

PSC CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This year has been one of the most challenging years in our club's history.

The **COVID-19 pandemic in the United Kingdom** - part of the worldwide pandemic of coronavirus disease reached our country in late January 2020.

At first we were able to continue operations as normal as the entire country started to come to terms with the scale of the problem.

We held a very successful presentation evening in January, took part in Counties and then staged our most successful Open Meet yet on the 14th and 15th March. I would like to thank everyone who helped make it the success it was.

But, during this time, numbers of infections started to rise and on the day after our Open Meet, the UK governments imposed a stay-at-home order, dubbed "Stay Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives", banning all non-essential travel and closing most gathering places including our swimming pools. Those with symptoms, and their households, were told to self-isolate, while those with certain illnesses were told to shield themselves. People were told to keep apart in public. Police were empowered to enforce measures, and the Coronavirus Act 2020 gave our government emergency powers not used since the Second World War.

As a club we needed to respond to the crisis quickly. Not only was the club at risk financially but we needed to support our members through what was to going to be, difficult times.

Our first priority was the health, safety and welfare of all of our members, their families, our coaches and volunteers and to this end, we took onboard all the advice of the UK government and Swim England.

We planned online remote methods to continue land training, provide dietary information, pool sets for individuals who may have had access to private pools, and provide other positive ways for us to engage. We wanted to be as 'ready' as we could before resumption to normal training.

Moreover, we needed to provide valued support in order receive well-earned income to support our key staff during the Covid pandemic. We put a proposal to our members to pay for online and remote training for 1/3 of normal fees.

Just over 80% of our members responded positively which was incredible. This has enabled us to almost break-even during the entire period, only needing to draw upon the club's financial reserves occasionally.

It had been my wish and that of our Executive and Committee, that we try desperately to maintain the club's financial reserves as much as possible, given the uncertainty and unpredictability of the pandemic. It was imperative for the survival of the club that we did not simply dip into our financial reserves. At the time we had no idea how long the pandemic was going to last.

The club made an application for grant to Sport England. At first unsuccessful and then with some modification and focus on Little Putts Academy, we were successful in obtaining a grant of £4,800.

Lesley and Lawrence stepped up as usual and put together an amazing online offering.

Google Classrooms were set up for Newbies, Development and Youth, and we used Team App for the Masters. Lawrence delivered 14 land sessions per week across these classrooms.

All were planned and progressed throughout Lockdown. They included stroke specific weeks, where swimmers were effectively 'swimming on land'. We also delivered 3 yoga sessions per week with the help of Clare Lodge - a friend of Lesley. Amazingly, we faced all difficulties and delivered a real positive outcome from lockdown.

With classrooms, we had a valuable resource to cover so many things, not just to do with swimming, but wellbeing too. Lockdown gave us something we had never had before, time! We were able to get to know members better and vice versa. We became a big Team and the PSC family really stuck and worked together.

And we covered so much:

Strokes, drills videos and discussions

Correcting stroke faults

An assignment on famous swimmers of the past

Winning habits

Personality and behaviour traits

Growth Mindset

We incorporated the British Swimming Optimal Athlete Development Framework

What muscles are used in what strokes

Designing land sessions and delivering them.

Self-reflections

Goal setting – with its own 'yellow brick road'

Mobility self-checks

Activity sheets for the younger ones, and so on and so on ...

... we even grew sunflowers and who can forget Graham's 'Guess the Movie'.

Lesley and Lawrence continued work with the County, Region and National Camps for Swim England, all remote via zoom. Swim England also delivered new online support for coaches via webinars, discussions etc.

Lawrence was selected for Level 3 Senior Coach. Lesley continued CPD online courses, currently still studying Neuro Linguistic Programming and extending her Psychology Degree, incorporating Sport Psychology. I congratulate them both.

Suddenly, September was here and slowly and cautiously we saw a return to the pool.

We worked tirelessly with Active Luton, developing a phased return, our swimmers were put into bubbles. Special paperwork had to be created and a designated 'Covid Team' put into place.

Planning the phased return under restrictions was challenging and constantly changing. Return dates changed 4 times. Insurance disclaimers were needed. Each member needed 8 signed documents before they could eventually go back to training but parents were absolutely amazing and supported us throughout, worked with us and our policies and our Covid protocol was a big success.

Whilst all this was going on, we also changed our Members Database from Activeworks to Team Unify which was also a mammoth task. It took around 2 months to get everyone signed over to the new platform. Most of this work was done by Jeff Zorn who also changed the website over to Team Unify at the same time.

A huge debt of gratitude must go to everyone involved including Jeff, all our members and volunteers who helped make this happen. They should also feel proud as all swimmers who engaged with our programme, throughout lock down, gained so much when they finally got back to training. They felt great in the pool, and they looked amazing and their strokes had improved. The extensive land programme had truly paid off. Flexibility, mobility, stability had improved 100%.

We were in a good place. Swim England had devised a way of competing within our own club environment. LevelX was introduced and included a National rankings data base. LevelX had to be run in accordance with Swim England's guidance. We needed all the officials and a programme of events and heats. The problem was, the next pool closure was looming fast. Our Level X Team had less than 24 hours notice to run the mini meet but did it, successfully at Inspire and at Lea Manor.

For our swimmers it was a highlight - they could put their racing costumes on if they wanted, they could dive and race. Smiles were priceless! They were racing again and strong and fast. 90% of those competing PB'd which was astounding considering they had only had 4 weeks in the pool.

But that moment helped raise their morale because all of a sudden it was November, and the pools were closed – yet again.

Early December saw a partial return to the pool. No over 18s were allowed to swim, except with disabilities.

Christmas was now looming and the pandemic was getting worse. The club took the decision that we would close for Christmas on the 20th December, however we only got to the 19th before the next lockdown was imposed.

Tough year! But we made it. There is something very special about this club and there is nothing like

a global pandemic to highlight it!

I would like to thank everyone involved and let's hope that 2021 is a better year for all of us.

I would also like to thank Ally Donnachie, our Treasurer who has also done an amazing job, throughout difficult and challenging times and has helped steward our financial operations throughout the crisis.

I would also like to thank my Committee for their continued support as we have adopted regular Zoom meetings during the pandemic. Wrestling with new technology and methods, we have been able to maintain our regular monthly Committee meetings.

It seems strange that my Chairman's report this year does mention swimming very much. But, I am very proud and very thankful to be working with such an amazing club that has stepped up to deliver so much above and beyond in such difficult circumstances, to 'ready' our swimmers to be in as best condition as possible for when we do finally, return to the pool and whatever our new 'normal' is.

Finally, on behalf of everyone at Putteridge, I would like send our best wishes, hopes and prayers to anyone at the club who is currently fighting this awful disease, take care, get well soon and we are all thinking of you and sending positive vibes.

Sincerely,

Chris Long

PSC Chairman.