



## **Transition Board of Golf Ireland**

### **Summary Report to Members, 2019-20**

22 February 2021

Dear fellow golfers,

#### **Introduction**

As you are aware, the Transition Board of Golf Ireland was established in February 2019 to give effect to the Golf Ireland Proposal, approved by overwhelming majorities of the GUI and ILGU in January 2019, to create a single governing body for golf on the island of Ireland. The following Report is intended as a summary for the members of Golf Ireland of the work undertaken by the Transition Board in the two years of the Transition Period. The main focus of the Report is on the areas of Regional Structures, Tournaments, Club Support, High Performance, Brand Identity and Website, Staffing and Accommodation, Finance, Governance and Volunteering. Our work was primarily taken forward by means of Sub Committees, each of which was chaired by a member of the Transition Board. The full list of Sub Committees and their memberships is set out in Appendix 1.

As a result of this work I am pleased to report that the Transition Period has come to a successful conclusion and on time, with Golf Ireland going live on 1 January 2021, and formal responsibility for the governing of the game on the island of Ireland passing at the AGM on 27 February to the first full National Board.

The first year of the Transition Period, 2019, was spent in setting up the arrangements and preparations for the various areas of work, with that work coming to fruition in 2020 and in January/February of 2021. One key task completed in 2019 was the recruitment of the new CEO of Golf Ireland, which resulted in the appointment of Mark Kennelly in September 2019. Mark took up duty on a part-time basis on 14 October 2019 and full-time on 16 December 2019.

The remainder of this Report summarises the main outcomes in the areas listed above.

#### **Regional Structures**

As you are aware, the Transition Board has worked intensively throughout the Transition Period to establish the regional structures of Golf Ireland.

Firstly, following an extensive consultation process in 2019 and again in 2020, a guide for clubs setting out the Regional Structures of Golf Ireland was published in July 2020. This provided

clubs with the information required to prepare for the establishment of Golf Ireland's regional structures during the latter half of 2020 and set out the key role of each Region in implementing the strategy and operations of the national organisation.

Following this, preparations continued and, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was decided that the Regional AGMs would be held virtually. As a result of this, it was also decided that the elections to establish the Regional Executive Committees would be conducted by a combination of postal and electronic voting. Electoral regulations were drafted and three phases of voting took place during the months of October and November 2020 to fill each of the four 16-member Regional Executive Committees (three Officers and thirteen Ordinary Members). This work culminated in the holding of the Regional AGMs in November 2020, where the members of each Regional Executive were formally elected.

In relation to the selection of Regional Directors of the National Board of Golf Ireland, the advertisement for these positions was circulated to clubs in November 2020. Following the Regional AGMs, nominated candidates were considered by a Regional Selection Committee distinct to each Region. The positions of President and President Elect of Golf Ireland were also considered in the case of Ulster and Connacht respectively. Each Regional Executive Committee then confirmed their selections, which were communicated to the Nominations Advisory Committee as set out in the 'Governance' section below.

### **Tournaments**

Following a significant consultation process in 2019 and 2020, the Golf Ireland Inter-Club format was announced in October 2020. As you will now be aware, Golf Ireland Inter-Club competitions will be split into eight equal Competition Areas with one area in Connacht; three areas in Leinster; two areas in Munster and two areas in Ulster. A pennant will be awarded to the winning club in each of the eight Competition Areas and these teams will progress to the All-Ireland Final series which will feature quarter-finals, semi-finals and finals across the entire suite of Inter-Club competitions. Given the importance of the Inter-Club competitions, the Transition Board of Golf Ireland has made a commitment for this new format to be reviewed following a three-year period.

Subject to the evolving public health situation, the intention is to stage these All-Ireland finals series over five weekends in August and September, with a mixture of male and female competitions held over each weekend. With the above caveat in mind, it is also the intention for Golf Ireland to run a full suite of National and Regional Championships during 2021.

### **Club Support**

In terms of Club Support, the Transition Board completed a substantial project in developing a Club Governance Guide which was communicated to clubs in November 2020. While fully respecting the principle of the autonomy of Clubs in regard to their own structures, this package includes a set of recommended Governance Principles, together with advice on the

implementation of a One Club Model. Clubs are encouraged to draw upon this Guide and engage with our Club Support team in order to fully utilise this resource.

As a follow up to the Guide, an online support toolkit has been created on the Golf Ireland website, each club has received three copies of the Guide and an educational webinar series has been organised which will give an overview of good governance. A sample club constitution is also being prepared which we hope will be an invaluable asset for clubs seeking further best practice guidance regarding their constitutions.

In addition, you will be aware that grant assistance has been made available to golf clubs as part of both the R&A and Sport Ireland Covid-19 funding programmes. 110 Clubs have received their allocation of the R&A funding totalling almost €600,000, while a further €2.8 million was secured through the Sport Ireland Resilience Fund. This amounts to a total financial package of €3.4 million directly for Golf Clubs.

In addition, Sport NI launched a fund for all sports clubs through the NI Sports Sustainability Fund totalling £25 million, with all golf club applications made through Golf Ireland. A series of workshops were held by the Ulster Region, resulting in 29 successful applications.

A further funding opportunity for Golf Clubs has recently been announced by Fáilte Ireland. Golf Ireland have been in close contact with them in relation to this on behalf of clubs and this fund will provide assistance to eligible clubs up to the value of €200,000.

Finally, following the announcement of the Irish Government's Sports Capital Programme, Golf Ireland delivered two webinars during December 2020 in order to support clubs through the application process. 95 Golf Clubs attended these webinars and it is hoped this interest will be converted into an increase the number of eligible applications from Golf Clubs.

### **High Performance**

The Transition Board made a commitment to continuing the immense success achieved by the legacy unions in the area of high performance and have created an exciting coaching and support pathway for both boys and girls at various stages of the game which is now operational.

Naturally, the club and their various junior development programmes are at the core of this pathway, as it is the entry point for every golfer who begins their high performance journey. Following this is the Area Development stage, which provides a creative learning environment for developing golfers who are starting to show potential in the game. The next stage is Performance Development where players will be provided with the environment to make significant strides towards delivering high standards and results at national level. This leads to the National High Performance Panels at adult and U-18 level which aims to assist panellists in excelling in international amateur golf while also representing Ireland. The pinnacle of the programme is the Team Ireland scheme, supported by Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland, where Golf Ireland will continue the work of the GUI and ILGU in supporting our

emerging tour professionals as they transition from the amateur ranks to the professional game.

Finally, in light of the impact of Covid-19 on the international golfing calendar, the Transition Board also decided to renew the terms of the Men's and Women's international and interprovincial team captains for the 2021 season.

### **Brand Identity & Website**

Golf Ireland launched its brand identity in February 2020. The new logo is drawn from intertwined putting greens, inspired by shapes from golf courses around the island of Ireland. Together with a fresh colour palette, it represents the new, modern and inclusive nature of Golf Ireland, building on the great legacy created by both the GUI and ILGU over the past 130 years.

Another key project undertaken by the Transition Board to continue building the identity of the new organisation was the creation of the new website, [golfireland.ie](http://golfireland.ie). This went live on 2 November 2020 and, as you will be aware, this was also the date of the introduction of the World Handicap System.

Overall, the transition to this new system was relatively smooth. In relation to this we recognise that clubs were faced with a large volume of work and we're very grateful to you for the collaborative and positive spirit in which you engaged with us during this period. We are confident that members will see the benefits of this new system as it is more modern, adaptable and indicative of playing ability. Additionally, a Golf Ireland app is being designed which will be launched in the coming weeks and which we hope will aid golfers further in the transition to WHS.

### **Staffing & Accommodation**

In regard to staffing, a consultation process began during 2020 which resulted in the successful transfer of staff from the legacy organisations to Golf Ireland by the end of 2020. The new staffing structure is now in place and operational as a professional support to the great work taking place in areas such as club support, tournaments, handicapping and high performance.

In relation to this, the Transition Board also undertook necessary work to refurbish the offices of Golf Ireland in Carton Demesne in order to create a single headquarters that was fit for the purposes and the ethos of the new organisation. This was a key objective of the Transition Board as it signified, in a material and literal sense, the bringing together of the legacy organisations under one roof. This work was undertaken in the latter half of 2020 following a competitive tender process and it was completed on schedule in December 2020.

### **Finance**

The Transition Board has worked in close cooperation with both the GUI and ILGU throughout this process and has been financed to date by both the legacy unions, something we are very grateful for.

In respect of this, the consistent position of the Transition Board since its formation in 2019 was to move forward with the Golf Ireland project on a careful and prudent basis. This was exemplified by following a tender process for all major items of expenditure such as the Carton refurbishment project, the new Golf Ireland website and the appointment of auditors Grant Thornton. The latter have now completed an audit of the Golf Ireland 2020 accounts for your consideration at this AGM.

### **Governance**

The overall governance arrangements for Golf Ireland have been progressed during the Transition Period, particularly in relation to meeting the requirements of Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland and the R&A. In particular, the process of acquiring formal recognition from the R&A and Sport Northern Ireland has been completed and is also at an advanced stage with Sport Ireland. As this progresses we continue to have a strong working relationship with our governing bodies.

In addition, the positions of Chairperson and Nominated Director (x6) on the first Board of Golf Ireland were advertised in September 2020. The selection process in relation to this was handled independently by the Nominations Advisory Committee. The remaining six board positions were nominated via the regional structures (as outlined above), with their decisions also communicated to the Nominations Advisory Committee. As a result of the successful conclusion of this work, the first board of Golf Ireland is now in a position to be formally elected at the inaugural AGM of Golf Ireland on 27 February.

### **Volunteering**

Finally, the Transition Board has prepared a Volunteer Policy and Structure document which has now been circulated to clubs. It sets out the various opportunities available to volunteers across the island. At the heart of this policy is our appreciation and understanding that volunteers have played an invaluable role in the successful administration and development of golf across the island of Ireland.

Ensuring that the volunteer workforce will continue to be the lifeblood of our game has been a key objective of the Transition Board and we believe it is now evident that this will continue to be at the heart of everything that happens within Golf Ireland as we go forward on this new journey.

### **Appreciations**

I want to close with some notes of appreciation. Firstly, I thank my fellow members of the Transition Board for the huge contribution they have all made over the past two years to the

creation of our new single governing body. Each of them laboured tirelessly, and gave great leadership, in their areas of responsibility and collectively we all worked cohesively on the Transition Board to deliver the outcome we were tasked with, and did so very much in the inclusive spirit of the Proposal of January 2019.

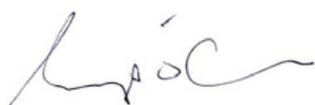
On behalf of the Transition Board, my deepest thanks to Mark Kennelly for his outstanding work as our CEO during the Transition Period and I wish him well now as he leads the taking forward of the work of Golf Ireland, under the direction of the National Board. He was ably assisted by Eoin Holligan as his primary support person during the Transition – thank you Eoin for your unstinting work. In the same vein, we are most grateful at the Transition Board for all the support and advice we received from the outgoing CEOs of the two Legacy Unions, Pat Finn and Sinead Heraty, until their retirements at the end of July 2020. We are also most appreciative of the input along the way of the hard-working Teams at the GUI, ILGU, and CGI, most of whom are now part of Mark's dedicated staff at Golf Ireland.

We were conscious throughout that we were implementing the wishes of the GUI and ILGU members as expressed in the Proposal. In that regard, we relied greatly on the support of the National Boards of the GUI and ILGU. My sincere thanks to them for that support, latterly under the leadership of the final Presidents, John Ferriter and Brigid McCaw respectively. In particular, I greatly appreciated the invaluable input and counsel throughout the Transition Period of the two National Chairs, Dr Iggy O Muircheartaigh and Clodagh Hopkins, with whom I worked closely from the outset – thank you Iggy and Clodagh. I also benefitted greatly from the wise support of Redmond O'Donoghue, the Chair of the CGI.

Second lastly, and very particularly, I thank you the golfers and affiliated Clubs. Golf has set itself on an exciting new journey, building on the tremendous legacy of the last 130 years or so under the stewardship of the ILGU and GUI. The way you, the Clubs, have embraced the new dispensation, exemplified by your very strong participation in the Regional Elections Process, has been very encouraging and inspiring and I have no doubt our sport is going to go from strength to strength into the future, founded on the values and principles of the Proposal of equality, inclusion and diversity.

My final word is to the inaugural nominees for President, Chairperson and President Elect of Golf Ireland, John White, Paul Haran, and Kay O'Loughlin respectively, and all the nominated members of the new National Board, together with the four Regional Executive Committees, as you take forward the journey we have started. I wish you every success in your critical and exciting work and I know that we are in the best of hands.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'L. O'Connell', written in a cursive style.

Tim O'Connor

Chairperson, Transition Board of Golf Ireland

**Members of the Transition Board of Golf Ireland**

Tim O'Connor, Chairperson (Edmondstown)

Brege McCarrick (Mullingar)

Joe McNamara (The Heath)

Brian Punch (Castletroy)

John Power (Portmarnock)

Fiona Scott (Dun Laoghaire)

Mary Culliton (The Heath)

Ian Kerr (Royal Portrush)

Pauline Bailie (Belvoir Park)



**Appendix 1 - Sub Committees of the Transition Board of Golf Ireland**

### ***Appointment of Chief Executive of Golf Ireland***

Chair: Tim O'Connor.

Members: John Power, Brege McCarrick.

### ***Finance***

Chair: Ian Kerr.

Members: Fiona Scott, Mark Kennelly, Michael Malone.

### ***Governance***

Chair: Ian Kerr.

Members: Brege McCarrick (Vice Chair), Brian Punch, Pauline Bailie, Mark Kennelly.

### ***Branding, Logo and Website***

Chair: Fiona Scott.

Members: Pauline Bailie, Mark Kennelly.

### ***Property and Office Accommodation***

Chair: John Power.

Members: Mary Culliton, Mark Kennelly.

### ***Competitions and Tournaments***

Chair: Joe McNamara.

Member: Mary Culliton, Mark Kennelly, Sandra Barnett, Mark Wehrly.

### ***Club Governance***

Chair: Brian Punch.

Members: Pauline Bailie, John Power, Mary Culliton, Mark Kennelly, Anne McCormack.

### ***Regional Structures***

Chair: Brege McCarrick.

Members: John Power, Joe McNamara, Mark Kennelly.

### ***High Performance***

Chair: Mary Culliton.

Members: Brian Punch, Mark Kennelly, Neil Manchip, David Kearney, James Corcoran, Anne McCormack, Anne Ferguson, Niall MacSweeney.

### ***Volunteering***

Chair: Pauline Bailie.

Members: Brian Punch, Mark Kennelly, Anne McCormack.

### ***Handicapping***

Pauline Bailie acted as the Liaison Point between the GUI/ILGU Joint Committee on World Handicapping and the Transition Board.

## **Appendix 2 – List of Related Documents**

- [Golf Ireland Proposal](#)
- [Golf Ireland Memorandum and Articles of Association](#)
- [Golf Ireland Volunteer Policy and Structure](#)
- [Golf Ireland Club Governance Guide](#)
- [Golf Ireland Regional Structures Guide](#)
- [Golf Ireland Electoral and Voting Regulations 2020](#)
- [Golf Ireland Administrative Zones 2020](#)
- [Golf Ireland Regional Executive Committee Terms of Reference](#)
- [Golf Ireland Inter-Club format](#)
- [Golf Ireland High Performance Pathway](#)