



All-Party Parliamentary Group for Golf

Ordinary Meeting Minutes

1800, 19 January 2016, Committee Room Six

Meeting commenced 1804

In Attendance

Members: Karl M^cCartney MP (in the Chair); Steve Brine MP; Glyn Davies MP; Jon Cruddas MP; Rt. Hon. Lord Butler of Brockwell; Laurence Robertson MP; Rt. Hon. Lord Davies of Oldham; Lord Lennie; Stephen Gethins MP

Organisational Associate Members: John Gerrie (The R&A); Claire Morgan, Stuart Mawhinney (Sky); Tim Payton, Rod Findlay, Nick Pink (England Golf); Roger Moreland (England Golf Partnership); Jackie Howe, John Hassells (NGCAA); Vivien Saunders OBE (Association of Golf Club Owners); Ciara Morgan, Nigel Freemantle (FSPA); Cae Menai-Davis, Frank Harrington (The Golf Trust); Donald Steel (Greenkeepers Training Committee)

Individual Associate Members (all, no affiliation): Liz Kahn, Carl Dalby; Andy Hiseman; Peter M^cEvoy OBE; Karl Hayler; Peter Gwilliam; Tony Menai; Adam Price

Other: Richard Coleman

Secretariat: Mark Ramsdale; Jack Baker

Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all to the first Ordinary Meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Golf; introduced the other Officers of the: Group Stephen Gethins MP, Lord Davies of Oldham, and Jason McCartney MP, and the Honorary Secretary Mark Ramsdale.

The Chairman outlined the purpose of the Group: to support the sport of golf, and asked the Honorary Secretary to read out a list of Members and Associate Members.

The Chairman thanked The R&A and Sky for their support.

Apologies

Members: Jason McCartney MP; Chris Heaton-Harris MP; Lord Sanderson of Bowden DL; Michael Tomlinson MP

Organisational Associate Members: Bob Williams (Golf Club Managers' Association)

Individual Associate Members (all, no affiliation): Ed Richardson; John Roger Jones; Mark Timlett; Iain Carter

Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous Group meeting were considered an accurate account.

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Matters arising

Since the Inaugural Meeting, Officers liaised with the Hon. Secretary to found elements of the Group:

- A website, www.parliamentary.golf has been established, and a twitter account @ParliamentGolf is live.
- A constitution for the Group has been written and approved by Officers. It is available on the Group's website.
- The R&A offered to become a supporter of the Group, and this was agreed by Officers. Vice-Chairman Stephen Gethins MP is on the Board of Trustees at the Links Trust.
- Sky offered to become a supporter of the Group and this was agreed by Officers.
- The Chairman and Honorary Secretary will set up a bank account for the Group.

Correspondence

Sent

- The Chairman wrote to stakeholders in the UK, announcing the establishment of the Group, and offering to meet.
- The Chairman and Honorary Secretary notified all MPs / Peers of the establishment of the Group.
- The Chairman wrote to all FTSE 100 companies, asking them to consider supporting the Group.
- The Chairman wrote to all UK Golf Unions, requesting a list of all clubs.
- The Chairman wrote to Wentworth Golf Club, concerning its joining fees, and requesting information on the use of income generated from membership and annual fees for development work in the local community and elsewhere.
- The Honorary Secretary wrote to the Honorary Secretary of the Parliamentary Golfing Society, offering to meet.
- The Honorary Secretary wrote to known Members of the previous Golf APPG in Parliament, inviting them to join the Group.

Received

- From the charity Golf in Society, regarding their work with people living with Dementia, and offering to present their work to the Group.
- From Lincoln Golf Centre, offering to host the Group for a competition.
- From the Sport and Recreation Alliance, regarding the possible involvement of the Group with a Parliamentary Sports Day the APPG for Sport hopes to hold next June.
- Regarding various issues facing the sport, to be raised later in the meeting.
- From the National Golf Clubs' Advisory Association, offering to sponsor some awards at an event.
- From the Association of Golf Club Owners, regarding their work, and expressing their support for the Group.
- An offer from PING for Members to visit their factory in Gainsborough.
- A request to interview the Chairman from BBC Sport. An article was published on the BBC website.
- An email concerning VAT on green fees. The Chairman has requested information from the House of Commons Library.
- An email asking that the Group address the proposed closure of a municipal golf course, Bradley Park, in Kirklees.
- From Dr Philippa Whiford MP, encouraging Members to visit her Central Ayrshire constituency when it hosts the Open at Royal Troon later this year.
- From London Sport, asking if the Group would be interested in hosting the launch of National Golf Month with an event on Speakers Green. **Action: Honorary Secretary to liaise with Officers.**

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Group activity report

Parliamentary

The Honorary Secretary provided references to golf in Parliament since the inaugural meeting.

In a debate on the Rugby Union World Cup, Lord Grocott questioned whether the lack of golf, amongst other sports, on free-to-air television diminishes the ability of the whole country to celebrate major events.

In a Westminster Hall debate on outdoor recreation, Liz Saville-Roberts MP raised the importance of the golf economy, which contributes almost £38 million to Wales.

In a Westminster Hall debate on air passenger duty and regional airports, Dr Philippa Whitford MP raised the importance of golf tourism in her constituency of Central Ayrshire, and the importance of Prestwick airport to this.

In the same debate, Mark Menzies MP raised the importance of Blackpool airport for world-class golf courses such as Royal Lytham and St Annes in his constituency.

In a written question, David Simpson MP asked the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport about his plans to take steps to utilise the success of the UK Open tournament to increase participation in golf. The Sports Minister responded emphasising her commitment to ensuring that golf has the opportunity to thrive, and noting the work of Associate Member the England Golf Partnership, to increase the numbers of people playing.

The following early day motions were tabled in the House of Commons:

- OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP (Congratulating the Royal & Ancient Golf Club on hosting, and wishing all well for the tournament) – Stephen Gethins MP
- MR GEORGE O’GRADY (Congratulating on his 40-year service to the European Tour) – Alex Salmond MP
- SOLHEIM CUP IN GLENEAGLES (Congratulating Gleneagles Hotel, Visit Scotland and the Scottish Government for bringing another huge international golf competition to the venue) – Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh MP
- RUSSELL KNOX AND THE WORLD GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP (Congratulating Russell on his success) – Drew Hendry MP
- THE OPEN AT PORTRUSH (Congratulating the R&A on it’s decision to stage The Open at Royal Portrush in 2019) – Karl M^cCartney MP

Public

The Chairman met with representatives from the following organisations, to discuss support for the Group:

- National Golf Clubs’ Advisory Association
- PING
- Mastercard
- The R&A
- Sky Sports
- England Golf
- British Golf Industry Association

The Honorary Secretary has followed up with all, and will liaise with Officers regarding any offers of support.

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The Chairman spoke with representatives from the following, to discuss the establishment of the Group:

- BBC Sport
- Golf Retailing Magazine

The website nationalclubgolfer.com featured an article debating what should be on the Group's agenda.

- Tackling the slide of golf participation. Looking at membership numbers is too narrow – need to find ways of getting casual golfers to invest in their local clubs with forward-thinking initiatives, making people feel part of a golf club without simply telling them they have to part with loads of money.
- Getting more junior players involved in golf.
- Returning tournament golf to England.
- Decipher the harmful stereotypes that surround golf. Women's golf should be an area of focus.

The Group put out press releases announcing its establishment, and The R&A becoming its first supporter. Press release announcing the establishment of the Group.

At the time of the meeting, the Group had 102 followers on Twitter. The Group's twitter name is @ParliamentGolf

Discussion: Issues

The issue of funding for the Group was discussed, and it was agreed that the Group needed funding for its general running, for events, and that the Group hopes to be in a position to be able to make donations to Golf charities.

It was agreed that the Group was keen to work together with the Parliamentary Golfing Society, and Vice-Chairman Lord Davies of Oldham invited any Members who might be interested to play for the Society. Fixtures will be circulated to Members of the Group once available.

The Chairman noted a number of Important topics that have been raised by stakeholders so far, including:

- Issues around practicalities of running a golf club (legislation, VAT, Community Amateur Sports Clubs (need for clubs to have certain membership numbers))
- Perception of the sport.
- Access to the sport for all for those with disabilities.
- Level of female participation. For example, much lower than that in Germany

The ongoing VAT issue in golf with respect to proprietary and private members golf course was raised.

There was discussion of the image of the golf, and agreement that the Group should support a positive message for the future of golf. Alternative forms of golf were also discussed.

The closure of municipal courses was also discussed as an area in which the Group might be able to offer assistance.

A number of positive campaigns, including This Girl Golfs, were discussed, as was the work of charities like the Golf Trust in bringing more people into golf through alternative forms of the game.

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Future activities

The Honorary Secretary is liaising with the R&A regarding an event on the House of Commons terrace on 21 March.

The House of Commons terrace is provisionally booked for 13 September, with a view to holding an event prior to the Ryder Cup.

The Chairman plans to write to all clubs in the UK, asking if they would like to join the Group.

The Chairman will meet with Scottish Golf Union, Golfing Union of Wales, and the Golfing Union of Ireland.

The Chairman is scheduled to meet with the PGA.

AOB

Future meetings are scheduled for 18 April; 4 July; and 24 October. The Group's Annual Dinner will be held on 22 November.

Main business concluded 1848.

Presentation: Jackie Howe, National Golf Clubs Advisory Association

The Chairman welcomed Jackie Howe from the National Golf Clubs Advisory Association.

Howe gave some background to the NGCAA, and explained that although the Association has both proprietary and private member's clubs, the focus of the presentation would be on private members clubs, and the changes in regulations related to Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs).

CASC status allows amateur sports clubs to benefit from a range of tax breaks. Howe outlined the recent changes to CASC regulations, explained that clubs have until 1st April this year to decide if they want to comply or not, and that many NGCAA Members are unsure about what to do.

Howe explained that the 2016 Budget will deal with the issue of the devolution of business rates, and outlined the implications for CASCs.

The impact of CASC membership clubs as competition against proprietary clubs was raised and discussed.

The issue of participation was raised, and the various options to enjoy golf were discussed. The advantaging of a certain type of club at the disadvantage of others, to the detriment of the sport of golf, was debated.

There was discussion of the taxation issue, and the point was made that this should not be confused with the CASC issue.

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking Howe, and all those Members and Associate Members in attendance.

Meeting closed at 1932

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