

**Report from Chairman**

**Annual General Meeting**

**Loughborough University,**

**24th March 2018**

1. Introduction

I am delighted to present this very positive report to our members following the difficulties the club endured as a result of the events prior to last year’s Annual General Meeting. I am pleased therefore to say we have reached today thanks to a strong & cohesive team which in my opinion for the first time in many years has operated amicably and in a true partnership. I would like to thank especially Nigel Seamarks & Paul Gotta as Executive members but also the committee who have when required supported and helped steer the club in a manner that has been a huge success.

1. Membership

The club continues to thrive & in relation to membership peaking at an unprecedented 60 hearing impaired members at the end of 2017 over both Categories A and B. Already this year we have had 5 new members who we welcome to the club and have also retained many of our senior swimmers which is never easy with education and employment very much in their minds at that age. We continue to operate with over 50 members which where we want to be going forward. It was felt that our membership process needed streamlined so the membership secretary position held by Sarah Tappenden was dissolved into the duties of Club Secretary. I would like to thank Nigel Seamarks & Sarah Tappenden for making this happen and I believe we have a better process going forward. Much discussion also took place over the ‘family’ and ‘individual’ memberships which does not promote a fair and democratic voting system at our AGM and ultimately how our members shape their own club. As a result, and if a successful amendment to our constitution is ratified, a new one fee membership structure will be introduced giving every swimmers family 1 vote while reducing the cost for families with more than 1 hearing impaired child.

1. Training Weekends & National Gala

The 2017 National gala weekend was hugely successful with 43 members competing at the event. We took the opportunity to add on additional training and sports specific talks for our Deaflympics athletes and again this was very well received and worthwhile. All squads attended Manchester in October 2017 and apart from some traffic issues on the Friday evening the mixture of 25 & 50 metres sessions along with the land training was excellent and again very well attended. I would like to thank GLL for their support in facilitating the use of The Manchester Aquatics centre, a quality venue for our swimmers. I am looking forward to this year’s events and I am delighted that we are again utilising our partnership with NDCS who are running their own fun gala after our National competition and I would hope everyone will stay on to support this. I am also delighted to be welcoming swimmers from both the Netherlands and Ireland to our gala which we may look to promote further in the coming years. We are also already looking at venues and dates for future training weekends in 2018.

1. Deaflympics

The 23rd Deaflympics, Samsun, Turkey, July 2017 was the most successful games for swimming for 28 years with our team returning with 7 of the 9 medals won by DeaflympicsGB. Congratulations to the whole team of Ciara Tappenden, Jasmine Seamarks (relay bronze), Lucy Sharp, Shiona McClafferty (relay bronze), Danielle Joyce (2 gold, 1 bronze and relay bronze), Matthew Oaten, Kieran Holdbrook, Sam Merritt, Nathan Young (relay bronze), Oliver Kenny, Jack McComish (gold, silver, bronze and relay bronze) & Tom Baxter (GB male team captain &relay bronze). Sam Chamberlain (Head Coach), Mel Davis (Team manager) & Amanda Pitkethly (Sports Psychologist). In addition with her haul of medals Danielle Joyce was DeaflympicsGB most decorated athlete of the games and was elected to carry the GB flag at the closing ceremony. A full report of the games can be found on the club website.

1. Competition Calendar

From 2-7 July this year we will compete at the European Championships in Lublin, Poland and I would like to congratulation all those who have been selected and wish them luck. We are also delighted to have been invited to participate in a 2 event in the Netherlands in September which we are hoping to encourage some of our younger and less experienced swimmers to consider attending this. Recently it has been announced that the Deaf Swimming World Championships 2019 will be held in Brazil which is very exciting.

1. Records

Our swimmers continue to amaze with the level of performance being raised each year. I am proud to present the 2017 records chart as follows

National Records 15 National Youth Records 1

National Relay Records 5 National Youth Relay Records 2

English Records 21 Scottish Records 11

Welsh Records 1 Irish Records 12

Isle of Man Records 25

Cat A Age Group Records 93 Cat B Age Group Records 88

In addition we have had hundreds of personal best swims from our very youngest swimmer to our oldest so congratulations to everyone.

1. NDCS

GB Deaf Swimming Club remains committed to working with NDCS and I would like to thank Ashleigh Scott who has been of great assistance throughout the year and for the continued partnership with the club. Our swimmers attended a celebration day after the Deaflympics for NDCS families as inspirational role models which was fantastic. I am delighted that Ashleigh has offered to continue to support the club beyond the conclusion of the Swim Project.

1. UK Deaf Sport

Work continues behind the scenes with UKDS who are involved in trying to establish better relationships with Paralympics GB and British Swimming as well as having the DeaflympicsGB recognised as its own brand while trying change the funding policy of government for deaf sport. There was some success in that MPs from both England and Scotland hosted Parliamentary celebration days following the Deaflympics and UKDS were invited to the BBC sports awards where we received recognition albeit briefly. A separate attachment for the work being done is included in this report.

1. National Governing Body

Following last year’s AGM I looked in depth at the benefits and difficulties involved in trying to establish ourselves as our own National Governing Body however in conjunction with UKDS the committee decided that at this stage we were not in a position to make this a viable option and therefore we will continue to develop ourselves as GB Deaf Swimming Club under the guidance of UKDS.

1. Welfare

I would like to thank Mel Davis for being our Welfare officer over the last few years and I am pleased to report that Samantha Sharp & Ashleigh Scott will be stepping into the role.

1. Sponsorship

Sponsorship is always difficult to secure and our Deaflympics athletes worked tirelessly to obtain funding for them to represent GB. Well done to Tom Baxter for securing TYR kit for the DeaflympicsGB swimmers. This year I am delighted to have personally secured £1500 from DMG Floorcare Ltd a small cleaning business from the west coast of Scotland and I would encourage everyone to look in their own areas for such opportunities as it this type of sponsorship which can make such a difference to us as a club where we rely on our membership fees to cover our training and gala costs.

1. Audiograms

There have been some difficulties with the audiogram system with changes in the way they are processed from us and UKDS however Nigel & I have resolved this and the procedure is now robust and straightforward if the audiograms are completed correctly. I would encourage all members who wish to compete at International games in the future to complete the more involved ICSD audiogram form which will generate an international number which allows them to do this. This form only needs to be done once.

1. Coaches.

Sam Chamberlain as Head Coach & Martin Lee both continue to do a fantastic job at our training weekends and National gala. Our congratulations go to Martin following his life membership to the club at last year’s AGM. The club will support both Sam and Martin in development courses which will benefit the club. The Coaches report can be read under separate attachment but from it I would like to congratulate all the swimmers who have been selected for the forthcoming European Championships in Poland and wish them every success.

1. Starting lights

Martin Lee has been working on portable traffic light starting systems for many years now and is currently awaiting electronic boards from suppliers however it is very exciting news and would be of great benefit to our swimmers if it can be incorporated to the current starting systems. On another positive note Oxford & Buckinghamshire purchased 2 starting lights at quite a considerable cost for their 2 deaf swimmers and I would be encouraging everyone to be lobbying their own clubs to provide this vital equipment.

1. Development of our club

The club are committed to retain our senior swimmers who have in the past drifted away and to ensure we can do this we will support our senior swimmers develop not just their coaching but any other qualifications which may be of benefit to the club in the future.

1. Finance

Our Treasurer Paul Gotta has done a fantastic job in keeping the cost to everyone as low as possible while the club has still provided quality training venues and competition opportunities. We continue to be in a reasonably good financial position while our membership remains high and the Treasurers report is submitted to you by Paul.

1. Going Forward

It has been a pleasure to have been involved as Chairman this year and I cannot thank Paul & Nigel enough for the work they have done this year, both in terms of their own roles and additional work they have undertaken such as the Club Newsletter which has been a huge success, however it takes more than just the executive to make things work so I would like to thank everyone involved in this year’s success from our swimmers to parents and extended families but also to all those officials and helpers who come and support our club in many capacities, giving up their own time and on many occasions at their own expense to help us through officiating, translating and anything else that makes the experience for our deaf swimmers more enjoyable and worthwhile. I am sure we will continue to make mistakes as we all do but hopefully we will continue to learn from them and keep building a great platform for our youngest swimmers to develop so that one day they too can experience swimming at Major championships around the world.

1. Conclusion

Finally as you may be aware I have been involved in the club in various capacities for 6 years. The role of Chairman was not one I had sought last year but had it thrust upon me. Hopefully my involvement has in some way helped to bring some much needed stability and a happy environment for all our children to thrive in their swimming. I have decided that I will not stand for the Chairman position this year and I wish whoever takes on the role every success and can assure them that they have good people and excellent support around them. I will continue to serve on the committee if elected, update and report on all the fantastic records our young stars of the future break every week. As Chairman I have been fortunate to have witnessed one of our clubs most successful Deaflympics ever with my own daughter standing proudly on the podium winning 2 gold medals. It is a feeling that is hard to describe and I hope that many more of our young swimmers can experience it & with the recognition they deserve along with government funding which would be something.

Jim Joyce