

SCOTTISH SWIMMING OPEN WATER

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2014-2018

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This development plan is intended to be the basis of the work to be carried out over the four year period from 2014-2018 in order to develop the discipline of open water swimming.

SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE OPEN WATER SWIMMING DISCIPLINE

Strengths:

S1	The discipline is run in Scotland by a group of very dedicated and experienced individuals
S2	Though small in number, some of the coaches in Scotland are very experienced in Open Water
S3	Training exclusively in OW will not maintain the fitness of athletes, particularly since they would only be able to train in summer but the large body of swimming clubs is well-capable of providing the necessary year-round distance training for athletes
S4	Age Group Scottish Swimming OW athletes have in recent years performed better in general against OW athletes from the rest of the UK

Weaknesses:

W1	Scottish Swimming Open Water events do not show a strong corporate branding
W2	The number of swimmers in Scottish Swimming Open Water is higher than it was even a few years ago but is still much lower than in mass participation events
W3	There is still an erroneous perception by many that OW is a niche discipline for a small number of oddball swimmers and that even swimmers who medal at OW are generally second-rate relative to pool swimmers
W4	The number of safety and technical officials available for any event is usually fairly small such that it is necessary to adopt Scottish Rules which permit a smaller number of officials than FINA, provided that it can be run fairly and safely on the day
W5	The environment in Scotland is such that it is necessary to adopt Scottish Rules which permit events at colder temperatures than FINA
W6	Minimum water temperature regulations for events in Scotland are qualitative, having little scientific basis. Research into the effects of cold water swimming on age-group swimmers at different work rates, etc, appears to be at best limited
W7	Most pool coaches are not familiar with open water swimming and therefore can be nervous about allowing their athletes to compete in open water
W8	Since open water swimming is generally undertaken at lower water temperatures (even beyond Scotland) than in the pool and also since there can be an element of physical contact between swimmers, it may be that there is a higher risk of athlete injury than in pool swimming
W9	Training in OW is difficult because it is difficult for coaches to communicate effectively over the large outdoor distances involved
W10	There is no current event in Scotland which readily allows Open Water swimmers in all Age Groups from Scotland entry to the ASA OW Nationals
W11	Existing Development Pathway is disjoint and aims are not clear.

Opportunities:

O1	Awareness of Open Water swimming or “wild swimming” has increased significantly over recent years, probably as a result of achievements by British athletes and television coverage of competitive events and charity swims by celebrities
O2	Mass-participation events have greatly increased in number over recent years, thus demonstrating a desire amongst substantial numbers of the general public for swimming events in the open air
O3	The age demographic of open water swimmers tends to be older than in the pool, thus offering the possibility of retaining members, starting from age 12, longer and of providing a means to increased fitness in the community as a whole
O4	An OW Coaching CPD module is being introduced in 2014 which should allow interested coaches who have so far been confined to the pool to extend their experience
O5	Once a significant number of coaches have been through the OW Coaching CPD module, the myths which surround the discipline will begin to evaporate
O6	More than one local authority has expressed interest in the provision or construction of facilities for Open Water/Triathlon training and competition
O7	The RLSS has expressed interest in a partnership arrangement whereby they gain practice and training at the same time as providing safety cover for the main Scottish Swimming open water events
O8	Availability of relatively cheap instrumentation capable of recording and storing swimmers’ heart rate, temperature, position, etc, opens the possibility of performance training aids as are common in pool swimming
O9	There is a large number of strong swimming clubs in Scotland, within which even a small proportion of interested swimmers would constitute a large body of potential athletes
O10	Scottish Swimming has strong relationships with Sports Science Departments of Scottish universities which could be used for the mutual benefit of athletes and academia
O11	Promoting healthy outdoor living via OW swimming has dramatically increased and could be an excellent platform for brand marketing

Threats:

T1	Mass-participation events have a large number of swimmers, often have strong branding and attract media attention. Scottish Swimming events do not. The media may focus on mass-participation events as being the elite events which the Scottish Swimming events actually are
T2	With the increasing interest in OW swims worldwide and increased participation, there appears to be a desire for widely differing events and for rules to govern such events which is not being filled by FINA. There is therefore a risk that non-FINA affiliated bodies may set themselves up as governing bodies, thus resulting in a fragmentation of the sport
T3	Budgetary constraints mean that the resources of Scottish Swimming OW and indeed British Swimming must be optimised, duplication avoided and that new sources of funding/revenue must constantly be explored

VISION FOR OPEN WATER SWIMMING TO 2018

1. Increased participation/growth in Open Water

- National/Regional training venues
- Come and Try events
- Challenge/District Events
- Wetsuit opportunities/promotion at all events

2. Coach Education/Development

- ASA Level 2 qualification up and running asap
- Regular coach education organised

3. Competitions

- Standardised policies, processes and training for events
- Safety paramount
- Swimmer Pathway- wetsuit to swimsuit transition
- Improve Standard of National Events
- Partnerships

4. Marketing/Promotion/Communication

- Raising the profile across all aspects of Open Water swimming
- Professional events/branding/promotion

5. Performance

- Regular training in open water
- Integrated Swimmer Pathway
- Committed Scottish performance OW swimmers to experience/attain highest levels of international competition

DEVELOPMENT PLAN: ACTIONS AND TARGETS 2014-18

Development Targets

Aim	Sector	No	Action	Owner	Target	Date
Dev1	Increase number of participants in Scottish Swimming OW events	1	Allow wetsuit entries to District and National Scottish Swimming events	DE Coordinator & District Convenors	All District/National Events to allow wetsuit (non-championship) swimmers integrated into events	2016
		2	Investigate organising challenge events to run alongside district championships	District Convenors	All district events to hold a challenge/participation event	2018
		3	Support appropriate Participation Events	Committee	Committee members to advise / support / attend appropriate events	Annually
Dev2	Increase Open Water membership numbers and develop within existing membership	4	Pool taster events for interested members <12yrs old	Team Manager	Investigate viability and likely effectiveness	2016
		5	Establish regional training venues for regular open water training	Relevant District Convenors	Midland venue- Broughty Ferry	2015
					East venue – Lochore Meadows?	2016/17
					West venue – various options	2016/17
					North venue – Knockburn, Aberdeenshire?	2016/17
Central venue – Helix Lagoon, Falkirk?	2015					
Dev3	Coach Development	5	Commence and support OW coach training module	Education	First coach to be enrolled	2015
		6	Head Coach to provide mentoring for Club Coaches	Head Coach	Provide mentoring	Annually/ongoing
Dev4	Volunteers	7	Recruit and train OW STOs in accordance with British Swimming OWSTO courses	OWSTO Coordinator	Base 2013: Total qualified OW STOs = 10 Target: Total qualified OWSTOs = 17	2016
		8	Create training program for Safety Officers	Safety Coordinator	Create a workshop / mentoring syllabus for training Safety Officers	2015
		9	Recruit and train Safety Officers	Safety Coordinator	Create sustainable safety provision for events	2016

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Dev5	Partnerships	10	Develop relationships in areas where we have an identity	Chair and District Convenors	All main events to have a settled and suitable prominent location to enable forward planning	2016
		11	Develop relationship with RLSS	Safety Coordinator	Support RLSS to obtain funding to provide increased support to our events	2015
		12	Develop a relationship with Scottish Student Sport	Office and East Dist Convenor	Support a student event	2015
Dev6	Improve Marketing and Promotion	13	Job Description, recruit and appoint Media/Press Officer	Chair	Assess Job description, advertise and appoint	2015 2016
		14	Improve event branding and promotion	Media/Press Officer	All National/District events to be branded	2015
		15	Raise profile across all aspects of open water swimming	Committee	Liaise with marketing to increase profile on website and across social media	2015 - ongoing
		16	Facilitate transport/storage of increasing amount of event equipment	DE Coordinator & District Convenors	Costs and personnel to pack equipment and for hire of transit van to move equipment to and from events	2015
				Safety Coordinator	Assess options and costs in short term for storage	2015
				Committee	Assess options and costs for long term resolution of storage problems. Sponsorship for transport?	2017
		17	OW Newsletter	Chair	Monthly newsletters emailed during season	Annually

PerformanceTargets

Aim	Sector	No	Action	Owner	Target	Date
Per1	Swimmer Development Programme	1	OW Head Coach	Chair	Recruit and appoint	Completed
		2	Funding for Open Water Head Coach	Chair	Funded part-time post	2017
		3	Create new Development Pathway for Open Water swimming	Head Coach	Establish framework	2015
				Head Coach	Annual Review	Annually
		4	Establish open water training sessions / events for interested members >12 yrs old	Team Manager/ Head Coach/ Chair	Investigate venue to become National OW 'Hub' or 'Academy'	2016
				Head Coach / District Convenors	Monthly training sessions during season	2015
Head Coach	Develop training days/ camps to link into OW Pathway			2017		
Per2	Support for Scottish Squad/Team	5	Monitor Dev Squad & Team Members during season and between seasons	Head Coach	Monitor and report to Committee	Ongoing
Per3	Encourage research on OW swimmers/ swimming	6	Identify opportunities for research in support of coaching and health & safety	Chair / office	Identify opportunities	2018
Per4	ASA and British Swimming	7	Maintain flow of information between OW Committee and Performance Team	Chair/ Team Manager/ Head Coach	Maintain understanding to optimise opportunities	Ongoing
		8	Provide swimmers with Scottish Event matching ASA criteria to allow entry to ASA National OW in all Age Groups	Chair	Obtain rule change for 12y olds	Completed
				East District Convenor	Event matching in all age groups	2015

TARGETS - DISCUSSION

A consistent and well-defined Development Pathway must be established to take novice Open Water swimmers through, delivering suitable athletes with the criteria to meet the performance standards for entry to the British Swimming programme.

[S4, W11]

Performance Aim Per1: *introduce/improve Swimmer Development Programme.*

Several of the Issues listed above could be addressed by targeting increased numbers both within the Scottish Swimming Membership and within the wider community. Increased numbers from within Scottish Swimming will both improve the perception of the discipline within the aquatic sports and should improve the financial outlook. Increased numbers in the wider community should raise the profile of the governing body, improve the overall fitness of the community and improve finances. Indeed, some of the other targets will require significant investment, so the generation of income streams by this process should be a priority. Age Group swimmers should also be targeted since they will stay within the discipline longer and attract similar swimmers into the discipline.

[S3, S2, W3, O1, O2, O3, O9, O11, T3]

Development Aim Dev1: *increase the number of participants in Scottish Swimming OW events from within the wider community.*

Development Aim Dev2: *increase OW membership numbers and develop within existing membership.*

Awareness of the discipline, what it is and what it is not needs to be raised within the Clubs.

[O9, S3, W2, W3, W7, O1, O4, O5]

Coach development in Open Water is required across increasing numbers of coaches. This will have an impact across the board, since coaches are more likely to inspire athletes interested in the discipline; the occasional myths about open water swimming are more likely to be dispelled by an informed coach community.

[S2, W7, W8, O4, O5]

Development Aim Dev3: *coach development.*

The existing organisers of OW events, safety officials and technical officials must be supported, given appropriate guidance and training and the numbers increased.

[S1, S2]

Development Aim Dev4: *support and increase numbers of volunteers.*

Several organisations appear to wish to partner with us to deliver events and to increase the number and quality of locations for open water (and triathlon) swimming.

[O1, O2, O6, O7]

Development Aim Dev5: *develop partnerships where mutually beneficial and which can assist in the delivery of the other targets.*

We need to improve the Scottish Swimming branding at our events so that it displays the professional image it should, advertises the governing body appropriately and with time hopefully attracts sponsorship. However, this will require significant initial investment.

[W1, W2, W3, O1, O2, T1, T2, T3]

Development Aim Dev6: *improve marketing and promotion.*

Since Scottish age group athletes have consistently been punching above their weight, the present levels of support for competition and for experience of foreign competitions have clearly shown results and should be continued.

[S4, W3]

Performance Aim Per2: *Continue support for a Scottish Development Squad and/or Team.*

Technological improvements should allow improvements to training techniques and monitoring of the athletes, thus allowing coaches to direct appropriate feedback to athletes on techniques and the way they can improve their performance. In addition, research should be encouraged on the effects of cold-water swimmers of the age groups we are seeking to participate.

[W5, W6, W7, W8, W9, O8, O10]

Performance Aim Per3: *encourage research on monitoring of open water athletes' performance and the impacts of the environment on these athletes.*

We must ensure that resources are not duplicated un-necessarily and in this regard must maintain good contact with British Swimming.

[T3]

Performance Aim Per4: *maintain good contact with ASA and British Swimming.*