



ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic meant our focus on our vision to make Golf 'Everyone's Game. Anywhere' and our aim to create and support an environment in Wales where golf is safe and accessible for everyone to participate, enjoy and progress was severely challenged. We were forced to adapt and innovate across all areas of our work to help support Welsh golf clubs and the game in general through the numerous and considerable challenges which the ever changing situation presented.

Early on in the Pandemic supporting our clubs was quickly identified as our number one priority a situation which has remained unchanged and the feedback received from numerous clubs has been extremely gratifying as has the recognition of our work by the R&A (<https://www.randa.org/en/news/2020/07/dealing-with-covid-19-wales-golf>) and other partners and key stakeholders.

The financial challenges the game faces are more apparent to Wales Golf than ever and demonstrate the ongoing need for continued prudent financial management to enable us to deliver the best possible outcomes for golf whilst balancing the budget. As ever we are grateful for the on-going support of Sport Wales, the R&A, the PGA, the Golf Foundation and all our sponsors. Subscriptions also make a significant contribution to the overall budget, and we are more aware than ever that we must provide value for money for everyone. Having the opportunity to provide some support via a 5-month suspension of club subscriptions during this period was well received by clubs at a time when they most needed help.

The Wales Golf Buying Group, a partnership between Wales Golf and GMG, which provides all clubs affiliated to Wales Golf free access to a dedicated buying group continues to grow offering new opportunities such as catering procurement and renewable energy. You can access all the information you need to get the ball rolling at your club by clicking [here](#). In addition two new partnerships have been formed with Dr Golf – a virtual strength and conditioning service details can be found [here](#) and 1Stop4aGP - A remote GP service for clubs to pass on to their members at a discounted rate. <https://www.walesgolf.org/1stop4agp/>

This year has seen a very significant change with the implementation of the World Handicap System (WHS) in November 2020. It enables global equitable portability of handicaps with relevant resources being distributed to clubs, these can also be accessed online at <https://www.walesgolf.org/world-handicap-system-home/>. This is underpinned by the launch of a new CDH system, Wales Golf Clubhouse and player portal/app to enable a fully integrated system and accessibility for all. Although course rating has been impacted by the pandemic a review of all ratings was undertaken prior to the launch of WHS and we anticipate we will get back on track with our rating schedule very soon. Meantime it's good to see clubs requesting nine-hole, short course, and genderless ratings to improve inclusivity and support the game at club level.

Since the launch by the R&A of the Women and Girls Charter in May 2018 and Conwy Golf Club, venue for the deferred 2020 Curtis Cup, becoming the first in the UK to sign up to the Charter another 44 clubs now signed up or committed to the Charter which pledges to support the aim of increasing the number of women and girls playing and working in golf. We would encourage all our clubs to sign up and details of how to do so can be found at <https://www.walesgolf.org/women-golf-charter/>. We also have 45 clubs who have achieved Junior Golf Cert Accreditation.



Equality and inclusiveness are still a key focus in ensuring we meet our vision and values. Wales Golf was one of the first sports to apply for the advanced level of the Equality Standards in Sport. The advanced level alone is an 18-month process with the final awarding panel presentation taking place in October 2021. Wales Golf was the only sport in Wales to be selected to pilot the Mental Health and Wellbeing standards in Sport and we achieved the first level in December 2019, and we continue to focus on all aspects of inclusivity including health, disability and safeguarding to ensure the best outcome for all.

We continue to offer New2Golf/Back2Golf schemes which can be tailored to support players of all abilities. The schemes provide benefits to all golfers and demonstrate the value of a sport which allows players to participate on a level playing field whatever their ability and strongly links to our current strategy and vision of making Golf 'Everyone's Game. Anywhere'.

Golf club and facility development remains integral to us achieving sustainable success across all our schemes particularly those focusing on women and girls and family friendly flexible golf which will remain at the forefront of our efforts. The game needs facilities that are welcoming and inclusive and which offer what the modern-day golfer is looking for whilst also embracing the principles that make this great game what it is. There is also a need to focus on environmental sustainability. More information is available at <https://www.walesgolf.org/greener-golf/>. 2020 saw the development of a state of the art Inclusive Short Game Academy at Parc Golf Club. The project, which was initiated by Wales Golf, resulted in a facility that caters for all abilities from high performance training through to inclusive coaching. Parc Golf Club hosted the inaugural highly enjoyable and successful Festival of Golf in June which involved a Disability Championship, Summer Swing (New2Golf event), a Welsh Mixed Handicap Medal (based on any player playing off any rated course they chose to), Golf Sixes and the second Junior Tour event and made great use of the new facilities by holding a short course competition for chipping and putting throughout the event.

We continued to run roadshows/workshops/events throughout the year by moving these online offering clubs and golfers focused support in essential areas such as health and safety run by Xact, Safeguarding and Protecting Children, Club Governance and Membership Retention, Digital Marketing, and Rules of Golf training. An additional facility was the provision of support for online AGMs for our clubs during the pandemic. These events will continue alongside Level 1&2 Coaching Courses, Inclusive Golf Coaching Courses, and a series of Regional Partnership (REPs) meetings on an annual basis.

Our strategy focus on stronger clubs is linked to the more flexible Business Support Scheme (BSS) with 69 clubs now having access to the Strong Club Matrix and support provided as a combination of consultancy, cluster workshops covering key themes, guidance from a regional club development officer, as well as access to a bank of templates and resources. We have developed Club Governance Resource (Version 2) in partnership with England Golf, Scotland Golf, GCMA, NGCAA and the PGA and the new updated version is now available with excellent feedback from clubs to date. A copy has been sent to each club and is used by the development team during the Business Support club sessions.

Full details of these roadshows and our scheme outcomes can be found later in this report.

The Wales Golf High Performance Team continued to deliver on their Strategic Plan 2019-2022 by moving online to continue to provide support. The focus being to continuously build and enhance our high performance systems and processes while considering the allocation of limited resources to provide the right players with the right support at the right time.

Sadly, the pandemic took its toll on the Championships, club, and elite competitions with very few events going ahead. We congratulate the winners of the Under 16's & Under 14's Championships which did go ahead and look forward to celebrating Welsh golfers' success, at all levels, as we emerge from the pandemic, hopefully in the near future.

Our clubs have done amazing things during the pandemic and are to be congratulated on their resilience and the innovative ways many clubs stepped up to help their local communities.

Many of you will already be aware that Richard Dixon is retiring in July. Richard joined what was the Welsh Golfing Union (WGU) as Deputy Secretary in 1991 following a successful career in the Ambulance Service culminating in working in the Middle East before returning to the UK in 1990, he became Secretary in 1992. Since then, he has been fully immersed in Welsh golf. On behalf of everyone I wish Richard a long, happy, and healthy retirement. I know most of you will already know his successor Hannah McAllister as our Director of Development and I am sure she will make an excellent successor and continue to provide sound management and creative leadership for our dedicated team of staff whose hard work and commitment delivers the best possible programmes in supporting Welsh golf clubs and players and bringing new levels of success.

On behalf of the Board, Council, and all Welsh clubs I would like to thank Richard and his team, Mike Bryant our current President, Andrew Emery our Treasurer, all our volunteers in the clubs and counties, the Youth Panel and our Ambassadors, all of whom make extremely valuable contributions to the success of Welsh golf and wish them all the best for the future.

This is my last chairman's report as Ashton Bradbury has recently taken over as my successor. Ashton is a former fund manager who enjoyed a successful career in the world of finance, before retiring in 2014. He is a former member of Cottrell Park in the Vale of Glamorgan and has two daughters Gemma and Katie who both played for the girls and ladies Wales teams for several years. He is a fully qualified golf referee who was Chairman of the Wales Golf Championships Committee from 2015-2019. I am sure he will assist Hannah and the team in taking Wales Golf forward to achieve new levels of participation and enjoyment of the game of golf in Wales.

Dr Val Franklin
Chairman



TREASURER'S STATEMENT

Financial Results for Year Ended 31 March 2021

I present my report on the accounts to the end of March 2021, a year unlike any other in living memory where previously agreed budgets and targets had to be set aside and decisions needed to be made quickly to respond to an unprecedented set of circumstances. Before making comment on the financial position I wish to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of the team at Wales Golf during the last year. The decision by Richard Dixon and his senior team not to furlough any of the Development Team when golf was effectively closed down last year was not the common response in the golf or leisure sector. However, it allowed Wales Golf to provide the maximum level of support to our member clubs exactly when they required it, providing the advice they required to be able to re-open safely and in line with Welsh Government guidance when allowed to do so.

The surplus for the financial year 2020/21 is £124,648, a reversal of the pattern of recent periods where we have deliberately operated at a deficit to invest in the game, and a further reflection of the extraordinary events of last year. The two main drivers of the surplus are that our major income streams have been resilient and budget holders suppressed all discretionary expenditure through the financial year. Also, as financial markets recovered during the year gains of £21k were made on investments held, reversing the losses made in the previous period. It was decided to dispose of the investment portfolio in a phased manner during the 2020/21 financial year so all reserves would be held in cash and thus allow maximum flexibility in responding to the uncertain environment.

Our key income source continues to be the subscriptions of our member clubs. An unexpected positive of the pandemic has been the increase in club membership, as with the correct protocols in place golf demonstrated it was a sport able to re-open earlier than many others. Adult membership numbers rose by 9.7% between March 2019 and the latest return completed in August 2020. Over the same period junior numbers increased by almost 12%. This presents golf with an opportunity that must be grasped and I hope clubs will focus on the service and benefits they provide their members, using the expert advice the Development Team at Wales Golf can deliver on member retention. Early in the financial period when the game was closed down it was decided to waive the subscriptions due from clubs for the five months to August 2020. This cost circa £240k but provided welcome support to clubs at a time of great financial uncertainty.

I am pleased to report that all our main funding partners fulfilled the funding commitments that were agreed prior to the pandemic. Our core grant support from Sport Wales was unchanged in 2020/21. They have also provided substantial one off grants to allow us to fund COVID specific measures and going forward to invest in our infrastructure and services. During the year they published their new funding model and unfortunately this means in the medium term a substantial reduction in our base funding of over 40%. Whilst this is very disappointing this change will be phased in through a transitional period over the next four years and they remain a valued and key partner which we look forward to continuing to work with.

We continue to enjoy a very positive relationship with the R & A. In addition to their budgeted support, they provided over £200k of COVID support that we have been able to distribute to clubs funding specific projects that met their guidelines. I support the direction in which they are looking to develop the game and I see no reason why our partnership will not continue to strengthen. My thanks also to both the Golf Foundation and the PGA for their continued support and the positive contribution they make to the game in Wales.

Although in 2020 we were unable to deliver our Championship program we are grateful that Ping still provided support to us and we look forward to again running the Junior Golf Tour and the Mixed Foursomes Championship which they have sponsored in recent years. Wales Golf appreciates that Ping continued their sponsorship in 2020/21 and we look forward to continuing our partnership into the future. The uncertainty of this period demonstrates that more diverse revenue streams will be required going forward and the Wales Golf Board are committed to exploring new opportunities to diversify our finances.

The balance sheet and reserves remain in a robust position at the end of the reporting period. With still a large degree of uncertainty at the start of the current reporting period the Board has looked to budget on a break even basis for the 2021/22 financial period. Undoubtedly investment in our services and infrastructure will be required in the medium term to support the development of the game in Wales. Ideally, there will be more clarity about the future environment golf will operate in during the present year and this will provide more confidence to make longer term planning decisions.

In conclusion, the outstanding work of the team at Wales Golf meant that golf has come through a very difficult year in as strong a position as could be hoped. There is still much to do but with a more stable external environment I believe the game now has a real opportunity to move forward. Finally, and on a personal note I would like to wish Richard Dixon well after his many years of service to golf in Wales. The team he has left in place is a testament to the work he has carried out for over thirty years.

Andrew Emery

Treasurer

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

The following report details our work throughout 2020/21.

Development Department

Wales Golf Strategy, Vision & Values for the period 2018-22 is 'Everyone's Game. Anywhere' and our purpose is 'to create and support an environment in Wales where golf is safe and accessible for everyone to participate, enjoy and progress'. Our Values, which inform everything we do, indicate our commitment to benefit anyone who wishes to access our Sport: Real, Innovative, People-Centered, and Excellence. We currently have six strategic pillars: More Golfers, Stronger Clubs, a Relationship with Every Golfer, Outstanding Events, Great People, and Winning Golfers.

2020/21 has been challenging for us all. We have adapted our support and services to ensure our clubs were supported, survived the pandemic and maximised some of the developed opportunities. The team have performed outstandingly to build even stronger relationships with our clubs and facilities, and engagement is at a record 98%.

Due to some of the coronavirus restrictions, some of our schemes and initiatives delivered in 2020 linked to our strategy targets could only be delivered in part (some not at all), with the 'More Golfers' strategic pillar being the most impacted. For example, due to COVID-19 restrictions, we were very late in the season starting New2Golf schemes (Sept rather than March/April) and group minimums reduced by half (from 8 to 4). We were pleased that some clubs could engage in this, and the female adult figures were encouraging.

Membership

Membership had increased by 10% (August 2020). This is driven by males (11% increase - men, 15% increase - boys). 2021 will be vital in supporting females being introduced to the game through New2Golf.

Wales Golf a High performing National Governing Body (NGB)

Disability Sport Wales NGB National Accreditation - Wales Golf was one of the first sports to achieve *insport* Silver and will be one of the first sports to submit to accomplish the highest level *insport* Gold during 2021.

Equality Standards for Sport - Wales Golf was the first Sport in Wales to submit for the Advanced Equality Standards in Sport in March 2020. The first panel took place in Sept 2020, assessment focus groups took place on 25th February, and the final panel will take place in October 2021.

Safeguarding - The highest level of the Safeguarding standards (level 3) has been maintained again, and we continue to make good progress in this area.

Mental Health and Wellbeing - Wales Golf was the only Sport in Wales to be selected to pilot the Sport's Mental Health and Wellbeing standards. We have been working towards the Silver standards. The staff receive individual support and group training every quarter in this area.

Club engagement

Club engagement continues to be high at 98%, previously 88% pre-COVID. Many previously unengaged clubs are now working with the development team, and stronger relationships with clubs have been built.

Member Benefits Wales Golf

An updated 'Benefits of Being Affiliated' to Wales Golf Info-Graphic has been circulated to clubs and can be found [here](#). Clubs are encouraged to use this to circulate to their membership.

Partnerships have been formed with:

Dr Golf – a virtual strength and conditioning service including a player programme, online classes for clubs to offer their members and certification for the club professional. Dr Golf is offering Welsh Clubs the growth package for the price of the retain package [here](#).

1Stop4aGP - A remote GP service for clubs to pass to their members at a discounted rate. <https://www.walesgolf.org/1stop4agp/>

Wales Golf Buying Group GMG – provides all affiliated golf clubs with free access to a dedicated buying group. GMG harnesses the collective purchasing power of clubs to leverage significant discounts across a range of goods and service categories used by golf clubs. The partnership will continue with new services and products offered in catering procurement and renewable energy. There are substantial cost savings to be made for clubs when using this service. Further information can be found [here](#).

Club remote AGMs

As an additional service, the Development team have supported clubs to run and host their AGMs remotely. 25 clubs have used the service.

COVID-19 Club Support Documents

The following documents are updated regularly in line with Government updates, and we are continuing to work with clubs on COVID-19 advice and support. These include:

- The Club Guidance document
- A Golfer Infographic on Safe Golf procedures. One for each level of restrictions (as they lift) for clubs to send to their members
- A Club Planning Document - A guide to restrictions for Welsh Golf Clubs
- Examples of Reciprocal Club Membership Arrangements
- Examples of affiliation discounts provided by clubs to their members
- A statement is also released directly to clubs and via social media channels each time restrictions change along with updated club guidance

Examples can be found [here](#).

Government Grants

The team supported clubs in applying for the latest Government Support Grants.

Sport Wales Grants

Emergency Sports Fund (up to £5k) - 65 Clubs Applied, 32 clubs received funding

The Be Active Wales fund (Prepare, Protect and Progress) – 32 grants awarded at a total of £293,738

The team have also supported PGA Professionals through the current Sport Wales freelancer fund.

COVID-19 Winter Resilience and Sustainability Fund

£205,000 was awarded to Wales from the R&A for the Club COVID-19 Winter Resilience and Sustainability Fund. This was to provide financial help to build resilience, improve sustainability and support clubs through the winter months and beyond. The fund was allocated to projects which focused on improving and adapting current operations to create the best possible experience for golfers while also planning for the future.

Each club/facility could apply for a grant of between £2,000 to £10,000. Clubs applying committed to Wales Golf's policies on safeguarding and equality, plus other essential criteria, including the Women in Golf Charter, Club Matrix and more.

Summary of interest, applications and geographical spread for the COVID-19 Winter Resilience and Sustainability Fund

Number of clubs that registered an interest	53
Number of applications	36 + 1 from an unaffiliated club
Number of successful applications	26 + 1 inclusive academy project (IA)
Total amount applied for	£321,486
Total amount awarded	£185,456 + £10,000 (IA)= £195,456
North Wales Applications	8 (7 successful)
South East Wales Applications	15 (10 successful) + 1 (IA)
West and Mid Wales Applications	13 (9 successful)

[Below is a detailed scheme update linked to our strategy Pillars](#)



Strategic Pillar – More Golfers

Mass Audience

Unable to deliver/ attend mass audience events in 2020 due to restrictions.

New2Golf/ Back2Golf recruitment programme

This scheme provides clubs with funding to run a membership recruitment programme. It aims to attract new or previous participants. Promotion can be targeted towards specific groups such as women and girls, families, disability groups, or general groups. It supports individuals through coaching, playing opportunities, and social events and aims to recruit participants to various membership offers.

Support by the Development Officers is provided from the planning of the scheme through to the retention of the New2Golf members up to 3 years on.

Marketing resources are produced each year supported by the R&A and focus on targeting the segments that are likely to be attracted to the Sport (2020 campaigns below).

Due to COVID restrictions and to ensure New2Golf could continue to run in 2020, we reduced the minimum number of people in each group from 8 to 4 and will be more flexible on minimum group sizes in 2021.

New2Golf usually starts March/April, but due to COVID restrictions, this started in August/September 2020, losing the ideal time to start the year-long scheme. Therefore, this was limited to facilities with the capacity to run the schemes in this challenging time and to facilities that could provide winter

coaching. Only half the usual number of clubs applied, with potentially under half the number of participants in 2021. This, however, under the current restrictions and climate, was better than expected.

There was a total of 693 participants (66% female) and a conversion rate of 62% to a trial membership was achieved.

Here are some of the 2020/21 campaigns.



New2Golf participant-centred research

Focus groups took place tracking New2Golf participants over three years to learn from their New2Golf journey. A simple resource has been produced with hints and tips for clubs on how to run strong New2Golf schemes. A copy can be downloaded <http://www.walesgolf.org/beginner-coaching-grants/>

New2Golf survey - all New2Golf participants have the option to complete a survey annually; feedback is given directly to the clubs, as well as being used nationally to develop the scheme.

Key findings from New2Golf participant survey

The most recent surveys showed respondents were most likely to have heard about N2G from family and friends, through the golf club or its members, or through social media. These have consistently been the top sources of information across recent N2G cohorts.

Overall scores are very similar to last year's, showing that **clubs running the scheme have maintained their high standards.** The rating of communication from the club, last year's most improved aspect, has continued to increase; there is also an improvement in the rating of communication from Wales Golf.

Participants who didn't join would be encouraged to join if there were lower membership fees. A 'buddy system' has moved up the list again, having been toward the bottom of the list last year – this may be due to the difficulties of organising a buddy system when there are restrictions on social contact.

As in previous years, the cost of membership, feeling they needed to improve their golf before joining, and lack of time were all cited as reasons for not joining, though fewer cited lack of time than in previous years.

Reasons why people joined the club were friendliness of the club, friends and family play, facilities and good value for money

Golf Foundation HSBC Golf Roots Centres

This is funding to deliver outreach work in schools and the community linked to club coaching. 30 Clubs applied and there was a surge in demand for schools golf delivery due to the safety of the sport. However, many schools were not allowing external coaches to deliver sessions.



Strategic Pillar - Stronger Clubs

Business Support Scheme (BSS)

The BSS is based on the needs of each club. Clubs and the Development Team utilise the Strong Club Matrix tool as a club health checker. Clubs and committees use this in conjunction with their Golf Development Officer to help identify the strengths and areas for improvement based around 9 key areas. These areas are Governance, Participation, Marketing, Visitors, Membership Recruitment and Retention, Customer Service, Compliance, Course Rating, and Course Management.

Support is a combination of consultancy, cluster workshops addressing key support themes, guidance from their regional Club Development Officer, as well as, access to a bank of templates and resources. As part of the support clubs also have access to the **Mystery Shopper Service** and customer satisfaction survey tool called the **Customer Feedback Tracker (CFT)**.

BSS 2020/21

Several clubs have been added to our Strong Club Matrix. New and existing clubs are receiving business support, including member engagement, business planning, governance reviews and more.

69 out of 142 clubs have completed the Strong Club Matrix (previously 57) with some progressing up the levels due to the support received.

Gold (70% green) - 40 clubs (previously 32), Silver (60%-69% green) – 8 clubs (previously 5), Bronze (50% green) – 8 clubs (previously 9)

Women in Golf (WIG) Charter

The Women in Golf Charter developed by the R&A intends to inspire an industry-wide commitment to developing a more inclusive culture within golf around the world and enable more women and girls to flourish and maximise their potential at all levels of the Sport.

44 clubs are either working towards or have achieved the WIG charter.

Junior Club Accreditation – Junior GolfCert.

This award has been developed to recognise those clubs attempting to increase the number of young people playing golf by providing a quality and fun experience. It also acts as a model for a junior section to strive towards. The application process is fully online and combines the Disability Sport Wales' **insport** accreditation. The Junior Golf Guide resource (an accompanying resource) is available, and the new #Safegolf brand is incorporated into this award.

45 (15 renewing) clubs have achieved accreditation to date.



Strategic Pillar – Great People

Coach Education and Volunteer Education

PGA related courses

2020 ASQ Level 1 coaching courses were cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions

Safeguarding Workshops (SPC)

5 x SPC 1 online workshops took place with 52 delegates in 2020/21

Time to Listen for Club Welfare Officers (TTL)

2 x online workshops took place with 20 delegates in 2020/21



Strategic Pillar – Outstanding Events

New2Golf Remote Championship

As we couldn't run the New2Golf Summer Swing, 12 Clubs participated in a remote New2Golf Championship and received a trophy to run a competition for their New2Golf participants.

Golf Sixes

Golf sixes was cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions plans are in place to run this 2021.

Mini Masters - under 18's beginner 9 hole comp

Four events ran in 2020, with the final being cancelled due to COVID restrictions

INCLUSIVE SHORT GAME ACADEMY @ PARC GOLF CLUB

2020 saw the development of a state of the art Inclusive Short Game Academy at Parc Golf Club. The project, which was initiated by Wales Golf, resulted in a facility that caters for all abilities from high performance training through to inclusive coaching. It includes two driving nets, an all-weather synthetic surface green with several surrounding chipping pods, as well as a bunker with targets. The area is designed so all golf shots can be taken from multiple locations with different scenarios, as well as being an area to conduct group sessions safely, comfortably and socially distanced for people of all abilities, all year round.



The concept development stage began in September 2020 with Parc Golf Club identified as a suitable location with the space, potential and drive from proprietor Terry Hicks to achieve the vision set out by Wales Golf. Funding was secured from Sport Wales, the R&A via its COVID-19 support fund, Wales Golf and Parc Golf Club to deliver the project within the financial year of 2020-21.

Construction of the synthetic area with chipping pods of both fairway and rough grade, contoured green and a bunker comprising of a shallow entrance leading to a full depth level with targets, was commenced in February by Southwest Greens.

The area also includes two hitting bays and is finished with a surrounding surface which makes it fully accessible to all people, including those using a variety of mobility aids. Rest areas, netting for safety, storage for adapted equipment and floodlighting for extended usage are also features of the Inclusive Short Game Academy.

Relocation of the natural putting green, upgrades to the wedges area which caters for practice of shots from 40-100 yards and the installation of an indoor putting green were also carried out as part of this project which reached completion by the end of March 2021, with the official opening in May.





The hard work and collaborative partnerships made this project a huge success, achieved within tight timelines to producing an industry leading inclusive facility which can be used by anyone, ensuring that golf remains a sport for all. The highest quality synthetic surfaces allow year-round coaching programmes for all players, while the design features will adhere to COVID-19 social distancing as well as making it a centre for the promotion of golf at all levels and abilities in Wales from grass roots to high performance.

As this has been the first project of its kind in Wales, future plans are to share this concept as a model of good practice for the development of further golf practice facilities around Wales.



HIGH PERFORMANCE



Our High Performance Programmes saw considerable change and innovation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ever changing and uncertain situation was the biggest challenge, with a need to adapt and modify how support was delivered to our HP Squad players during this time. Efforts to maintain continuous contact with players became the priority, with online squad sessions ranging from check-ins for personal well-being, to support with individual at-home practice plans and skills challenges. The high performance coaching and support staff team delivered online coaching sessions while an online Strength and Conditioning programme was also rolled out to squad players. Although none of this was ideal, Wales Golf High Performance are proud of the support offered to both players and our team during this period. A Q&A Series with numerous Welsh Tour Players as guests was the highlight of online sessions.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, work continued in delivering the objectives set out in the Wales Golf High Performance Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022. Publication of Mental Health and Well-Being Code of Practice, launch of an online Education Platform to host content for squad players and the implementation of a Parents Support Project which saw a series of sessions designed and delivered to parents were all achieved this year.

On course playing and tournament opportunities were very limited with the Home International Matches being cancelled and Wales not competing at the European Team Championships based on government restrictions and advice. A Golfer of the Year or Order of Merit was not completed but focus was placed on supporting players to continue to develop their game and compete in a restricted number of UK based events.

Highlights included, top 10 finishes for Ffion Tynan and Kath O'Connor at the English Women's Open. Jordan Ryan placed 9th at the qualifying stages of the Women's Amateur with Darcey Harry, Harriet Lockly and Ffion Tynan also progressing to the matchplay stages, while in the men's event Ben Chamberlain advanced through qualifying also.

CHAMPIONSHIPS & RULES

The 2020 Championship Season was heavily impacted upon by the Coronavirus outbreak, with very few Championships able to take place under the restrictions in place throughout the year. Planned rescheduling of the Ladies and Men's Amateur Championships, as well as the Welsh Boys and Girls, took place for later in the summer season, however the local lockdown restrictions and the start of the second wave meant these too were not played in 2020.

Two Championships however did take place in late August and early September. At the weather affected Under 16's & Under 14's Championships, **Joe Jones** of Langland Bay claimed the Under 16's crown while the Under 14's was shared between **Alex Japp** of Conwy GC and **William Pontin** of Pyle & Kenfig. At the Ladies Open Seniors', **Laura Webb** of East Berkshire Golf Club and Ireland came out on top.

Home International matches were also sadly unable to be played, as well as all team events in Wales. However, the Back2Golf Championship was launched for the August Bank Holiday weekend and designed so that clubs could host their own events across the 3 days in a Championship for all golfers to compete against each other. Luke Mumford of St Giles GC came top from over 1000 competitors to claim the title.

Rules

Traditional style rules schools were not possible last year, however Wales was the first country in the world to run an R&A approved online level 2 rules school. Running over 3 days, delegates were able to

learn the course materials then undertake an online exam at any time after the course to become qualified. At the end of 2020, we had over 30 newly qualified level 2 referees

Education programs were also switched online for clubs rules talks and webinars on the modified rules for golfers with disabilities. All free to attend, hundreds of golfers and committee members across Wales were able to access Rules education during the lockdowns.

The Championship team also created video clips for the safe return to golf following the lockdown and for safe Championship play ahead of events in late summer.

Finals Week and the Wales Golf Festivals

Sadly, the inaugural Wales Golf Festival also had to be cancelled in 2020, however two festival events celebrating the inclusive opportunities of golf were planned for 2021. These will take place in North and South Wales, and offer a wide range of competition for a wide variety of golfers.



2021 will see the launch of the Wales Golf finals week, where a range of existing events will be moved together to ensure that every member of a golf club in Wales has the chance to compete in at least one event at the Finals.

HANDICAPPING & COURSE RATING

2020/21 was a hugely significant year for the Wales Golf handicapping and course rating (HCR) department. Handicapping plays a vital role in ensuring that golf can be played between golfers of all standards on an equitable playing field, and on the 2nd of November 2020 the shift to the New World Handicap System (WHS) represented one of the biggest changes the game of golf has seen globally for some time. Wales Golf has worked hard over the previous 12 months to prepare ourselves and our clubs for the introduction of this new system. This project was made additionally difficult as it was delivered against the backdrop of the COVID19 Pandemic, but through the hard work of the team we managed to deliver the new system and transitioned handicaps by the November 2nd deadline.

Over the past twelve months the handicapping and course rating department has completed the following:

- Introduction of the World Handicap System
- Development of the new WHS club 'Clubhouse' system to facilitate club handicap administration
- Development of the new Wales Golf Player Portal to give players personal access to their WHS handicap index and scoring records.
- Development of a Wales Golf app incl General Play scoring platform
- Amateur status applications
- Preferred lies submissions
- Provided support and expertise on club queries via club visits, meetings, telephone and email
- Club Education

Our dedicated HCR email address handicapping@walesgolf.org continues to be very effective and has been a key tool this year allowing us to handle the many thousands of queries over the last year allowing us to give clubs quick effective advice on their handicapping and course rating queries.

2020 has represented a hugely significant year for the HCR department with the development and implementation of the WHS clearly being the overriding focus of the team. 2020/21 saw us embark on a wide-ranging WHS education programme. Originally seminars were planned across Wales at seven host clubs but COVID restrictions saw the cancellation of these sessions and we switched all of our education online. We held a number of webinar sessions throughout the year both pre and post launch with a variety of content aimed at club staff, officials, volunteers and players. We also developed a whole raft of resources that can still be found on the dedicated WHS homepage on our website. Education remains ongoing as we endeavour to get over 140 clubs, and around 47000 member golfers in Wales to get to grips with the new way handicapping works.

A key part of our transition to the WHS has been the development of a new CDH and centralised technology ecosystem that should now make it easier for clubs to administrate and golfers to access their handicaps. Included in this new system has been a new Union handicap management system,

individual club systems, player portal and associated mobile application. To date nearly 23000 golfers have signed up to the Wales Golf player portal allowing instant, accurate and live access to their official handicap index and scoring record. Just over 11000 golfers have downloaded the Wales Golf app putting this functionality in the palm of their hand and giving them access to the new general play scoring facility, allowing members of Welsh golf clubs the opportunity to input scores for their handicap at any club in Wales.

Our Course Rating service has unfortunately somewhat hit the pause button in 20/21. We are proud of the hard work of our team over the last few years that put us into an excellent position to be ready for the transition into the WHS, which holds accurate course ratings at its core. The pandemic meant we were unable to do any of our scheduled ratings across the year although a lot of work was still done in the background preparing and inputting the course rating data into the new systems. Once restrictions are fully lifted and pressure on clubs has reduced our committed group of volunteers will once again start visiting and rating our courses.

We are also pleased to report 9 hole and short course Course Rating requests have continued to see an upsurge and we welcome golf clubs looking to embrace a different way to play the game. We hope that the number of clubs requesting 9 hole and short course Course Ratings continues to grow in the future alongside initiatives from golf's governing bodies to champion shorter formats of the game. We have also seen a shift away from gender specific tees towards ability-based tees being offered by some clubs. This move allows players to choose the length of course they play that is specific to their ability rather than their gender. Providing a rating for all tees allows members to submit scores to maintain their handicaps in a more enjoyable way for many and allows clubs the opportunity to run a greater variety of competitions to suit their whole membership making the game more inclusive than ever.

Wales Golf has retained the status of having three members on various CONGU Committees. This is important to us as a Union as we look to shape the future of handicapping. We would like to offer our sincere thanks to the committee members, course raters and other volunteers who have kindly given up their time to help us achieve our goals within HCR.

Conclusion

It is fair to state that 2020/21 has been a year like no other, as the Chairman indicated in her report I have decided to retire at the end of July having worked for Wales Golf in some capacity for over 30 years. I certainly haven't experienced anything that has presented anything close to the challenges that Covid-19 has thrown at all of us. Having said that I am extremely proud of how my colleagues at Wales Golf have responded, without exception they have committed themselves to providing the best possible support to our clubs and golfers, adapting to new ways of working and often being on hand to give help and advice 24/7.



Picture-Hannah McAllister

I have thoroughly enjoyed working within Welsh Golf and feel privileged to have been trusted to do so for so long, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all clubs, volunteers and colleagues for their support throughout my tenure, it has made a huge difference and has provided me with many special memories. I am personally delighted that Hannah McAllister has been selected as my successor, she is someone I have worked with for almost 20 years and watched her develop into an extremely capable talented professional who is more than capable of helping take Wales Golf into a new era and help ensure that golf in Wales truly does become Everyone's Game Anywhere.

Richard Dixon

CEO