Chairman's Report to AGM 15 October 2008

We have had an extremely busy year – busier than I had anticipated – but quite a considerable number of meetings, emails, telephone conversations and a trip to Majorca later I am here to tell the tale!

A review of nearly every aspect of Club life has been undertaken.

For our extremely successful learn to swim program, the teachers and coaches have worked hard in planning for the introduction of the National Teaching Plan which is currently being rolled out.

We ran an Assistant Teachers Course bringing on board 4 new Assistants. Several of our Assistants also worked to upgrade themselves to full Teacher status.

It cannot be stressed enough how much all our teachers do to develop the kids in our care. Learn to Swim is the life blood of the Club and no words can really express how dedicated our teachers are.

In excess of 100 badges were awarded in our annual distance Badge Day and thanks again to Andrew Hodgson for organising this. Another very successful Summer Swim School was organised by Claire McGonigle.

For our junior teletots squad last September we enjoyed the fact that at the Ulster Minor Schools we lifted 6 medals. In the last couple of weeks the Minor Schools has again been run, this time with Templemore swimmers lifting 21 medals.

The Teletots gala season started with the challenge of trying to get over 50 swimmers registered and ended with the team remaining in division one where in the 'B' final we came a close second to Briefne but well ahead of City of Belfast who were relegated. Thanks must go to the efforts of Fiona Hillier and Robin Higgins with Robin not only teaching but also acting as the Teletots Rep.

Our senior squad has also developed considerably. In July 2007 we had a sprinkling of swimmers representing the Club at Irish Division 1 and 2 whereas in 2008 we had nearly 3 times the number of swimmers at the National Championships.

Such development is testament to the amount of work put in by our swimmers, their Parents and our Head Coach Mark Craig.

In the Provincial Towns League we remained in Division 2 with wins over Dungannon and Coleraine. This league has already began for the 2008/9 season. Last month we lost by a very small margin to Newry & Mourne.

Thanks to the adhoc committee that met to review how we organise for galas. The recommendations from that forum have already been seen in the organisation of our PTL trip to Newry & Mourne last month.

Our end of season Club galas were a great success thanks to the work of William Stafford. The senior gala in particular is in a period of transition. In 2008 we changed the date - in 2009 we will be looking to change some of the events in order to make the gala even more inclusive.

We have a great bunch of swimmers at this Club and it was a privilege for me to take over 20 of them for a week long training camp to Palma, Majorca during Easter.

I believe that this was a great success and will be followed up next year with a trip to Crystal Palace, London for which 22 swimmers, mostly from the junior squad, have signed up.

Out of the pool, we have had representation at Ulster and Ireland level meetings and for Swim Ulster we ran a very successful stroke development gala last December.

Teachers meetings are now formalised and meet the first Monday in the month.

We have representation on the East Belfast Community Sports Forum.

Several fundraising events were ran the most successful of which, in terms of numbers, was the table quiz.

With Julie Wallace, Louise Black & Isobel Ward at the helm we ran two very successful end of season activity nights at Crawfordsburn Scout Centre were we had a great turn out each night. We have uncovered the hidden talents of Louise and Isobel as excellent barbeque chefs.

Our website has gone from strength to strength with Karen Baines coming on board during the year. It is the first port of call for news and now contains various shopping channels for swimwear and other items that generate an income for the Club. I am very pleased to say that the site is being used heavily and over the last 6 months the site has had on average over 70,000 hits per month and in September the number of hits was in excess of 114,000.

So what are our plans for the incoming year?

With a very big Club and such a diversity of age ranges meeting in two locations, communication and relationships between us all needs to be improved. This is a considerable challenge.

The planning meeting I held with our Coaches back in June together with matters arising from Committee and suggestions from Swimmers, Teachers and Parents throughout the year has however produced some new initiatives to push the Club further forward.

We have already had our first team building event being the Dragon Boat racing in early September.

Our first of two information meetings for the junior squad ran in September with a follow up due to be held in January.

We have already commenced what will be regular trips to the NAC in Dublin for long course training – available to the senior squad and to the older swimmers within teletots.

Short, sharp 20 minute information meetings are soon to be held with parents of our Learn to Swim program and these will hopefully be repeated in the spring of 2009.

The Club now has over 300 members. For certain jobs it is now simply not possible to carry on some of the administrative tasks on a voluntary basis so I am sure most of you will have seen the recent job advertisement. This should be seen as progress and part of the next stage of Club Development.

A lot of the work that will be undertaken by the new staff member will pick up on what Claire McGonigle has carried out so admirably for the last few years.

This will also create a single point of contact for information on Club matters thus aiding communication.

From the membership database we will continue to update the members electronically on a frequent basis and will further develop the Club website. You will shortly receive information on how to claim 10% discount off swimwear.

The Club is 25 year old this year and a small sub committee has been working very hard behind the scenes to meet 4 objectives…

The first was to consider Club kit and rebrand. You may have seen the new logo on the Learn to Swim Hats. Here, for the first, is the new kit. We have also updated the teachers kit and they have turned blue!

The first of our three big events will be on Saturday 1st November – the 25 hour Swimathon. If you haven't registered to swim or volunteer please do so as soon as possible.

The swimathon will be followed by a swimmers birthday party on Saturday 7th March 2009 in Avoniel and an adults night out on Friday 29th May 2009 in the Park Avenue Hotel.

In closing can I take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped in whatever capacity – by teaching/coaching/on committee/at galas/at the pool side/providing transport/at events and parental support. If you happen to see my Wife and kids please tell them that I thanked them as well.

Last year when I came into the Chair I set myself an objective to put Templemore on the map at local, provincial and national level.

We are getting there but there is still a lot of work to do.

Ladies & gentlemen, if we all do a little, we can all achieve a lot.

Thankyou.