with the condition that Council continues to manage the affairs of the Association during the transition period leading to a new Constitution and Rules."

Mr Mason explained that the S.A.S.A. Development Initiative was part of the Scottish Sports Council's governing body review programme. There had been two unsuccessful previous attempts at modernisation which had "got nowhere". The present Proposals for Change were designed to modernise the S.A.S.A. governing body for the 21st century.

He said he regarded the process which the Association had gone through as a good one. Each district had been consulted three times, clubs had been communicated with three times, more than 500 people had been interviewed, a number of other swimming associations and governing bodies of other sports had been examined as a benchmark for Scottish Swimming's recent performance, and 12 to 14 other countries had been contacted to find out how they did things. There had been plenty of opportunity for the sport to give its opinion.

Mr Mason said he hoped delegates would agree the framework drawn up for the future direction of the sport. They should be aware that other sports were preparing development plans, appointing development officers and modernising their administrative structures. The S.A.S.A. would have to match them or slip back.

He outlined the key findings of the Steering Group:

1. Scottish Swimming had become overdependent on the Sports Council for raising finance. Approximately 22% of the Sports Council's funds were at present allocated to swimming and hockey. The S.A.S.A. would have to generate more income from other sources.
2. Not enough was being done to aid development of the grassroots of the sport.
3. There had been a decline in the international standing of Scottish Swimming.
4. There was a feeling that there was poor communication and administration in the sport.
5. There was a lack of co-ordinated district development.
6. The present management structure of Scottish Swimming was inappropriate for the sport today and in the future.

The solutions proposed by the Steering Group were:

1. A three- to five-year development plan for Scottish Swimming.
2. The formation of a Board of Management for the sport.
3. An annual planning forum for the key figures in the sport.
4. The formation of a new Development Committee.



5. The formation of a new External Funding Sponsorship Committee to increase income.
6. A focused and tiered approach to support for clubs, both the top clubs and the smaller ones.
7. A more supportive administrative structure.
8. Programmes of development for coaching and clubs. There was a need for coaching and a lack of planning, particularly in the top clubs.
9. A period of stability was needed to attain these objectives.

Mr Mason pointed out that the Proposals for Change document before the meeting was not the full answer, but simply an initial framework for the future. A detailed development plan would have to be prepared. There must in the future be a positive interaction between all the stakeholders in the sport.

The Scottish Sports Council had indicated that it was very pleased with the process the S.A.S.A. had gone through, and had undertaken to support the sport in the future in a number of ways. The Council had indicated that it was very keen to see the Proposals for Change passed at the E.G.M.

Mr Mason thanked members of the Project Team for their contribution of six months' "solid" voluntary work. He thanked Alistair Gray, the Consultant to the Steering Group, whose knowledge of sports administration and organisation had proved invaluable.

Mr Mason invited comments from the floor, and he and Mr Gray answered questions from delegates before the vote was taken.

Mr Hugh Steele queried whether the apparent emphasis on swimming in the Proposals document reflected its status as more important than disciplines such as diving, water polo, synchronised swimming and long distance. Mr Mason assured him that these disciplines were not being dismissed because of the emphasis on swimming, which did not prevent their committees driving forward their own plans within the larger framework of the sport.

Mr Bob Venner asked for clarification of the "pay-as-you-swim" aspect of the proposals. Mr Mason explained that swimming was overdependent on funding, and the "pay-as-you-swim" principle was one aspect of reducing this dependency. The more an individual participated, the more he or she would pay.

Mr Charlie Grierson asked about the time-scale and priorities for the Development Initiative. Mr Gray replied that all the disciplines should discuss the way forward for their part of the sport with the Board. Each discipline would be encouraged to think of the sport over the next 4 years, and discuss funding in advance with the Board. This would enable them to make progress.

Commenting on the proposed improvement of access to facilities, Mr Ben Connolly (Glasgow) said decreasing access to facilities because of competitive tendering was one of the most serious problems facing swimming. Mr Mason pointed out that the document did not provide all the answers to problems in the sport. Key areas had to be "fleshed out". There was an obvious lack of communication between the governing body of the sport and district authorities who were in control of facilities.

Mr Charlie Grierson asked whether, if members of the Board were appointed by Council for a three- to four-year period, all officers would present themselves for annual re-election during this period. Mr Gray confirmed that this was the case. There was a lot of work to be done up to 1995. For the duration of the Development Plan - a three- to four-year period - the group of people elected would be backed up by professional staff. He pointed out that annual re-election of office-bearers was quite common in the governing bodies of sports. A person's other commitments might prevent them from doing a good job, so an annual endorsement at the AGM would be good for the individual and the sport.

Mr Norman Grierson said the Board of Management would carry a heavy responsibility. He queried how they would find the time, and whether they should be salaried. Mr Mason agreed that the Board would bear a heavy burden, particularly in the first year or so. The Vice-Chairmen would have the role of co-ordinators to the conveners for the existing committees. The Board would have a major task which was unpaid. An honorarium might be found appropriate in the future. This was an issue to be dealt with by the sport itself.

Mr Norrie Beattie asked whether more money would have to be found to pay for additional employees in the sport. Mr Gray said no one was doing the necessary work at present. The proposals addressed the management of all areas of the sport, and roles might change on the basis of being able to afford additional staff. There would be a three- to four-year transition period during which things would be sorted out.

Additional development officers would be brought in as the sport could afford them. This would be discussed with the governing body and the districts. Sponsorship and the generation of additional income was an important part of the plan to employ development officers. An estimate of the additional resources needed would include salary costs. Hopefully it would be possible to raise an extra £50,000 without raising subscriptions. Once the Proposals for Change document was approved, a detailed financial costing would have to be done to submit to the Sports Council - £50,000 was only a "guesstimate" of the additional funding needed.

Mr Connolly queried whether the extra £50,000 would be used to pay for additional employees. Mr Gray confirmed that "a large chunk" of it would go to employment, but the money would also be used for the promotion and development of the sport.



Per capita fees should not be increased if income could be raised in more creative ways. The development planning process would include looking at ways of raising funds. However, the days of zero increases in fees were probably over. Mr Connolly asked whether development officers would be responsible for marketing and the mechanism needed for raising the extra money, and whether the Scottish Sports Council would give a four-year commitment for funding. Mr Gray said the Sports Council had "signed on". Any plan for the sport would have to be agreed with the Sports Council. It was hoped that their commitment to swimming would increase as the level of commitment to the sport increased.

Mr Mason said three- to four-year renewable contracts would be needed for paid employees as an "escape mechanism" in case the relationship of swimming with the Sports Council changed drastically.

Mr Martin Sreenan of Grangemouth queried whether the quality of people appointed as Board members might decrease as the time needed to do the job increased. Mr Mason was confident that, although Board membership was an onerous task, the right calibre of people could be recruited, and that, once it was up and running, people would perceive serving on the Board as a "positive experience".

In answer to a query from Mr Charlie Grierson about the appointment of development officers, Mr Mason said development officers were a rapidly expanding group in the governing bodies of sports which were moving forward. In a number of sports there were partnership arrangements, where various bodies employed development officers jointly.

Mr Bill Stewart of Eyemouth asked whether the Board and Council would merge after 1995. Mr Mason said this was a future possibility, but would not be appropriate at present. The Council, democratically elected by the people from the districts, was needed particularly as a "safety mechanism". It would continue in its present form for the time being, but the number of meetings would be reduced because much of the work would be done by the Board of Management.

In reply to a question from Mr Stewart Martin about how Board appointees would cope with their onerous commitments, Mr Gray pointed out that they would not be looking after the office day by day. There were good examples of volunteer management throughout sport, and swimming did not have one of the heaviest administrative loads. If he was a good administrative manager, the Vice-Chairman would be needed to act as a "godfather", giving help and guidance, reviewing the work of the office monthly or quarterly, with a weekly check to ensure that the work of the office was going well. The Vice-Chairman Finance and Administration would be someone the office could turn to. The focus in the document was on teamwork - the responsibility would be too much for one individual.

Mr Colin Pearson of the Scottish Sports Council promised that, if the S.A.S.A. showed their commitment, the Sports Council would in turn make it a priority to show commitment to swimming.

Mr Blair Prentice asked if there would be tiered club structures. Mr Mason replied that the grassroots felt they were not being given sufficient support and attention, and the top end of the sport was not developing as it should. Development officers were one solution. It must also be recognised that the top end of the sport needed different kinds of help and support, in terms of club managers and coaching, from clubs down the line. However there would be support for the best swimmers, regardless of which clubs they belonged to. The same support would not be put into every club regardless of its size, aspirations, expertise and needs.

Mr Mason confirmed that he and Mr Gray had drawn up proposals for the process of appointment of the Board, which would be put before Council if the Association approved the document. Nominations would be received within a week of approval of the Proposals for Change.

Mr Mike Sheppard thanked Ian Mason, the Chairman, and the members of the Steering Group for the enormous amount of work they had done. He commended the Proposals for Change to the meeting, and encouraged delegates to support the "superb ideas" put forward. Mrs Ferguson added her thanks. Mrs Ann Hart, National Education Convener, recommended the adoption of the proposals.

Delegates voted unanimously in favour of the motion.

Thanks were recorded to the Midland District for providing hospitality and stewarding.