

Meeting of the Areas and Counties – Sunday 15th October 2017

1. In Attendance

Top table: Chic Nash (**CN**), Jack Keeney (**JK**), Jim Ewing (**JE**), David Roy (**DR**) and 50 representatives of Areas and Counties.

JK opened the meeting, welcoming everyone, introduced the top table and explained that the meeting had been called specifically to discuss the proposals that are to be put to the members of the SGL at the SGM on 2nd December 2017.

2. Working Group

JK explained that the top table represented a working group that had been convened following the 2016 Area Team Championships in order to effect better communications between the Area representatives and the SGL Board. **JK** then asked **CN** to summarise the efforts of this working group in this regard.

CN explained that the working group had identified the abolition of the SGL committees as a significant factor in the problematic relations between the SGL Board and the Area representative and consequently, proposed an amendment to the Regulations of the SGL to be considered at the 2017 AGM. This amendment would have mandated SGL to convene the Audit and Governance committee to meet twice per year and report to the Scottish Golf Forum, which would also have been mandated to meet twice per year. This proposal was considered by the SGL Board to be competent but the CEO requested that it was withdrawn and suggested that a compromise could be found that would meet the perceived needs of the Area representatives.

3. AGM Resolution

DR was asked to report on the subsequent meeting between Blane Dodds, Karin Sharp and the working group in February 2017. **DR** explained that on conclusion of the meeting, the working group had been satisfied that all the main issues would be addressed, resulting in 11 action points agreed as follows:

1. The Areas and Counties 'one-to-one' meetings will continue annually.
2. Clubs will be invited to regional meetings.
3. The Scottish Golf Forum will be convened annually and will be expanded to include all relevant organisations such as the PGA, the R&A and so on.
4. The Board composition will be amended to include a representative from the Areas and Counties.
5. The process of amalgamation of Areas and Counties would be delivered through consensus
6. The SGL committee structure would be overhauled to make it more representative of the needs of the membership.
7. A detailed evaluation of the previous strategy would be provided.
8. The SGL volunteer force would be better resourced and rewarded.
9. Review and propose changes to the Clubgolf scheme.

10. Review and propose changes to the Memorandum and Articles in order for the Board to be more accountable.

11. Propose an adequate mechanism for recruiting Board and Committee members

DR commented that there has been no evidence thus far that these action points have been effectively delivered.

4. Comments or Questions

CN then asked those present for their thoughts on the current situation.

Gordon Chalmers (**GC**), Argyll and Bute, asked for clarification on the voting process at the SGM. **DR** confirmed that the Areas and Counties would have 10 votes each and clubs would have one vote each. Any member not present has the option of a proxy vote but this has to be received by SGL at least 48 hours in advance of the SGM. For clubs to be able to vote, they are required to canvass the views of their members. No other votes will be considered.

Roxy Brown (**RB**), Lanarkshire, commented that she would prefer a poll, rather than a show of hands at the SGM. **DR** responded by stating that this could be a formal proposal and therefore ensure that a poll takes place.

Paul Gibson (**PG**), Lothian, asked if the vote was a simple majority and it was confirmed that this is the case.

Alasdair Malcolm (**AM**), Ayrshire, reflected the anecdotal views of the Ayrshire member clubs that the governing body should return to their very basic core responsibilities of handicapping, representative golf, developing talent and introducing new people to the game.

Derek McGlynn (**DM**), Renfrewshire, explained that their Area have meetings planned with their member clubs but that so far, the response to the strategy has been overwhelmingly negative. He also commented that individual club members have shown an interest in this issue, which is unprecedented in his experience.

Gordon Campbell (**GC**), Stirlingshire, questioned what the additional money was required for, because there appears to be very little detail on how the extra resources will be utilised.

Alan Bell (**AB**), Dunbartonshire, explained that their member clubs had been canvassed on their views and not one single positive response had been received and expressed surprise that the intimated changes to the M&A have not yet been circulated.

Harry Barnett (**HB**), Angus, explained that the lack of clarity in the operation of the SGL coaching grant is indicative of the current state of confusion within the national structure that prevails at the moment.

Andrew Smith (**AS**), Glasgow, explained that their Area has yet to start the consultation process with their member clubs and cannot comment on the level of support or otherwise.

Charlie Gallagher, (**CG**) Perth and Kinross, reported that they have consulted widely with their member clubs and have received no positive comments thus far and reflected that the level of interest in the proposal was significant.

Dave MacPherson, (**DMcP**) Fife, reported that all the Fife clubs have been contacted and that roughly half have replied and that every response has been negative.

Ann Colthart (**AC**) Dunbartonshire & Argyll Ladies, reported that all of her members have so far indicated a negative response.

GC stated that should the proposal be approved at the SGM, many clubs may decide not to affiliate to the governing body.

Jim Ewing (**JE**) Lanarkshire, reported that all their member clubs that have so far provided a negative response.

PG stated that there are meetings planned with the Lothian member clubs and that Blane Dodds has been invited to attend. The Lothian Area will take their stance on the proposal after this process has been completed.

Sandy Anderson (**SA**) Glasgow, enquired what the likely scenario would be if the SGM did not take place. **DR** replied that it is his understanding that the Sport Scotland funding is dependent on the SGM taking place and that consequently, it would be extremely difficult to change direction at this late stage without profound financial consequences.

CN asked **JE** to reflect on the financial situation as reported in the SGL Annual Statement of Accounts. **JE** highlighted that as far as can be determined, roughly half of the SGL income is generated from the Affiliation Fee and that there would have to be substantial savings made if the proposal was not approved. However, it is not possible to ascertain where the current revenue is sourced and expended given the paucity of information in the Annual Statement and there has been no explanation as to how the additionally requested funds would be used.

HB commented that Blane Dodds has already publicly stated that the SGL staff has been drastically reduced and would be keen to find out how this affected the current situation.

5. Proposed Amendment to the Proposal

CN asked **PG** to report on the call he received from the SGL Chair, Eleanor Cannon. **PG** explained that he has had a brief conversation with the Chair who intimated that the proposed CRM system may not be compulsory and that the £12.75 increase in Affiliation Fee could be revised downwards. The SGL Board are apparently aware of the negative response so far from the members and are therefore considering what the minimum increase in the Affiliation Fee would have to be to plug the expected gap in funding.

DM also stated that the SGL Chair had tried to contact him and he refused to take the call. He opined that for the Board to make changes to their strategy at this late stage calls into question their competency to lead the organisation.

AM commented that the strategy appears to be change whenever there is significant negative feedback from the members, which indicates a lack of rigour in the preparation on the part of the Board.

Bob Holmes (**BH**) Borders, queried the status that the Affiliation Fee afforded the individual golf club member, explaining that the way in which it was being represented, the fee was directly related to the individual golfer and not the member club.

AB enquired if anyone knew what the proposed changes to the Articles of Association were and it was confirmed that this information had not been shared with anyone.

6. Special General Meeting

CN stated that if the proposal was approved, the membership would have little more input. However, if the proposal was not adopted, an alternative would have to be considered.

DM stated that if the strategy failed, a huge amount of effort would be required from all concerned and that the burden would have to be shouldered by a good many people for the situation to be remedied.

BH stated that there is nothing wrong with the stated aims of the SGL strategy and it is perhaps the way in which it has been communicated that is the issue.

PG commented that it would be premature to start work on an alternative strategy until the SGM has taken place.

June Lockhart (**JL**) Renfrewshire Ladies, expressed her concern on the lack of detail on the process of amalgamation. **DR** replied that the SGL communications make it clear that amalgamation of Areas and Counties is not considered a priority at the moment, although it remains an issue that has to be dealt with in the long run.

SA agreed that whilst there has been little progress in the process of amalgamation, this has not been entirely the fault of the Board and that the membership has to share responsibility for the lack of action.

GC asked what the voting situation would be following amalgamation. It was suggested that it was likely that the Areas and Counties would have a 20 votes each in this situation.

DM suggested that the currently convened working group should write to the SGL Board to offer the support of the volunteers present in the event that the proposal is not approved. This suggestion met with broad approval. **DM** went on to claim that the core volunteer workforce of the game have not been considered, despite their willingness to do so and suggested that a formal offer should be put to the Board of SGL for the Areas and Counties to support them through this challenging period. **DM** specifically offered the support of Renfrewshire in this respect.

BH stated that it has to be remembered that approving the proposal remains an option.

Enid Young, Dunbartonshire and Argyll Ladies outlined the role of the Counties for those present.

7. Working Group

Alan Cargill, (**AG**) Perth and Kinross supported the formation of a working group to support the SGL Board.

GC commented that the current strategy is perhaps overly ambitious owing to the demands of the Sport Scotland funding requirements and that this has to be taken into consideration.

BH suggested that the current Board should be left to resolve the issue in the event that the proposal is not approved.

SA replied that in the event that the proposal was not approved, it could be construed as a vote of no confidence and in this circumstance, a new Board would be convened.

JL asked if the strategy could be ‘cherry picked’ and certain aspects approved in isolation. **DR** replied that this is unlikely, given the way in which the strategy includes significant revenue generation from Green Fee revenue from member clubs, which is integral to its success.

8. Any Other Comments

CN asked for comments from those Areas that had not yet contributed.

Peter Abbott, North Area, explained that the majority of their member clubs were unsupportive of the AGL proposals and went on to explain that many people had raised the issue of Drumoig when commenting on the current proposal. He strongly believed that it is the support of the volunteer constituency that will resolve this current situation.

Mike Pocock, North East, reported that they have yet to contact all their clubs but those that have so far responded have been unanimously negative.

Ian Robin, South, reported that of the meetings that have been held with their member clubs, no positive responses have been received.

9. Straw Poll

CN asked for a show of hands in the spirit of a straw poll to indicate how many Areas and Counties would support the proposal. However, it was felt that not enough member clubs had responded to empower the representatives to indicate intentions with any degree of accuracy and this effort was therefore abandoned.

10. Closing Remarks

CN summed up the meeting by stating that it appears there is little support for the proposal and asked for the informal working group to be given a mandate to be formalised and officially represent the Areas and Counties. A show of hands was requested and it was clear that those present supported this course of action.

CN then asked for volunteers to assist with the ensuing workload and various representatives offered support.

JK closed the meeting by thanking everyone for making the effort to attend, especially given the long distances some had to travel to do so.