



# All-Party Parliamentary Group for Golf

## Ordinary Meeting Minutes

1800, 4 July 2016, Committee Room Nineteen

Meeting commenced 1801

### In Attendance

**Members:** Stephen Gethins MP (in the Chair); Baroness Nye of Lambeth

**Organisational Associate Members:** Nick Pink, Rod Findlay (England Golf); Simon Kidd, Richard Shaw (Community Golf); John Gerrie (The R&A); Sandy Jones, Robert Maxfield; Kyle Phillpots; Jonathan Wright (The PGA); Neil Sjoburg, Ron Wyatt, Gaye Sjoburg (Association of Golf Club Owners); Andy Lloyd-Skinner, Richard Haygarth (UK Golf Club Owners Association); Nigel Freemantle (BGIA); Alistair Booth (Frilford Heath Golf Club); Brendon Pyle (Golf Foundation); Roger Moreland (England Golf Partnership); Rob Drinkwater, Jason Stanton (MyTime Active)

**Individual Associate Members (all, no affiliation):** John Bushell; Richard Payne; Peter Gwilliam; Mark Timlett; Nick Proctor; Adam Price; Robert Spurrier; Katherine Nathan; Tom Abbott; Eddie Bullock; Barry McGregor; Carl Dalby; Neville Gaunt

**Honorary Secretary:** Mark Ramsdale; Jack Baker

### Welcome

In Karl M<sup>c</sup>Cartney's absence, Stephen Gethins MP took the Chair.

The Chairman welcomed:

- New Members: Rt. Hon. Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale; Mark Menzies MP; Roger Godsiff MP; Baroness Barker; John Mann MP; Julian Knight MP; Sir Peter Bottomley MP; Baroness Heyhoe-Flint; Lord Maxton; John McNally MP; Lord Colwyn; Rt. Hon. Andrew Tyrie MP; Rt. Hon. Cheryl Gillian MP; Oliver Colville MP; Neil Gray MP; Chris Evans MP; Gavin Newlands MP; Craig Williams MP; Scott Mann MP; Nigel Huddleston MP; James Heappey MP; Mary Robinson MP; Alan Brown MP; Craig Tracey MP; Lord Moynihan.
- Organisational Associate Members: Golf Tourism England; Sunningdale Golf Club; Sport Industry Research Centre, Sheffield Hallam University; Sports Publications; The PGA; British Golf Industry Association; The Golf Foundation; British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association.
- Individual Associate Members: Andrew Cooke; Dennis Taylor MBE; Barry McGregor; Will Shucksmith; Dale Concannon; Nick Lunn; James Edwards; Paul Gilbert; Nicholas Proctor; Paul Miller; Matthew Bridge; Caroline Hardy-Evans; Rob Spurrier; Neville Gaunt; Tom Abbott; Tony Westwood.

### Apologies

**Members:** Karl M<sup>c</sup>Cartney MP; Lord Moynihan; Alan Brown MP; Scott Mann MP; Laurence Robertson MP; Rt. Hon. Cheryl Gillian; Eleanor Laing MP

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**Organisational Associate Members:** Paul Harrison (Sports Industry Research Centre, Sheffield Hallam University); Jane Montgomery (FSPA); Jasbir Athwal (Waterton Park Asian Golf Society); Stephen Toon (Sunningdale Golf Club); Maureen Roberts (The PGA); Bob Williams (GCMA); John Clark (PING); Mandy Jarvis (Community Golf); Vivien Saunders (Association of Golf Course Owners)

**Individual Associate Members (all, no affiliation):** Keith Mannering; Gary Ward; Gilian Kirkwood; John Roger Jones; Glen Halsey; Duncan Kelso; Paul Miller; Donald Steel

### Minutes of previous meeting

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

### Matters arising

- The Honorary Secretary is organising a visit to Beckenham Place Park golf course and will circulate information to Members. The course is threatened with closure.
- The Honorary Secretary will organise a stand at the forthcoming Parliamentary Sports Fair on 13 September.

### Correspondence

#### Sent

- The Chairman wrote to the Prime Minister, inviting him to the launch of National Golf Month on Speaker's Green.
- The Chairman sent a note of thanks to all those Members who attended the launch.
- The Chairman wrote to the European Tour, thanking them for their presentation to the Group.
- The Honorary Secretary sent invitations to all Members and Associate Members to the England Golf Partnership reception on the House of Commons terrace.
- The Chairman wrote to the Mayor of Lewisham, Leader of Lewisham Council and Chief Executive of Lewisham Council regarding the proposed closure of Beckenham Place Park golf course.
- The Chairman wrote to the Chief Executive of Kirklees Council regarding speculation over the future of Bradley Park Golf Course.
- The Honorary Secretary circulated invitations to Members to the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Golf Day.

#### Received

- A note from the UK Golf Course Owners Association on their efforts to resolve the VAT distortion issue in golf.
- From Martin Slumbers, Chief Executive of The R&A, congratulating the Group on the adjournment debate held on the economic importance of golf to the UK economy.
- From the office of Alan Brown MP, regarding the use of recycled golf clubs.
- From Red Tee Breaks, briefing on their efforts to drive female participation in golf.

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- From Andrew Bingham MP, regarding support for his charity golf challenge. **Action: Honorary Secretary put in touch with England Golf.**
- A number of pieces regarding the Group's position on the news that Muirfield had decided to not allow women members. No Officers were available to comment. It was noted that a second vote is taking place.
- From the Mayor of Lewisham, in response to a letter from the Chairman, justifying the Council's position on the proposed closure of Beckenham Place Park golf course. **Action: Honorary Secretary organising Group visit to the course.**
- A number of pieces following the Group's press release on correspondence regarding Beckenham Place Park, detailing issues with the Council's consultation process and the proposed closure of the course. **Action: Group is investigating.**
- From Golf in Society, providing an update on their work.
- A briefing on how the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union may affect the VAT issue in golf from the Association of Golf Course Owners.
- A briefing from Front Nine Network on their work to connect young, like-minded people working in the golf industry.
- From representatives of the campaign to keep Bradley Park golf course open, thanking the Group for their support.
- From medi8 Ltd, a specialist golf marketing agency, offering support for the Group.
- From the office of Sir David Amess MP, regarding a charity golf in his constituency. **Action: Honorary Secretary to circulate information to Members.**

## Group activity report

### Parliamentary

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

At Northern Ireland Questions, the Minister noted that the Open Championship will be held in Portrush in 2019.

In an oral question to the Secretary of State for Transport on regional airports, Philippa Whitford MP referenced inward tourism for golf in her constituency.

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

At questions to the Minister for Women and Equalities, Tom Pursglove MP raised The R&A's ban on Muirfield golf club from hosting the open championship in light of the club's decision not to admit women as members.

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

- LADIES NATIONS INVITATIONAL GOLF TOURNAMENT (Congratulating the Scottish team for its victory in the tournament) – Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh MP

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- MUIRFIELD GOLF CLUB DECISION TO EXCLUDE WOMEN MEMBERS (Condemning the decision by the club to continue to exclude women from full membership) – George Kerevan MP

### Public

The Group hosted a reception on the House of Commons Terrace in conjunction with the England Golf Partnership, promoting the grassroots of the game and participation in golf.

The Group hosted the launch of National Golf Month on Speaker's Green.

The Chairman met with representatives from MindFit Golf.

The Group sent out press releases on

- The European Tour's presentation to the Group;
- the launch of National Golf Month in Parliament;
- England Golf's support for the Group;
- Sports Publication's support for the Group;
- The PGA's support for the Group;
- the England Golf Partnership reception hosted on the House of Commons terrace;
- the Group's correspondence with Lewisham Council regarding Beckenham Place Park Golf Course.

At the time of the meeting, the Group had 362 followers on Twitter. The Group's twitter name is @ParliamentGolf.

### **Upcoming Activities**

The Honorary Secretary noted that Members of the Group were welcome to join the Chairman in visiting Beckenham Place Park golf course on 19 July.

It was noted that an AGM would be scheduled prior to summer recess.

The Group's final ordinary meeting of the year will be held on 24 October. The Group's Annual Dinner will be held on 22 November.

### **VAT**

At the last Group meeting, the Group stated that it would investigate what steps it could take.

The Group asked the House of Commons Library for a briefing on the issue. After consulting this briefing, the Chairman wrote to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, recommending that they call the relevant Treasury Minister to give evidence.

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It was agreed that the Honorary Secretary would circulate a note following conclusion of discussions between UKGCOA / England Golf and HMT.

### AOB

The Chairman noted that the Scottish Open would be taking place at Castle Stuart over the weekend.

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

Main business concluded 1819.

### Presentation: Nick Pink and Rod Findlay, England Golf

The Chairman welcomed Nick Pink and Rod Findlay from England Golf, who thanked the Group for its invitation.

Pink outlined the work of England Golf, and welcomed the establishment of the Group, particularly as a forum for bringing people in the sport together.

A short video was shown from the recent Brabazon trophy event.

Pink discussed England Golf's current strategy, which has been running for nearly three years, and had raised some important findings. Golf in England is the fifth largest participation sport, and Pink noted that the game is in good health. There has been a significant increase in golf clubs promoting female initiatives, encouraging people into the game, and also a stabilisation in club membership.

Once a week participation is down, though, and England Golf are trying to understand how golf facilities can offer something different, and support clubs to become stronger and better going forward.

Pink discussed England Golf's network of partners, and the work being done with these partners to encourage people to get into the game. He commented that there are lots of people, especially those in the room, who are very passionate about golf, and hoped that all can continue to work together for the good of the game.

Findlay outlined the impact of the new DCMS strategy on England Golf. The organisation is in a consultation phase, as it looks to develop a new strategy. There will be a focus on the participant, and the strategy will stress the partnerships which England Golf are engaged in. England Golf's aim is to get more people playing more often, but the strategy will also focus on being more commercial, and also providing variety of opportunity, catering for casual players as well as those at the top level.

Findlay closed by noting that the consultation was ongoing, and that comments were welcome.

Opening to questions, the feedback on increased female participation emphasises the importance of a fun, friendly environment. The use of ambassadors, and experience of coaches is important, and England Golf are

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scaling up initiatives that work well. Different formats of the game are also useful, and England Golf are working closely with a number of partners to look at what constitutes a good environment for junior golfers.

On different formats of the game, such as 9-hole golf, adventure golf, and pitch and putt, these have led to encouraging increases in participation. Thanks to the Olympic legacy, golf is also now delivered to 5000 schools.

Asked about the distortion between membership and proprietary clubs, Pink and Findlay noted that England Golf tend to take a broader view, and whole sport plan funding does not differentiate, although National Lottery does.

On assistance for golf clubs, England Golf are working collaboratively with clubs to help identify where demand may be, and assist them, in finding potential participants and customers.

The VAT distortion issue was raised, and the Chairman noted what the Group had done on this.

England Golf work with the PGA on coach education and improving training capabilities. A lot of coaching is done through volunteer coaches, and there has been a focus on developing these for many years by the PGA.

The Chairman noted that the PGA would be presenting to the Group at a future meeting.

Asked how the Group can help the sport, Pink and Findlay stated their hopes that it could encourage Parliamentarians to recognise the role that golf plays to the economy and to health, and help provide advocacy and support around public policy.

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking Pink and Findlay, and all those in attendance.

**Meeting closed at 1912**

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