



South Wales League General Meeting — Minutes

Date: Sunday, 30 November 2025

Time: 7:00 PM

Venue: Zoom

Chair: Richard Bennett, Squash Wales Chairman

Minute Taker: Russell Edwards, Squash Wales

Hosted by: Richard Bennett, Nick Edwards (League Manager), David Evans (Head of Performance & Participation), Phil Brailey (Liaison Director), Tomos Rosser (Membership & Club Engagement Officer)

Attendees

Nick Dyer, Nick Edwards, Phil Brailey, Richard Bennett, Calum Pearson, Alexander Rowlands, Terry John, Richard Drinkwater, Craig Withycombe, Julian Griffiths, Paul Thomas, Freya West, Robin Livermore, Justin Nemeth, Graham Till, Bleddyn Davies, Tomos Rosser, Mark Palmer, Geoff Lea, Adrian Brace, Greg Price, Luke Mussa, Rhodri Hughes, Nick Joseph, Ceredig Emanuel, Phillip McCarthy, Eirian Crabbe, John Waller, Matthew Perry, Steve Thomas, Noah Jones, Mathew Woart, David Pearn, Pat Westlake, Geraint Hodges, David Evans, Russell Edwards.

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

1.1 The meeting commenced at 7:00 PM.

1.2 Chair: Richard Bennett welcomed all attendees, outlined meeting protocols (muting, Q&A, use of chat), and confirmed the meeting objective:

- To present the new South Wales League Restructure for implementation in January 2026.
- To answer club questions and gather feedback.

1.3 Richard confirmed this meeting followed six months of consultation and analysis after concerns raised by clubs and members.

2. Background & Rationale for Restructure

2.1 Richard summarised the context:

- Declining participation in several regions
- Rising walkovers and fixture cancellations
- Concerns over travel, especially in East and West
- A board-level responsibility to ensure sustainability of league squash

2.2 The Squash Wales Board endorsed the need for structural change based on feedback from Squash Wales members, consultation data and the current state of squash in regions East Central and West central.

3. Presentation: League Restructure Proposal

3.1 Decline in Competitive League Activity

Presenter: David Evans

- Noted reduction in competitive fixtures
- Increased forfeits linked to travel, scheduling, and uneven competition
- Importance of maintaining viable, meaningful leagues

3.2 Proposed New League Structure

Three new leagues were presented:

1. **South East League** (East & South Central combined)
2. **South West League** (redefined West Central)
3. **Pembrokeshire League** (retained and reshaped)

Key point: teams will be allocated using the average Squash Level of their top five players.

3.3 Hub Option (Travel Support Mechanism)

- A neutral-venue “hub option” (example: Newport) may be used where travel exceeds 40 miles.
- Use of the hub is optional and must be agreed by both clubs.

3.4 Expected Benefits

- More competitive matches

- Better travel/participation balance
- Improved fixture reliability
- Increased club engagement opportunities
- Long-term sustainability for the region

3.5 Timelines

- **January 2026:** New structure implemented
- **Post-season (Spring 2026):** Consultation and review
- **September 2026:** Adjustments applied as needed

4. Data Requirements and Allocation Process

Presenter: Nick Edwards

4.1 Club Data Collection

Clubs must provide:

- Number of teams
- Home nights
- Accurate ranking lists

4.2 Ranking Verification

- Squash Levels for players will be issued to clubs by 3 December 2025
- Clubs have one week to return their ranking lists using current SL /Variance rule
- Algorithms with new South East, South West and Pembrokeshire leagues determined through average Squash Levels of top 5 players in a team

4.3 Promotion & Relegation

- Premier Division promotion/relegation rules remain unchanged
 - Two teams will move from Premier 2 to new feeder leagues South East and South West (not three) from end of Spring 2026
 - Meads and Carmarthen to be incorporated into Pembrokeshire League divisions for Spring 2026
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5. Q&A — Key Issues Raised

5.1 Promotion Pathways & Pembrokeshire Concerns

Question: Is there promotion from Pembrokeshire to higher leagues?

Response:

- Currently no, due to excessive travel distances required for Premiership-level fixtures. This is no change to current arrangements.
- Recognised as an ongoing challenge to be monitored.
- It was also noted that Meads are not currently operating at the competitive level they once were and are presently positioned mid-table in West Central Division 2. Based on recent performance levels, they are not expected to be challenging for promotion in the near future

Concerns:

- Fairness to strong teams (e.g., Meads) unable to aspire to Premier, both as a team, or for higher performing junior players.
- Feedback noted for long-term structural review.

5.2 Travel Distance Concerns

Issues Raised:

- Increased travel for social and lower-level teams
- Potential loss of teams
- Early start times conflicting with rush-hour traffic
- Reduced home-court usage if hubs are used
- Suitability for juniors and women's teams

Responses:

- Travel difficulty acknowledged across the region
- The restructure aims to reduce *overall* imbalance
- Hub use is optional and requires mutual agreement
- Start times can remain flexible within 6:30–7:30 pm range
- Leisure centre closing times (e.g. Monmouth 9:30 pm) will be considered

- There was a mixed response in the meeting with a comment that travel was not a problem from one club and travel was a major issue from another club
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5.3 Process Transparency and Consultation Method

Concerns:

- Lack of visibility of consultation responses
- Questioned why no formal vote was held
- Suggestion that rule changes require AGM/EGM approval

Responses:

- An anonymised consultation summary will be shared
 - Individual responses cannot be published for privacy reasons
 - Restructure decision was taken as a governance responsibility of the Squash Wales Board, not a rule change requiring a vote, in accordance with the current Articles of Association
 - Board deemed the restructure urgent due to declining participation
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5.4 Timelines and Implementation Date

Concerns:

- January launch considered “too soon” for clubs
- Risk of team withdrawals
- Request to defer to September 2026

Responses:

- Delay risks further participation decline
 - January start enables earlier review and adjustment
 - The structure will be reviewed after Spring 2026
 - Squash Wales acknowledges the significant change but emphasises urgency
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5.5 Competitive Balance & Lower-Level Players

Concerns:

- Structure perceived to favour higher-level clubs
- Long distances unsuitable for newer or recreational players
- Teams worried about losing depth or entire squads

Response:

- Challenge acknowledged
 - Balancing competitive integrity with participation needs is difficult
 - Restructure aims at long-term sustainability to prevent further membership decline
 - Hub option in South East region offers a solution to travel issues
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5.6 Rules Clarifications

Playing for two clubs in same region?

→ No, rule remains unchanged.

Ranking allocations for all divisions?

→ Yes, all teams will be reallocated based on top-five Squash Levels scores for the new South East, South West and Pembroke regions, Other regions' and Premiership process remains now for Spring 2026 start.

Court usage under hub option?

→ Hub use is optional; no club is required to give up all home fixtures.

6. Chat Log Themes Noted for Record

The chat contributions echoed and reinforced several key themes:

- Promotion pathways queried repeatedly
- Travel distances and impact on juniors and women
- Concerns about constitutional authority
- Desire for maps and visual aids of new boundaries
- Open request for slides to be circulated
- Some clubs voiced strong support for the restructure (e.g., Swansea, Rhiwbina)

(A full thematic summary is included above; individual chat entries are not reproduced for privacy.)

7. Closing Remarks

7.1 Richard Bennett thanked attendees and acknowledged the range of views expressed.

7.2 Emphasised that the restructure is:

- based on extensive consultation and declining participation
- intended to address urgent issues
- subject to further review after Spring 2026

7.3 Clubs reminded to submit required data by published deadlines.

7.4 Meeting closed at approximately 8:15 PM.

8. Actions Arising

Action	Owner	Deadline
Issue updated Squash Level data to clubs	Nick Edwards	3 Dec 2025
Clubs to verify player ranking lists	Clubs	10 Dec 2025
Distribute anonymised consultation summary	Squash Wales	Before Christmas
Circulate slide deck and league maps	Squash Wales	Within 48 hours
Confirm team numbers, home nights & facility data	Clubs	10 Dec 2025
Review Spring 2026 season impact	Squash Wales	End of May 2026