



SLCGA AGM – Monday 30 November 2020

England Golf Report

Due to Covid-19 there have been no meetings at Woodhall Spa in 2020. Instead England Golf has been holding regular updates on-line with all the Voting Members.

The main topics under discussion have been:

Chief Executive

The new CEO Jeremy Tomlinson joined England Golf at the beginning of January. No sooner had he got his feet under the table than we went into lockdown. He has worked hard to promote golf and England Golf, at a time when all sports are lobbying the Government as to the merits of playing their particular sport.

Covid-19 Fund

England was allocated £2.25 m. from the R&A Covid-19 Fund. There were 775 applications from clubs across England. 15 Surrey clubs were awarded funding. England Golf later added a further £500,000 to this fund, to be awarded to clubs which had narrowly missed out on the funding. A further 5 Surrey clubs were allocated funding. The Covid-19 fund was generally considered to be an excellent initiative. The extra £500,000 allocated by England Golf was felt to be a good use of funds accumulated because expenses were down due to Championships and coaching being cancelled.

World Handicap System

Final agreement was reached with the R&A/USGA re the new master WHS licence to England Golf and the other Unions through CONGU. England Golf has been sending regular updates to clubs and has posted a Players Reference Guide to Handicapping on the website. As we all know, WHS was launched on 2 November, 3 days after our second lockdown. Not the most convenient time for clubs and players alike!

Independent Golfer

This is a complex and important issue which has been on the Agenda for the last 3 years at least. It has now become a priority. At a recent meeting of the Golf industry's main bodies the R&A spoke of the future of golf not being just in the hands of members but very much all participants and in particular Independent Golfers. Furthermore, the R&A has spoken of the need to connect with all golfers using the WHS and issuing handicap indexes to drive greater levels of participation. This has now become a core strategy for the R&A and they want to drive this through all the home nations, preferably through the governing body, if not directly. England Golf must now decide how to move forward on this issue.

Clearly there is much work to be done at national, county and club levels.

England Golf Administration & Finances

Staff were put on furlough during lockdown as you would expect. All championships and coaching programmes were cancelled until August. This has led to an unexpected surplus in the accounts, hence why England Golf contributed additional funds to the Covid-19 Fund.

The Championships and competitions which were run later in the Summer were all run very successfully despite the strict Government guidelines. It is felt that the game has handled itself very well during the pandemic. Indeed many clubs have increased their membership as independent golfers realise the benefits of club membership.

England Golf has been conducting regular on-line updates with the Voting Members of the Counties. They have realised that for many people this is a preferred method of meeting, thereby avoiding the time spent travelling to Woodhall Spa. Accordingly they have reduced the number of General Meetings to 2 a year, and will be increasing the number of regular regional and on-line updates

Insurance

You will remember that last year England Golf in association with Bluefin Sport provided all golf club members with a £10m. personal liability insurance package. EG reserves were used to cover the first 6 months cost and after that it was agreed it would be part of EG's ongoing budget. The Bluefin cost was 29p per member. At the time of renewal this year the underwriter quoted a significant increase in the premium cost. An alternative quote was accepted for 34p per member.

England Golf Board

Following the recent Board Elections there are now 6 ladies on the Board. There are 12 members of the Board made up of three appointed independent directors, eight elected directors and the Chief Executive.

Summary

England Golf has managed itself relatively well during the pandemic. It has engaged with Counties and players through regular updates. It has continued to promote the benefits of the sport wherever possible. It has engaged with the Government in attempts to keep the sport going during lockdown. Initiatives to get more women/girls into golf will have stalled this year, but they will remain an important issue. I am sure for many there are questions over its handling of the new WHS system. This will undoubtedly take time to bed in. The Independent Golfer will be the next big challenge to England Golf.

Lorna Robey – SLCGA Captain
November 2020