

A Word of Welcome from our President, Richard Willis (Wandsworth S C)

After our amazingly successful, first-ever, foray at the London Aquatic Centre, I wish you all a warm welcome as we return to Crystal Palace for the final weekend of our 2018 Surrey County Age Groups Championships. May I also welcome Mrs Eileen Adams, President of Swim England South East Region, who will help me present the medals and the trophies to the swimmers on Sunday.

At this level competitive swimming requires perseverance, commitment and dedication, not only from the swimmer, but also from the families of swimmers. We all appreciate the hard work and time that the coaches put into your swimmers, but the support of the swimmer's family is paramount to a swimmer's success too. So thank you for bringing them here today!

The championships themselves, however, involve a lot of hard work and preparation from the Age-Groups Committee and, in particular, Alan Thurlow. Many hours of planning and thought have gone into the galas to ensure that they run smoothly and I am truly grateful to the team for all the arrangements they have made.

A huge vote of thanks must also go to our wonderful team of Technical Officials and Competition Team without whose voluntary attendance and goodwill to ensure the trouble free running of the galas, none of this would happen. Officials have to be licensed to work at the County Age Groups galas and officials organiser Sharon Porter works very hard to ensure that all sessions have sufficient officials in attendance. Without the right number of licensed officials, the requirements of the license cannot be fulfilled and if these are not fulfilled, then the swimmers' times are not valid for inclusion on the ASA rankings or for selection into higher competitions. We rely on many officials who no longer have any swimmers involved in competitive swimming, but if all the officials we train each year became licensed and offered one or two sessions every year, this would no longer be such an issue.

Finally, it is a very proud moment for the swimmers, coaches and their families, when they make it to the top and win medals and trophies, but it is the rest of you taking part that matter to us too, in that you continue to enjoy your swimming, long into the future, and go on to become the next generation's masters swimmers! May I wish you all a very enjoyable day and the very best of luck for every swimmer taking part today too!

For swimmers who do not have a Surrey County 2018 qualifying time we will be holding a separate meet, in April, at the Spectrum, Guildford to provide the opportunity for those swimmers to gain experience at high level of competition

Richard Willis ,President, Surrey County ASA