

Dear Members, Parents, Swimmers and Friends of the Club...

It has been a very busy and successful year across the club, and there is lots I would like to share with you, but first let me wish you and your families all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

We have seen some amazing swimming and the club has reached new heights and unprecedented success, but I want to save those for the end of this note, after I talk about some of the changes we are implementing and some of the challenges we face.

Club Pathways

With the growth across the club, it is important that we invest in the future of the club and to ensure that we have a stable foundation and a pathway for all our members, whether they are looking to compete, looking to keep fit or just want to be part of our club and enjoy swimming with friends.

We have listened to our membership and have put in place changes to meet your growing demands for coaching and excellence and to have clear “pathways” for swimmers to progress through their time with the club. To that end, the board tasked Steve Murphy and the coaching and teaching team with designing a new framework that represents the pathways available to swimmers across the club. Attached to this email, you will find a detailed outline of the product of their efforts, which was endorsed by the Poolside Committee and enthusiastically adopted by the board.

The swimming structure starts with the Teaching groups that form the foundations of club and where most of our members join our club. Sitting above this is the new Pathway structure that sets out three distinct pathways for swimmers: The Development Pathway, the Competitive Pathway, and the Performance Pathway. These then feed into the Masters/Senior Age group sections, where we provide a vibrant community of adult swimmers. The Pathways sit alongside our active Disability Group and our growing Water Polo section, and we are keen to see overlaps between those groups and the Pathway swimmers.

This represents a significant change and will lead to some further changes to ensure we can provide clear expectations and a clear structure for swimmers. First, all swimmers, who are associated with a squad or training group, can expect to receive a communication of their Pathway placement. Allocation along a Pathway will be based on a number of factors including the individual’s current performance, commitment and ability. The coaches and teachers have put great care and thought into the correct allocation of swimmers along the Pathways, considering the needs of the individual and the club. It should, however, be recognised that we expect movement both along and between the Pathways, as a swimmer’s ability and availability change.

Thank you again to Steve and the team for their hard work in mapping out a future structure to help the club continue to thrive.

Club Kit

I won’t say much on this but as I write, the first items of the new kit are arriving for distribution to members. I look forward to seeing the kit poolside, especially in competitions in the New Year. While the kit itself won’t make our success, I am excited that it will reflect our success and I know that swimmers are excited for the new gear and will “wear the Marlin” with justifiable pride.

Volunteering

I want to move on to a recap of all the success we have experienced this year, but first I need to share a word of warning – we are dangerously close to not having the people to support the running of the club and all that the club can and wants to achieve. Our club and our success are built upon volunteers; who contribute to the club not for any individual reward or recognition, but instead for the joy of supporting and contributing to the club's success. With the continued growth of the club, we do not have the level of support we need going forward. **WE NEED YOU!**

There are almost limitless opportunities for you to get involved, poolside or elsewhere. There is a list of specific needs we have identified below, but do not be limited by that list. We need your time and can use any skills you have. My simple plea to you is not to ignore this. Whether you swim yourself or support your child/family member, sitting on the side is not enough to keep the club going.

While they may not be asking for your thanks, the club owes an enormous debt of gratitude to those people who come out time and again to support the club – and to support YOUR swimmer. Please show your actual appreciation by joining that group of committed volunteers. Get in touch and we will find a way for you to help.

Some of the volunteers we require, urgently, include:

- Event officials (training given)
- Event support team members
- Open meet administrator and coordinator
- Club kit and club shop controller
- Volunteer coordinator
- Minute taker PSC meetings and Board meetings
- Treasurer (any accounting/bookkeeping experience needed)
- Systems implementation and management of systems

Successes

With that warning given, I'd like to move on to the justification for the pride we should all feel in Mid Sussex Marlins. We can all be proud to have been part of one of the most exciting years and the success just keeps on coming. I have been fortunate enough to witness many of our successes first hand, but there have been so many over the year that I have to rely on second and even third hand accounts sometimes. There are too many highlights, both personal and for the club, that I can't list them all here, but let me share a few of my favourite moments with you.

- Mid Sussex Marlins were crowned not only top club overall but also winners in every age group category in the Sussex County Championships – a feat never achieved before in Sussex!
- To match that, Steve Murphy was recognised as top coach and our Masters relay team were awarded for their success.

- The success of our Disability swimmers in the Squids gala.
- Amazing personal bests for Marlins swimmers at the National Para Swimming Championships just a couple of weeks ago.
- The Masters representing Marlins and GB with great success at the 18th Fina World Master Championship in South Korea, not to mention successes in county, regional, and national competitions, and our World Champions in the 280age group relay team.
- Continued success in the Arena Leagues, including retention of the Sussex League Division One title, promotion for our B team in Division Two, and maintenance of our position in the Premier division of the National Arena League.
- The growing vibrancy and success of our waterpolo squads, with team members representing Marlins in county and national teams.
- We were also recognised by Sussex as top club, top coach in Steve, and award for contribution to master swimming for the relay team.

All of this can only be achieved with the support of our magnificent volunteers, helpers, our fabulous team managers and event team, the many officials who tirelessly support us at events all over the county, our inspiring teachers and coaches (again, PLEASE join them). I would personally like to say a massive thank you to each and every one of you for all you do for our club and our members; you are all stars.

Finally, I would like to thank the board for putting up with me for the last year, and the PSC for supporting and taking the initiative to move on many changes we have had to make. We still have a lot to do and it is another big year for the club and our members as we strive for new heights and look to emulate our success of 2019.

Lastly, thanks for being part of Team Marlins.

Have a fabulous Christmas and I look forward to a very exciting 2020.

Les Hawkey
Chairman