

**Notes from the meeting of the North Regional Forum held in
Pitlochry Golf Club on Thursday 7 November 2019**

<p><u>Present</u></p>		<p>Peter Abbott (PA), Heather Bantick (HB), Joyce Burnett (JB), Alan Cargill (AC), Neil Hampton (NH),</p>
<p><u>In attendance</u></p>		<p>Brendan Dick (BD), Iain Forsyth (IF), David Kernohan (DK), Andrew McKinlay (AMc), Karin Sharp (KS),</p>
<p><u>Welcome & 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 Alan Reid.</p>
<p><u>Update from Scottish Golf (WHS and VMS)</u></p>	<p>2</p>	<p>Presentation from DK, with round table discussion and questions. SG will be providing support, training, resources around WHS to enable clubs to educate their members on the changes coming in Handicapping in 2020. SG will be ready with the appropriate software and new CDH by April 2020 that will be used to deliver WHS calculations and as previously outlined in club communications we will provide all clubs with hardware that will facilitate the sending of scores for handicap purposes to the SG CDH. More details will be shared during 2020 on that process. An update on where we are with VMS was also provided, with approx. 120 clubs currently engaged at some stage, 1 close to full utilization, another 20 or so parallel testing and remainder at data migration stage. From SG perspective a frustration is the myths and misconceptions that are being portrayed amongst a number of our clubs and alternative providers in this space. Request was made by SG that clubs give us the opportunity to demo the platform to them and then it for them to make up their own minds as to whether it right for them. The clubs that are in the parallel testing stage have been providing feedback on functionality and making suggestions for improvement and the platform has seen some considerable change in the last few months as a result. There remains no compulsory usage of VMS but we hope that clubs will see it as a fantastic system that can deliver more than current providers and will chose to switch, however there is no pressure to do so. It was also clarified that the system will remain free of charge for clubs, no annual fee will be charged and it is considered by SG that this is a service option in return for affiliation payment.</p>
<p><u>Core Discussion Items</u></p>	<p>3</p>	<p>AM provided general additional updates: Delighted to have announced new partnership with Forev, providing opportunity for Golf Clubs to have electric charging points installed at Clubs and would encourage everyone to look a look at this.</p>

<p><u>Communication</u></p>	<p>3.1</p>	<p>As well as WHS and VMS being focal points for SG in 2020, participation is the other key theme. Women & Girls activity using Solheim Cup success as a springboard will see additional regional hubs being promoted. The Club Ambassador scheme which was set up for Solheim will be continued with AIG Women's Open being held at Royal Troon in 2020 it is hoped this can be another professional event that could be used to enthuse and engage female golfers to support.</p> <p>Work continues on the development of a new junior framework with a Spring launch planned – it is likely that this programme will be a feature that we present at the next round of Forum sessions.</p> <p>AM reported that SG continue to circulate regular Club & Golfer Bulletins to the respective distribution lists but challenge remains in getting these seen by a wider audience. Often misinformation is spread through uncertainty both within the membership, media and by third party views, if in doubt we would encourage all members to speak to us for clarification rather than assume a position.</p> <p>JB enquired about potential to have more material on YouTube which clubs could use on their TV screens in the clubs, allowing members to see more messaging coming from SG at a National level that shows local relevance. Too often clubs come up against keyboard warriors from within the membership on their own posts and perhaps seeing the governing body more overt in the clubhouses would help position activities that are working in other parts of the country or indeed let members see that others are facing similar challenges.</p> <p>It was agreed by all present that from a club perspective the member communication piece is critical and can also be very challenging for clubs to get right or to make an impact.</p>
<p><u>Club Support</u></p>	<p>3.2</p>	<p>With VMS & WHS already covered which are clearly significant areas in which SG will support clubs over the next few years, AM advised that other support services are being reviewed. We recognize that as an organisation we have perhaps tried to offer too many services and as a result of the quality of delivery success has been impacted or difficult to evaluate. We are looking to provide more specific support in core areas, with more flexibility of delivery through central routes or online portals to meet modern day requirements.</p> <p>Feedback on RCDO for North Region was positive, with good visibility and engagement with local clubs and the Area.</p>
<p><u>Volunteers</u></p>	<p>3.3</p>	<p>KS advised that a Volunteer Strategy was being worked on, we have been looking at other sports, voluntary sector support and initiatives and will be looking at launching something in 2 phases through 2020. Phase 1 will be for those volunteers that support directly SG (eg Referees, Course Raters, Coaches) and</p>

<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p>	<p>4</p>	<p>Phase 2 will be aimed towards clubs, to provide guidance around recruitment and retention of volunteers. We are also looking at a Spring 2020 launch of a new learning platform that will be aimed at providing peer to peer communities, for sharing of knowledge, best practice, ideas and support amongst volunteers of different experience across critical roles in golf. A pilot phase is anticipated in early 2020, with an aim to launch more widely when season underway. The benefits of peer to peer support were discussed and there was interest from all participants in contributing feedback through the pilot stage. JB welcomed the initiatives proposed and asked if recognition and reward for volunteers was being considered. KS acknowledged this was forming part of the strategy. PA advised it is becoming more difficult to attract volunteers at District level, which is also evident in many clubs often meaning that the same people end up recycling in roles. HB reported that Abernethy are fortunate to have a very active senior section, that play regular competition all from the red tees and whom give back a lot to the club. A discussion on support from Club Managers to those smaller clubs who operate without a Manager was held and was determined that HIVE had the potential to provide some additional support to clubs or individuals in that direction on an informal basis.</p> <p>NH asked about the announcement of new holiday company partner and in particular the timing of this in Scottish Golf Tourism Week when the company were English, as this has generated negative comment for those who were onsite at Fairmont in SGTW. IF explained that the commercial sponsorship arena was extremely challenging and whilst acknowledged the timing was not great, reality is that this company approach us and was the only offer on the table. NH enquired about the additional information requested as part of the affiliation return for this year, what was purpose? KS explained the rationale for additional information was to try and find a simple way to ingather some key figures that SG are regularly asked for by Scottish Government, Sportscotland and other potential grant agencies, as well as being a useful benchmark to health check the membership and look at potential for provision of other services that SG might look to consider in the future. NH reported that there had been discussion amongst some clubs about the poor communication on this matter and that perhaps asking for headline figures versus annual accounts would have resulted in better co-operation. This feedback was noted and as the information gathering is ongoing it is not yet known how successful the approach has been. IF updated the group that a new brewery sponsor will shortly be announced and that company are worldwide brands, not Scottish.</p>
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<p><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></p>	<p>5</p>	<p>DK & IF undertook to look at setting up some more local groups or demonstration forums to let more clubs see progress that has been made with VMS.</p> <p>HB asked that after the Junior Framework has been launched, that SG give consideration to a Senior Framework that encourages over 50's to get into golf – a late beginners or such like programme that clubs could embrace. We are starting to hear more about the health & wellbeing benefits of golf both physically and mentally and perhaps this is something that we should look to provide more structure to.</p> <p>Next meeting dates will be looked at for March/April via usual Doodle poll approach in early 2020.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 8.33pm with a vote of thanks to the Chair and all present for their contributions.</p>
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