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SEAHAWKS TAKE OFF

Two of Sussex's leading competitive swimming clubs - Atlantis SC Horsham and Shiverers SC based in Brighton and Hove - are announcing today a major new initiative to improve swimming in Sussex. The two clubs are forming a new combined swim squad to be known as the Sussex Seahawks Swim Team.

The purpose of the Seahawks is to provide new opportunities for local swimmers to compete more effectively at regional and national level; to promote standards of excellence; and to create a high performance environment and culture from which national and international swimmers have the best possible opportunity to emerge.

Atlantis and Shiverers will continue to maintain their own identities. Swimmers will continue to train and to compete with their home club for all competitions within Sussex, including the County Championships.

Seahawks will support its member clubs by establishing Performance and Development squads comprised of swimmers from its member clubs, who meet the selection criteria. These squads will hold regular pool and land training sessions overseen by a joint team of coaches from each member club. These will be additional sessions used to prepare for major competitions and to forge a strong team spirit.

Swimmers from member clubs will compete as part of a combined Seahawks squad at the ASA South East Regional Age Group and Youth Championships, Zonal Championships, National Age Group and Youth Championships, British Championships and selected Open Meets outside Sussex that are preparation for major championships.

The two clubs intend to be in a position - subject to achieving the necessary formal ASA approvals - to compete for the first time as Sussex Seahawks at the South East Regional Championships in May and June 2012.

It is hoped that in the coming year other local Sussex clubs, who are interested in pooling resources and working in partnership to raise the standards of competitive swimming in Sussex, will join the Team.

The initiative has attracted support from the Amateur Swimming Association.

Rosa Gallop, the ASA's national Talent Development Officer for the South East said: "I welcome this collaborative initiative. I hope it will become a successful vehicle for a group of clubs to come together in Sussex to achieve a real step forward in the development of the county's swimmers".

Keith Sutton, the ASA's South East Regional Director said: "I'm encouraged to see the emergence of this combined squad in Sussex. The ASA South East is keen to encourage the development of networks of clubs that have a swimmer focused approach and has already approved a similar concept in Kent - East Invicta ExCel - which has proved a great success. I hope the Sussex Seahawks enjoy similar success in helping to raise the standards of competitive swimming in the South East".

Sussex Seahawks Chairman Andrew Dunlop said: "The Seahawks really excite me. I'm a strong believer in our local swimming community working together to extend swimmers' opportunities and to raise standards of performance. Here in the South East we can learn a lot from how other regions of the UK organise themselves effectively for competitive success".

Shiverers Head Coach Ian Newell said: "This is a fabulous opportunity and the swimmers will respond really well to working together and doing something different. We can look forward to Sussex swimming advancing at a faster pace as a result."

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Notes to Editors:

- **Shiverers SC was formed in 1920 and operates from the King Alfred Leisure Centre Hove, Lancing College and Brighton College;**
- **Atlantis SC was formed in 1979 and has three principal bases at the Pavilions in the Park, Horsham; Steyning Leisure Centre; and Billingshurst Leisure Centre;**
- **Both clubs use the 50m pool at K2 in Crawley for Long Course training;**
- **Atlantis Head Coach Bill Penny has plenty of high performance experience having coached more than 60 swimmers to international honours and been a regular GB and England international coach over many years. Many of his charges competed at Olympic, Commonwealth, World and European Championships and he has also produced several national club winning teams as well as many English and Scottish National medallists;**
- **Shiverers Head Coach Ian Newell helped to produce 8 Olympians in the late 70s including Duncan Goodhew and an Olympic silver medallist in 1980. At Shiverers Ian coached Karen Pickering (the UK's most decorated swimmer) and 90s Commonwealth and Olympics competitor Stephen Akers, as well as numerous numerous individual national gold medallists. Current Shiverers member Charlotte Woolliscroft is a European Open Water bronze medallist, has twice represented GB at World Open Water Championships and hopes to qualify for 2012.**
- **In 2011 both clubs combined had 40 swimmers who achieved regional qualifying times and 90 who achieved county qualifying times;**

- **At the Sussex County Championships in 2011 Shiverers and Atlantis finished 1st and 2nd in the overall top Age Group club rankings;**
- **Shiverers currently competes in Division 1 of the National Arena Swimming League London, while Atlantis competes in Division 1 East of the National Arena Swimming League South.**