

**Notes from the meeting of the East Regional Forum held in  
Turnhouse Golf Club on Tuesday 2 April 2019**

<p><u>Present</u></p>		<p>John Allan (JA), Lorna Bennett (LB), Gordon Campbell (GC), Claire Capocci (CC), Gerard Flannigan (GF), David Gemmell (DG), Bernadette Giefer (BG), Hugh Hunter (HH), Gail Joughin (GJ), Patricia Masterton (PM), Chic Nash (CN), Jenni Ray (JR), Matt Whiteford (MW)</p>
<p><u>In attendance</u></p>		<p>Brendan Dick (BD), Andrew McKinlay (AM), Lesley Nicholson (LN), Karin Sharp (KS),</p>
<p><u>Welcome &amp; Introductions</u></p>	<p>1</p>	<p>BD welcomed everyone and advised he would be acting as Chair for this meeting. A round table introduction followed. Apologies were noted from Ross Fenwick &amp; Allan Shaw.</p>
<p><u>Outputs from previous meeting</u></p>	<p>2</p>	<p>An amendment to the key themes document under 3.2 regarding membership fees that had increased 3 times the rate of inflation was noted – the previous notes will be updated to correctly reflect the statement made by HH.</p>
<p><u>Core Discussion Items</u></p>		
<p><u>Communication</u></p>	<p>3.1</p>	<p>AM provided a brief summary from SG perspective:  New website is underway, will be mobile friendly, slicker and easier to navigate. Is a real opportunity to cleanse and ensure information is easy to find.  New club platform – interest has been significantly higher than anticipated. Within the platform &amp; member app piece there will be opportunity for enhanced communication from clubs to members and between members in a whats app style approach. Team – we now have 2 new staff members appointed into roles of Marketing Manager and Communications Manager respectively. An internal comms plan has been drafted and currently going through a review process but key to the plan is regular dialogue with our members.  In summary we have made progress with our approach to communication but still a way to go.</p> <p>TM enquired about the timeline for the website refresh? There no timeline confirmed as yet but hoping that progress will be seen before the end of 2019.</p> <p>CN advised that whilst he felt communication from SG was improving, what were SG doing to encourage more 2 way communication? AM advised that with club engagement with RCDO team, Forums, GM, Conference, AGM there were many opportunities for members to engage face to face, as well as written or telephone contact that we receive.</p>

<p><u>Club Support</u></p>	<p>CN also asked about communication in relation to WHS. AM advised that training from R&amp;A to our team was taking place in middle of April, thereafter it is planned to roll out awareness sessions for clubs through May and June, with additional resource and content being provided through remainder of 2019 A date for implementation of WHS has not yet been agreed, however it highly unlikely this will be early in 2020 and could well be towards the end of the season next year. As the plans and detail of WHS are finalised, we will ensure that clubs are communicated with but at this time there remain many parts of the new proposal which are yet to be confirmed.</p> <p>HH suggested that introducing a structure or regularity to our communication to clubs on the same day of each month might help with engagement. Additionally it was suggested that regular topics be covered, with a focus on the amateur game and in particular publicise achievements within the game.</p> <p>BG suggested that making the website content more relevant and easily located, could reduce reliance on newsletter as a key message source.</p> <p>MW suggested that ability to at a glance see most recent updates to website might be helpful to users. In addition to encourage more active links to increase integration of external information to cut down on need for updating information in multiple source locations should also be considered.</p> <p>3.2 AM summary from SG perspective: As advised at conference, we have realigned the Development Team with 6 central roles and 7 regional roles now supporting our service delivery. Our spend on development activity continues to be the highest area of spend within the business at c40%. The Annual Review document shared at AGM and available on website, has more detail on the team changes and also contains some good case studies for clubs to consider. Key priorities for the SG team are increased visibility and more focused support for clubs through improved/refreshed resource material.</p> <p>LN updated on the Solheim Ambassador programme which now has c118 individuals signed up against a target of 150 clubs. The Women In Golf Charter has seen slower uptake with around 26 clubs committed thus far – we looking at pulling together a case study to demonstrate to clubs some of the commitments the early adopters have made. The club requires to make a minimum of 3 commitments within the charter and many are using this to link to existing Get into Golf initiatives to relaunch or refresh activity. AM also advised that R&amp;A are looking to push this initiative, as they see it as the biggest opportunity in the sport to influence cultural change, make golf more welcoming and inclusive. Golf Sixes League to run in 2019 with 67 clubs</p>
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<p><u>Events</u></p>	<p>engaged across 16 Leagues. Junior Forums are ongoing across the country, with high levels of engagement and some very good output coming from these sessions that in time will help shape a new junior framework. Additional areas of support in Get into Golf/Participation, Business Planning, Governance, Buying Group and Xact services for Health &amp; Safety and HR.</p> <p>PM enquired about Women’s Charter information as it wasn’t something that she had been aware of through her own club. KS will send a link out with minutes.</p> <p>CN mentioned the importance of volunteer engagement being key to delivering any programmes or projects within clubs. Also looking at Balbirnie at introducing gender neutral tees and if more clubs look to adopt that option can course rating team support that demand? This is something we very conscious of and will continue to monitor and seek solutions to ensure this can be done as effectively as possible for clubs.</p> <p>3.3 AMc provided a brief update: Area &amp; County meeting held at end of January has now been summarised and we currently awaiting feedback particularly on the events piece from Areas &amp; Counties. Boys Open Championship &amp; Girls Open Championship take place next week, with both events oversubscribed for entries. Both have entries from 14 countries, with the boys ballot falling around 3.6 and girls at 5.5 which is the lowest ever for the girls field.</p> <p>HH expressed concern at lack of Scottish girls in the field. LB advised this had long been the case, with handicaps of European girls often proving lower than Scottish girls but not evident in terms of playing ability. It was suggested that the adoption of WHS might even things up on this front.</p> <p>CN noted his concern at the lack of names on the volunteer list circulated after last round of forums and asked what more could be done to recruit additional support for events. KS advised that from a Rules panel perspective, we have sufficient cover in the current year with more focus on local attendance. With introduction of new rules for 2019 we have undertaken training at L2 for all those on rules panel and will look to move forward to L3 with those who are keen to progress in coming years. In addition we will later in 2019 or early 2020 look at provision of further L2 training at a local level that will be targeted at Area and County officials to attend.</p> <p>GC expressed concern that the events team don’t value the Area Team Championship events and that proposal to bring the men’s and boy’s events together is not welcomed. JA also supported that view and indicated that running concurrently meant that team officials could not support both teams if they were playing at same time.</p>
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<p><u>Volunteers</u></p>	<p>3.4</p>	<p>GC also raised the position of accommodation, requesting that SG take responsibility for booking of rooms for those who get through to match play stages.</p> <p>The format of the team events is out for consultation and once all feedback has been ingathered, the consensus view will be shared back to Areas and Counties with proposals for implementation based on the outcomes determined. KS advised that the Events team are focusing on the delivering of the tournament not undertaking accommodation booking as previous experiences have shown that we never suit all the teams. LB advised that the Counties take care of accommodation themselves and manage that effectively themselves without requiring input from SG. That view was confirmed by the other county officials present.</p> <p>KS provided a brief update: SG have recruited a new post which will provide support for Safeguarding, Volunteer Management and Equality work. A key piece that will be looked at is the introduction of a Volunteer Strategy that provides a consistent framework for the volunteers that support SG across categories such as rules, course rating, coaching, team captains and more.</p> <p>CN expressed concern at lack of new volunteers at club level, committee roles are not considered attractive and particularly seem to struggle with attracting junior convenors that have the energy and time to commit to regularly supporting in the club. LN acknowledged this challenge is felt by many clubs and it an area in which the RCDO team can support, with defining role descriptions, sub-committee structures that share the workload and considering succession planning as a key part of the clubs plans. GC suggested that anyone taking on a role with a junior section needs to be social media savvy to engage with the young members. Falkirk Tryst are very good at this and perhaps they are a club where information could be captured and shared?</p> <p>LN advised that some clubs were using TeamApp to good levels of success within sections of clubs.</p> <p>HH asked about the Youth Panel and when output from their sessions will be shared? AM advised they have as yet only had an introductory session and their next meeting is scheduled later in April, following which updates will be prepared. LN advised that some of the youth panel members have actively participated in recent junior forum events, making a strong and valued contribution.</p> <p>CN then raised governance review that has been previously mentioned in other Forums. Within Fife Golfing Association they are undertaking a constitutional review and they would encourage others to do the same. In addition, he suggested that a wider review of SG Articles and Regulations should potentially be considered by the Board. AM encouraged Areas &amp; Counties</p>
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to seek support from SG should they be looking to undertake any governance reviews and confirmed that review of Articles & Regulations remains on the radar for the Executive and Board.

The update circulated was an extract from recent report to Board. A new reporting system is being set-up and moving forward it would be our intention to provide a more dashboard style reporting format to add strategic context and measurement against targets to be displayed.

IT platform has had higher level of interest than anticipated. A project steering group has been formed with representatives from executive and Board overseeing the project. Currently in testing phase with 3 or 4 clubs, with an aspiration to roll out to 100 clubs by end of year. Communication of progress and understanding of timelines is critical to ensuring clubs remain engaged during the roll out of this platform, we have appointed 2 project managers who will be the key liaison with the clubs to gather information and support transition in due course. Worth remembering that the investment in the platform equates to less than 5% of turnover.

Other key meetings since the report was issued, was with European Golf Association on the World Handicapping System – still some aspects that are to be finalised and it our belief that it will be late 2020 before the changes are implemented. Key focus for SG will be supporting and delivering education to clubs to ensure readiness for switchover.

R&A Forum where big focus of messaging was on the Women in Golf Charter.

Performance Pathway review is taking shape and we hope to share some diagrammatic information in the near future.

Membership Returns, continue to be a challenge with clubs not providing swift or accurate data. Worrying trend of junior boy membership in last 10 years which has dropped by nearly 50%.

Adult membership in current year is down by 3.2% which is higher than was budgeted. HH enquired as to why membership information was not shared? KS advised that the information was shared with Area & County contacts in January.

CN asked if the performance pathway review would also incorporate costings? It was advised that would be part of the ongoing work and certainly unlikely to be included in the early stages.

GC asked about developments with the nomadic golfer plans? AM advised that our plans remain unchanged, focus is currently on getting the VMS platform functional and roll out commenced before turning attention to the non-member offering via the APP. Earliest is this will be late 2019 or potentially early 2020 but we remain committed to this, as it our firm belief that if SG don't take the lead, a commercial operator will come in with an offering that takes the income out of the clubs.

MW asked if there was research on the non-member requirements that would be used to support the offerings

<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p>	<p>5</p>	<p>made? AM advised that England Golf had recently completed research in this space and the results should be published soon but in addition we would potentially look to augment with more local focused research.</p> <p>GC – are there any plans to reintroduce Life Membership? Not immediately but would look to review and determine potential demand.</p> <p>HH – thinks there should be more focus on the amateur game in our messaging. Additionally, he suggested that the Charitable Trust be changed to a “friends of Scottish Golf” whereby there might be potential to charge a membership fee or to attract donations, legacies for development of the game. CN – advised Ramblers Association operate a similar “friends of” which operates successfully.</p> <p>JA – asked if there were any plans to sell SGL branded merchandise? Again this is an area we have considered but it not a current priority for us. We will review further with ongoing discussions with clothing suppliers for 2020.</p> <p>HH – advised of his disappointment that SG were not represented at the Scottish Golf show. AM advised we had been approached late in the day by PSP but we felt versus the cost to take a space the return on our attendance would not be high enough at this time. We have intimated our potential interest in attending next year when our non-member offer should be more developed and this would provide an ideal platform on which to increase awareness and engagement.</p> <p>KS suggested that as we now have a year of these Forums completed that we take the opportunity to review the format and structure via a short feedback survey. KS will pull something together and circulate to participants to help shape the next set of meetings.</p>
<p><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></p>	<p>6</p>	<p>Next dates for Regional Forums will be around June 2019 and a doodle poll will follow for potential dates.</p>