

**Notes from the meeting of the West Regional Forum held in  
Haggs Castle Golf Club on Monday 25th November 2019**

<p><u>Present</u></p>		<p>Stephen Anthony (SA), Gordon Campbell (GC), Rob Crusher (RC), Tom Cummings (TC), Barbara Cunningham (BC), Frank Gloag (FG), Alasdair Malcolm (AMa), Derek McGlynn (DM), Ann Scott (AS), Vic Skelton (VS), Andrew Smith (ASm), Ann Wallace (AW)</p>
<p><u>In attendance</u></p>		<p>Stewart Darling (SD), Iain Forsyth (IF), David Kernohan (DK), Karin Sharp (KS)</p>
<p><u>Welcome &amp; Introductions</u></p>	<p>1</p>	<p>SD welcomed everyone and advised he would be acting as Chair for this meeting. A round table introduction followed.</p>
<p><u>Update from Scottish Golf (WHS and VMS)</u></p>	<p>2</p>	<p>Update from DK, with round table discussion and questions. SG will provide continuing 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.</p> <p>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>Robust discussion across both topics followed and summarised:-</p> <p>Workload/Double Entry/Link to other Software – concern raised about impact of WHS approach from SG that would increase workload for clubs not using VMS. DK/IF advised that dual entry is not anticipated and that discussion had taken place with 3 of</p>

<p><u>Core Discussion Items</u></p>	<p>the ISV's earlier in day to open discussion in terms of engagement on WHS. Until we have sight of the proposed licence for WHS there is little that can be determined but dialogue has commenced with ISV's and we will look to continue that when more information is known. As soon as a definitive position is determined we will communicate to clubs.</p> <p>Communication approach, timescale and education delivery linked to WHS. DK acknowledged that rumors, myth, misconception and miscommunication had been rife which hasn't helped SG and our request is that clubs ask us if they have any questions or concerns rather than rely on speculation or external sources for information. Timescale for WHS readiness is April 2020, our new CDH will be built and ready, clubs using VMS there members will see current CONGU handicap and WHS handicap on their APP. Our timescales are well ahead of the other home nations, whom we understand will not have sight of their CDH offering from dotgolf until July 2020.</p> <p>Migration to VMS/support functionality/capability of OCS? DK advised that on average it takes about 4 hours support time for SG to migrate the data for a 400 member club onto VMS. We have a team that support clubs with training, understanding of platform &amp; technical support at present (includes weekend coverage). The team will be scaled to ensure that service support levels remain strong as volume of clubs utilizing the platform increases. OCS are an existing ISV provider, who have significant experience and pedigree in tournament software with many professional tours using their systems.</p> <p>Functionality of platform is key, especially EPOS. DK advised that a bespoke EPOS system is currently being developed and we will have this option available for VMS users by April 2020.</p> <p>Why are SG building separate CDH to other Home Unions? As we were already in development of our platform which had handicapping and tournament software as a key component, it made more financial sense for SG to incorporate into VMS rather than invest further in a separate platform at additional expense. Current position sees the Home Unions using different CDH providers which all have capability of sending/receiving cross border scores and our planned approach will be no different.</p> <p>WHS Timeline/Communication Plan/Education/Slope Ratings/Scores for handicap/field impact for national events. DK advised that additional education, communication and support will be offered throughout 2020. Scotland in a good place from course rating perspective, with slope ratings held for most clubs (these can be accessed through request to</p>
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handicapping team at SG now). WHS will see removal of minimum requirement for 3 scores per playing season. Handicap limits & field entry it is anticipated that playing field will be levelled post WHS as calculation will be consistent moving forward, where currently the average system perhaps does give overseas players an advantage over those using the incremental system of CONGU.

#### Pay Per Play Membership.

It was agreed there is a lot of uncertainty and lack of understanding in the golfing community about SG plans, with speculation filling the gaps at present. Many clubs believe fees will go to SG for all bookings and that they will be forced to allow this category of golfer into club competitions, thus making it likely that some current club members will defect to this membership.

IF advised that this membership category is not yet fully defined, won't be launched until late 2020 at earliest and that whilst the headline price of £4.99 is agreed, the full detail and terms of the membership are not yet determined. The aim of SG is to give control to the clubs both in terms of green fee pricing and whether they permit members of the virtual club to access competitions or green fees. The miscommunication and Chinese whispers make it difficult for SG to regain the message and getting the balance on our communications is a challenge. We can't control the narrative in meetings that we not invited to attend and often this is where misinformation starts to spread. Our request continues to be to give us an opportunity to part of the discussion or to answer directly questions or queries that clubs have. The pay per play golfer membership is coming but is a way down the line and it needs clubs engaged for it to be successful. The tee booking market was lost to commercial operators a number of years ago and what we are trying to do with all of our digital approach is to give that control back to the clubs, with any income generated by SG being reinvested in the clubs, given our not for profit status.

GC advised that 3 clubs in Stirlingshire have indicated they will close if SG introduce the pay per play membership category. They have members that don't feel they currently get value for membership who would leave the clubs and transfer to this type of opportunity.

Discussion then ensued about importance of clubs to offer value for membership beyond handicaps, the race to the bottom being created by clubs competing on crazy membership deals and 2 for 1 deals that for last decade have killed the game.

DK advised latest information suggests up to 500,000 non member golfers play regularly in Scotland currently. In Australia when they introduced pay per play option 40% of clubs saw an increase in membership within first 18 months. Many clubs are seeing opportunity to use open competitions to sell membership to this category of player.

<p><u>Communication</u></p>	<p>3.1</p>	<p>KS reported that SG continue to circulate regular Club, Golfer and Area &amp; County 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>Need to continue to work at communications</p> <p>GC raised concern about reporting of professional success on SG channels which appears to stop at Challenge Tour level, when other tours such as Euro Pro is seeing strong success from a good number of young Scottish players.</p> <p>IF advised that we try not to bombard the social media channels with tournament updates all weekend but will look at a better spread of coverage moving forward.</p>
<p><u>Club Support</u></p>	<p>3.2</p>	<p>With VMS &amp; WHS already covered which are clearly significant areas in which SG will support clubs over the next few years, KS 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, and to this end have invested in an education platform, Hive, as a means of supporting all clubs regardless of location.</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 Phase 2 will be aimed towards clubs, to provide guidance around recruitment and retention of volunteers.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p>	<p>4</p>	<p>SA enquired as to whether there were any plans to review the per capita approach to affiliation collection? KS advised that our biggest challenge remains lack of robust data in terms of membership and impact of multiple memberships – it an area where we would like to consider options but without</p>

<p><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></p>	<p>5</p>	<p>meaningful data with which to analysis impact it not really something that we consider in any detail at this time.</p> <p>AMa asked about the annual return process for club membership numbers this year and specifically why SG had asked for Accounts to be provided?</p> <p>KS explained that in scenarios such as the Barclay Review of Business Rates, we had opportunity to lobby the Finance Minister on the impact for golf but our position was difficult to present as we have no meaningful financial information on the contribution that golf makes to the Scottish economy from a club perspective. The data would always be anonymized and we not using it for any other purpose than to try and benefit the sport in Scotland. Remains a frustration to SG that clubs don't see a two way sharing of information as important. KS acknowledged that our communication on the matter could and should have been stronger and this will be revisited with any future requests.</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 8.35pm with a vote of thanks to the Chair and all present for their contributions.</p>
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