



## **Wales Golf Guidance around Competitions during COVID-19**

### **Club considerations**

Set out below are some guidance and considerations clubs may need to think about when taking the decision whether to safely begin to run competitions again.

When considering whether to start running competitions, be mindful whether this is fair to all members if some are still unable to access the club due to travel restrictions.

All Welsh Government guidelines should be adhered to at all times.

### ***Registration and pre-competition***

- If a player needs to register with a member of staff or club volunteer can this be done safely under social distancing regulations?
- How will members pay? Exchange of cash is not seen as safe at the moment.
- Can it all be done online along with the tee booking system which must be done remotely?
- With only limited numbers of tee times available is the opportunity to participate in a competition available to all? Do you need to look at multiday competitions?
- If clubs are thinking about introducing competitions we would encourage 'Open' competitions including all members sections where possible to maximise inclusivity
- You could even consider open competition tee times throughout the course of the day. To enable members who don't wish to play in the comp to still access the course.

### ***Playing***

Although the following clarifications from both the R&A and CONGU outline the rules needed to allow competitions to take place, you may want to consider whether these rules retain the integrity of your clubs' competitions? You may even need to think about the level of competition. For example, would your course set up be appropriate to crown a club champion?

### ***R&A Rules Guidance***

- If competitive stroke play is played, a method of scoring needs to be used that does not require any handling or exchanging of scorecards.
- Committees may choose to allow methods of scoring in stroke play that do not strictly comply with Rule 3.3b, or do not comply with the normal methods used under Rule 3.3b. For example:
  - Players may enter their own hole scores on the scorecard (it is not necessary for a marker to do it).
  - It is not necessary to have a marker physically certify the player's hole scores, but some form of verbal certification should take place.
  - It is not necessary to physically return a scorecard to the Committee provided the Committee can accept the scores in another way.
- As provided in the Rules of Golf, scorecards can be electronic, which could include emailing or texting scores to the Committee.



- Bunkers
  - If golfers take due care when smoothing bunkers, there should be no need to provide a Local Rule for bunkers. REMEMBER bunkers are supposed to be a hazard, so they should retain that significance as much as possible. But if the Committee feels that the enjoyment of the game is being significantly affected by there being no rakes, it may introduce preferred lies in bunkers and provide that a player may place a ball in the bunker within 6 inches of the original spot and not nearer to the hole than that spot.
  
- Flagstick
  - Golfers are required to leave the flagstick in the hole at all times and not to touch it. It is a matter for the Committee to decide whether it establishes this policy by way of a Code of Conduct or Local Rule, and whether it provides a penalty under the Code of Conduct or for a breach of the Local Rule.
  - As a temporary provision, flagsticks can be used for the purpose of player safety which do not meet the specifications in Part 8 of the Equipment Rules.
  
- Hole and Holed
  - The hole liner (sometimes referred to as the hole 'cup') can be set in a way that means that all of the ball cannot be below the surface of the putting green, so the ball is considered holed if any part of it is below the surface of the putting green.
  - To minimise the need to lift the ball from the hole, the Committee can provide that a ball is holed with the next stroke if it is within 12 inches of the hole (which is just over the length of a standard putter grip). This does not prevent a player in match play conceding a stroke that is outside this length.
  - The Committee may decide to have the hole liner sitting above the surface of the green and treat a ball as holed if it strikes the liner.
  - The Committee can also use a mechanism attached to the flagstick of lifting the ball from hole. In which case standard rules of holed ball applies.

#### *CONGU Guidance on Qualifying Competitions Decision*

In addition to the R&A guidance on different solutions to ensure golf can be played in a safe manner, CONGU has released the below clarifications on what is acceptable for a competition to be handicap qualifying:

- Flagsticks/Holes:
  - If clubs have made the decision to modify the depth of the hole to allow players to remove the ball without touching the flagstick, scores will be acceptable for either competition or supplementary score purposes. In such cases, the ball is considered holed if any part of the ball is below the surface of the putting green, even if not lodged against the flagstick.



- Bunkers:
  - If clubs introduce a Local Rule to allow preferred lies in bunkers, scores will be acceptable for competition or supplementary score purposes. (Using Model Local Rule E-3)

Please note: The distance for preferred lies in the bunker is limited to 6 inches and the area cannot be smoothed before placing.

As an alternative (but not combined with the preferred lies detailed above) if the condition of bunkers is so poor that it interferes with the proper playing of the game, a club Committee may declare all bunkers to be Ground Under Repair, scores will be acceptable for competition or supplementary score purposes.

### **Recording and Results administration considerations**

- How will score scores be entered of displayed?
  - Are you able to and is it safe to set up and use the competition administration facilities at the club? Is it used by more than one-person e.g. different Men's, Ladies, Senior Junior sections?
  - If players are required to enter the scores into a touch screen or computer, can this be done safely? Access to machine? Sanitation needs here?
  - Can you ask players to email in or take pictures of scorecards? Is this possible or appropriate for all members?

### **Handicapping**

- Clubs are able to issue new handicaps under current conditions. However, we would recommend cards are submitted electronically and club regulations around verification of score cards should be considered, with signing for scores by markers not currently considered safe practice.

*Please note: Due to current working restrictions we are not able to issue category 1 codes. We ask for your patience if you need to issue category 1 handicaps. This service should be up and running again very soon.*

- Clubs and members do not need to be concerned about losing their competition (c) status for 2021 as this will no longer exist under the New World Handicapping System.