

# Asa Draft Strategy 2009-2013

## Consultation Comments

When first looking at the Draft Strategy – I was struck by the absence of reference to any discipline other than swimming. I have tried to accept the difficulties of always referring to swimming/diving/synchronised swimming/water polo/open water swimming – such a course of action is plainly ludicrous and would tend to subvert the document, however, even when accepting that constraint, it is difficult to see many areas that include all disciplines. This is plainly a ‘swimming’ oriented strategy; I say that with no sport related criticism intended simply that each discipline deserves to have its own strategy clearly marked out as a working document to inform strategic & tactical decisions and measure progress.

### Introduction

The key objectives remain:

- Delivering gold medal success
- More people learning to swim (dive?)
- Delivering a more effective, quality, talent pathway
- Encouraging more people to put swimming (diving?) at the centre of their activities.

As far as the ‘What’ is concerned, these are laudable objectives – the devil is in the ‘How’.

Underpinning these objectives, British Swimming identifies four objectives in its document “A Vision for Swimming (Diving?) 2009-2013”

- Ensure everyone has the opportunity to learn to swim (dive?)
- Offer everyone the opportunity to enjoy swimming, or water based fitness activities for health throughout their lifetime.
- Ensure everyone achieves their different personal health goals throughout their lifetime.
- Ensure the nation achieves gold medal success on the world stage.

Again, these objectives provide a sound framework upon which to build in the coming years. How we will achieve success is likely to be the subject of much debate. I will relate my comments on the draft strategy to these objectives.

### Health and Lifelong Participation

I am disappointed that there is no mention of the co-operation between the Great Britain Diving Federation & the asa to drive forward the Community & Masters Diving Programme. David Sparkes said in June 2008 “Working together we believe we can strengthen and build a vibrant Community Diving Programme in England...” It is a pity that this is not included and could be an opportunity lost.

## **Facilities**

I note the facilities targets for 2013 and welcome the will to increase the number of International standard diving venues to nine. As this is an asa document, I take it that this number relates only to England?

With the provision of nine International standard diving venues in England, there is a real need for an effective supporting structure of facilities underpinning the continued investment in ongoing international success. How many Regional diving venues are envisaged? How many local (feeder) venues are to be provided nationally? I note your acknowledgement that there are areas of under provision of facilities with regard to swimming – do you accept that a similar situation exists for diving? I do acknowledge that the actual provision of facilities must be achieved through co-operation with other stakeholders, however the asa should take a strategic view (geographically) as local authorities tend to think – locally.

In addition to the provision of facilities, the question of actual use must also be addressed. Again, I appreciate that this is in much more detail than the Draft Strategy, nevertheless, there seems to be no strand in the strategy that refers to this issue, which is key to delivery. It is pointless to have facilities built, only to see them stand idle because pool management have a paranoid fear (Health & Safety you know) of actually letting people use them. The ISRM, with the help of the GBDF, have produced a guide to the safe operation of Public Diving Facilities, together with a training package for local pools. This needs to be positively promoted and contact established with the HSE & Insurance Companies to acquaint people with the real risks of diving, rather than misguided perception.

## **Athlete Development**

“To provide a seamless talent pathway which allows **all** (my emphasis) athletes to achieve their potential by accessing quality training environments at every stage of their development.”

If all athletes are to be provided with this “quality training environment” the issue of facilities must be urgently addressed. I will not expand on the 20 minute travel ‘rule’, but it must be taken into consideration for success to be achieved. The current ‘postcode lottery’ that exists as far as Athlete Development is concerned, is unacceptable.

## **Workforce Development**

The current Diving Education system is not fit for purpose; it is expensive and requires significant time investment from volunteers, who generally have not got that much time to invest. Accessibility must be enhanced through the delivery of e-learning, mixed with attendance at a diving facility for practical exercises and examination.

There must be a radical review of the process for delivery of Diving Teacher Courses, with education programmes being targeted at facilities, providing value for money and greater opportunity for the use of those facilities. Diving

Development Officers would be key to success in this area, parachuting into areas and working with pool management to help set up local diving programmes as part of a talent identification system, as well as delivering on the achievement of objectives (see above).

In order to get the right people in the right place at the right time the education programme must be interlinked with the provision, use & development of facilities; at the moment this does not happen. Furthermore, if Diving Teachers qualify but never teach at a club, are they really worth the investment? When I tutored diving teacher courses a significant number of delegates were 'qualification chasers', who had no intention of actively using what they had been taught. Perhaps this should be monitored?

My final point is around the development of an integrated seamless delivery system of Beacon Programmes, HPCs, and club pathways. Do the figures within the draft strategy include diving? If so, what are the particular figures for our sport? I do note the breakdown of the Talent Pool into disciplines, but this is the only place it occurs.

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