



All-Party Parliamentary Group for Golf

Ordinary Meeting Minutes

1800, 18 April 2016, Committee Room Eight

Meeting commenced 1804

Welcome

In the Chairman's absence, Laurence Robertson MP took the Chair and welcomed:

- The Group's first Honorary President, Dame Laura Davies.
- New Members: Baroness Nye of Lambeth; Rt. Hon. Lord Wallace of Tankerness; Mark Pritchard MP; Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh MP.
- Organisational Associate Members: Mytime Active; UK Golf Club Owners Association; PING Europe; Community Golf CIC; Waterton Park Asian Golf Society; Frilford Heath Golf Club; Yorkshire Union of Golf Clubs; Richmond Golf Club.
- Individual Associate Members: Gilian Kirkwood; Trevor Martin; Colin Harding; Susan McKenzie; Katherine Nathan; Gary Ward; Duncan Kelso; Glen Halsey; Michael Coffey; David Boyce; Eddie Bullock; Caron Morton; Richard Payne; John Bushell; Keith Mannering; Stephen Towers.

Apologies

Members: Karl McCartney; Jason McCartney MP; Stephen Gethins MP; Tom Pursglove MP

Organisational Associate Members: Donald Steel (Greenkeepers Training Committee); Jackie Howe (NGCAA); Jane Montgomery (FSPA); John Clark (PING); Phil Veasey (Mytime Active); Bob Williams (Golf Club Managers' Association).

Individual Associate Members (all, no affiliation): Richard Haygarth; John Roger Jones; Gary Ward; Gilian Kirkwood; Keith Mannering; Tim Seabrook; Colin Harding; Iain Carter; Peter Gwilliam; Ed Richardson; Stephen Towers.

Minutes of previous meeting

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

Matters arising

None

Correspondence

- The Chairman wrote to all English MPs with golf clubs in their constituencies, providing them with information on the Group, and inviting them to join. Thanks to England Golf for providing data. Requests have been made of the Scottish, Welsh and Irish Unions so that the exercise can be repeated for all Home Nations.
- The Chairman emailed all Members of both Houses and the Hon Secretary emailed all Associate Members, inviting them to a reception hosted by The R&A on the House of Commons Terrace.

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- Related, the Chairman wrote to The R&A's CEO, Martin Slumbers, thanking him and his colleagues for their part in the excellent event, held on 21 March.
- The Chairman wrote to the Chancellor regarding VAT issues in Golf, on which the Group had received various correspondence.
- The Chairman wrote to The Daily Telegraph, in response to an article "Wentworth members' fury at new fees offer".

Received

- From the Golf Foundation, providing information on their work.
- Email asking the Group address the proposed closure of a municipal golf course, Bradley Park, in Kirklees, West Yorkshire. **Action: Group investigating.**
- Email asking the Group address the proposed closure of Beckenham Park Place Golf club. **Action: Group investigating.**
- A number of invitations for the Group to hold events from various golf clubs.
- A piece enclosing research on the psychological elements of the "golf experience."
- Email asking the Group support reduced subscription fees for Sky TV for Golf clubs. Group sent to Sky.
- From Mind Fit Golf, describing their work. **Action: Chairman to meet.**
- From Philippa Whitford MP, offering information to Members attending The Open at Royal Troon in her constituency.
- A number of pieces expressing support for the Adjournment Debate on the Economic Value of Golf.
- A number of pieces related to promoting women's participation in golf.
- From the Ladies European Tour, providing information on their work. **Action: Hon Sec to organise for Tour to present.**
- From the Sports and Recreation Alliance, a briefing note on the CASC scheme. Hon Sec circulated to Members.
- A piece regarding alleged discrimination against disabled players.
- An invitation to England Golf's second Annual Conference and Awards. Hon Sec circulated to Members.

Group activity report

Parliamentary

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

At Northern Ireland Questions, David Simpson MP raised the anomaly in VAT across golf clubs.

At the same Questions, Laurence Robertson MP raised the awarding of the 2019 Open Championship to Royal Portrush, and asked that the Minister works closely with the Executive and the golf club to ensure that it is a success similar to that in Scotland last year, which brought £140 million into the economy. The Minister responded positively.

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In a Westminster Hall debate on regional airports, Philippa Whitford MP referenced the Open Championships being played in her constituency in 2016.

In two written questions, that Chairman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations his department had received on allowing a five percent rate of VAT to golf participants at proprietary golf facilities, and if his department had any plans to put this in place. The Financial Secretary to the Treasury responded that HM Treasury has received representations from the Association of Golf Course Owners, the Reduce VAT in Sport campaign group, the UK Golf Course Owners Association and England Golf, and that fees paid for participation in golf at proprietary facilities are subject to the standard rate of VAT.

At Business Questions, Andrew Stephenson MP raised the planned closing of the only municipal golf course in his constituency of Pendle.

In an Adjournment Debate on the Welsh bid for the 2026 Commonwealth Games, Craig Williams MP referenced the 2010 Ryder Cup, which generated a total economic impact for Wales of £82.4 million and had a direct economic impact of £53.9 million for south Wales. According to Golf Union Wales said that in the 12 months following the Ryder Cup, 40% more boys and 60% more girls under the age of 18 started to participate in the sport.

At Scotland Questions Tom Pursglove MP asked the Secretary of State to estimate the contribution of golf to the economy in Scotland in the last 12 months, and what steps are being taken to secure further investment in this very important industry for Scotland. The Secretary of state noted the huge contribution that the game makes to Scotland's economy, noted the sugar tax element of the Budget will see investment in schools in the wider UK, and the opportunity of the British Open at Royal Troon to showcase Scotland's golfing opportunities to the world.

An Adjournment Debate was held on the Economic Value of Golf. The Chairman applied for the debate and Stephen Gethins MP, Michael Tomlinson MP, Jason McCartney MP, Philippa Whitford MP, Andrew Stephenson MP and Richard Arklees MP also took part. The Sports Minister replied on behalf of the Government, who welcomed the establishment of the APPG, and wished it all success.

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

- US MASTERS GOLF (Congratulating Danny Willett on his victory) – Louise Haigh MP
- UNIVERSITY OF HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS GOLF TEAM (Congratulating the team on reaching the final of the British Universities Golf Championship) – Paul Monaghan MP

Public

The Group hosted a reception on the House of Commons Terrace in conjunction with The R&A, launching an independent report into the economic importance of golf in the UK produced by Sheffield Hallam University. The debate featured on BBC Radio Four's You and Your's show and included an interview with the Chairman.

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The Chairman met with:

- Representatives from the PGA.
- Representatives from the Golf Foundation.
- Members of the Parliamentary Golfing Society.
- Representatives from the UK Golf Club Owners Association.

The Chairman visited an event hosted by “Golf Days Out” for families living with dementia, at Lincoln Golf Centre.

The Honorary Secretary met with representatives from National Golf Month and London Sport to discuss the launch of National Golf Month on Speaker’s Green on 27 April.

The Honorary Secretary met with the CEO of the Golfing Union of Ireland.

The Honorary Secretary met with Tom Abbott from The Golf Channel.

The Group sent out press releases on

- its first Ordinary Meeting;
- Sky’s support for the Group
- the launch National Golf Month in Parliament;
- the launch of a report into the economic importance of golf in the UK;
- an EDM congratulating Danny Willett on his Masters victory.
- an Adjournment Debate applied for by the Chairman on the Economic Value of Golf; and
- Dame Laura Davies becoming the Group’s Honorary President.

At the time of the meeting, the Group had 219 followers on Twitter. The Group’s twitter name is @ParliamentGolf.

Upcoming Activities

The launch of National Golf Month is taking place on Speaker’s Green throughout the day on 27 April. There will be opportunities for Members to take part.

Vice-Chairman Jason McCartney MP is to host a reception on the Terrace for the England Golf Partnership, where England Golf, PGA and the Golf Foundation will be promoting the grassroots of the game and participation in golf. There will be opportunity for members of APPG to attend.

Vice-Chairman Stephen Gethins MP is due to meet with the CEO of the Scottish Golf Union.

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

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VAT

As the Group has received a lot of correspondence on issues surrounding VAT, and taken some action, the Group will investigate what steps it can take and report back at the next meeting. **Action: Honorary Secretary to investigate what steps the Group can take.**

AOB

There being no other business, the Chairman brought the main business of the meeting to a close.

Main business concluded 1828.

Presentation: Calum Slowther, European Tour

The Chairman welcomed Calum Slowther and Fred Lindgren from the European Tour.

Slowther opened by thanking the Group for its invitation to the European Tour. He noted the Tour thinks that the Group is good for the sport, and looks forward to working with it closely in the future. There is a significant amount of change taking place at the European Tour at present, and a lot of the work being done resonates with Group's objectives.

Slowther discussed different opportunities to participate in golf in the UK, particularly the different formats to engage which other sports do not necessarily have. There was also discussion of increasing the frequency participation, by shifting participants from fringe engagement to regular participation. Participation is critical to the European Tour, as research has shown that participation and engagement in golf are interlinked in a way unlike any other sport.

Opportunities to maximise the accessibility of the elite game were discussed. Suggestions include creating faster action to boost the fan base, and providing more opportunities for players to increase fandom.

Slowther noted that the Tour sees its role as inspiring the population by showcasing game in best possible light. A short video was shown, to illustrate the European Tour's attempts to do this.

Opening to questions, the issue over membership at Wentworth, where the Tour is based, is one for the owners and shareholders of the club.

Relations with media and participation are good, and the Tour is looking at various platforms through which it can promote the game.

On grassroots participation, it was noted stakeholders in the sport are getting better at working together, and that the Group could provide a forum to facilitate links.

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On what the Tour can do to promote faster play, it was noted this is often a barrier to participation. The Tour are looking at different formats of the game, and there is a lot that can be done on to promote a quicker, more exciting game, which is critical to driving participation.

The issue of reducing VAT for watching sport and the impact of this on participation was raised.

Since the appointment of new CEO, Keith Pelley, participation has been high on the Tour's agenda. This has to be part of the agenda for a long time, and the Tour are now clearer on how can address it and spend resources to do as much as possible to support.

It was noted that the Group would be launching National Golf Month the following week, with the hope that this initiative would support initiatives to increase participation.

On engagement between players and fans, the example of Eddie Pepperell, who has given money back to his club to use for junior participation, was raised.

The Tour is working closely with other main golf unions to plan to make sure that golf is more easily accessible to view on television.

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking Slowther and Lindgren, and all those in attendance.

Meeting closed at 1928

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