

**clubgolf Evaluation
Summary Report (Draft)**

Research Report no.

*A research study for **sportscotland***

by

MW Associates and

TNS Travel and Tourism

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INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the main findings of the evaluation of clubgolf carried out for **sportscotland** between January 2006 and December 2007 by MW Associates and TNS Travel and Tourism. The full report is available from **sportscotland**. (IS THIS CORRECT?). This summary report is in the same format as the full report, and with the consultants' recommendations drawn together at the end.

clubgolf, Scotland's Junior Golf Strategy, was initiated in 2002 as a component of Scotland's successful Ryder Cup bid to provide opportunities for children throughout Scotland to participate in golf. The programme was established as a partnership between the Scottish Golf Union (SGU), the Professional Golfers' Association (PGA), the Scottish Ladies' Golfing Association (SLGA), the Golf Foundation (GF) and **sportscotland**. Basic funding of £500,000 a year was provided by the Scottish Government.

With key targets set for 2009, **sportscotland** wished to have an evaluation carried out of the programme to date, to assess progress towards the targets and to provide new information as an input to the ongoing development of the strategy.

There have been significant developments in clubgolf itself while this evaluation has been under way, including the establishment of clubgolf Scotland Ltd, the appointment of an overall project manager, and expansion of the team of regional managers. The evaluation has therefore been of a 'moving target' and one that is still steadily evolving.

Nonetheless, this evaluation should make its own contribution to the ongoing process of improving the planning and delivery of the clubgolf programme, by demonstrating its achievements to date, highlighting new information and findings not previously available to the management team, and making specific recommendations based on these.

The consultants would like to express their thanks to all the children, parents, volunteer coaches, golf club representatives and Active Schools Co-ordinators who took part in their surveys and case studies, and to the clubgolf Board members and managers, and the staff of **sportscotland**, who provided input and guidance over the course of the evaluation.

CONTEXT

Levels of participation in golf in Scotland are high by international standards, but appear to have changed little in recent years, while significant changes in patterns of participation now appear to be taking place which mean some clubs are struggling to maintain their membership numbers.

Around 8 or 9% of Scottish adults play golf regularly, with a ratio of about 9:1 males:females. Probably less than half of these regular golfers are members of golf clubs. There is an 'over-supply' of golf facilities in general, and the current trend is towards the provision of commercially-run golf facilities, often incorporating more than just conventional 9 or 18 hole courses and catering for what appears to be a trend towards 'informal/recreational' golf rather than club-based or competitive golf. Female club membership in particular has fallen significantly in recent years.

Participation in golf among young people also appears to be broadly static, with golf the 13th most popular sport among 8 to 15 year olds. However, the number of children receiving golf coaching in primary schools is growing rapidly, largely as a result of the clubgolf introductory game firstclubgolf.

It is also encouraging that 30% of adult golfers take part in voluntary activity related to sport, with much of this involving coaching.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

The overall aim of the evaluation was to establish the effectiveness of the investment in clubgolf and provide information to assist with the further development of the programme.

The methods used included:

- discussions and meetings with **sportscotland** staff and clubgolf board members and staff;
- desk research, covering golf participation and trends, assessment of clubgolf targets, and analysis of findings from the Sports Participation in Scotland Survey;
- making an input to the design and analysis of questionnaire surveys of clubgolf participants and deliverers;
- carrying out new surveys, including a survey of golf clubs and an online tracking survey of clubgolf participants;
- conducting 15 case studies of clubs and facilities delivering clubgolf, and 5 of clubs not involved in clubgolf.

TARGETS

Good progress is being made in delivering firstclubgolf in primary schools, with about 26,000 children receiving coaching in 2007. However, the target of every 9 year old receiving coaching every year is likely to prove impractical, since some education authorities may not make firstclubgolf part of the curriculum, some headteachers may not adopt firstclubgolf in their schools, and some schools may rotate firstclubgolf with other activities.

Also, with about two-thirds of children keen to learn more about golf having experienced firstclubgolf, there is a danger of disappointing some children if the scale of delivery of firstclubgolf does not match the capacity of clubgolf coaching then available at golf clubs. The 2007 figures suggest that only about 15% of those who had experienced firstclubgolf went on to receive clubgolf coaching.

So far, fewer than 1,000 volunteer coaches have been recruited, compared to the 6,000 or more required if the target of 50,000 children going through the various stages of clubgolf each year is to be achieved. The target also implies an average of almost 100 clubgolf children being coached at every golf facility in Scotland every year. Many clubs show no interest in becoming involved in clubgolf, often because they run junior programmes which are adequate for their own needs. The target therefore seems unachievable.

An increase from the current figure of fewer than 30,000 junior members of golf clubs to the target of 50,000 will also be very difficult to achieve, and significant progress towards this target will require considerable effort and innovation by golf clubs.

The target of doubling the proportion of girls playing golf requires almost a quadrupling of the actual number of girls playing – again something that is not likely to be achievable. Although girls respond well to clubgolf and the 'Girls in Golf' initiative is proving successful, girls are less enthusiastic than boys, less keen to move through the stages, and less likely to expect to be playing golf when they are grown up.

On the other hand, the targets for the numbers of clubs and other facilities delivering clubgolf were set too low, and do not appear to be compatible with the very high targets set for the numbers of children who would participate. These facility targets have already been met, but may need to be raised if revised targets for the numbers of children going through clubgolf are to be met.

Initial targets set for the delivery of clubgolf to community groups and for membership of a 'Scottish Junior Golf Club' are no longer relevant and can be dropped.

ISSUES

Strategy and partnerships

clubgolf operates alongside other junior golf coaching programmes (such as Total Golf and Young Masters Golf), some of which cater for significant numbers of children and appear to offer services similar in some respects to clubgolf.

clubgolf can also be seen as a component of Scotland's 'One Plan for Golf', with children being offered both 'vertical' progress in terms of their development as golfers and 'horizontal' access with their families and friends to the wide range of types of facilities and participation on offer.

clubgolf provides clubs with a new opportunity to boost membership of their junior sections, but this will require innovation together with progressive policies and management on the part of some clubs.

There is a question mark over the effectiveness of 'clubgolf' as a brand name for the junior strategy, since it does not convey anything about youngsters, while implying that the programme is focussed on clubs. The name is not sufficiently publicised and promoted, eg through the websites of the partner agencies.

There is an opportunity to strengthen working links with local authorities and others who are instrumental in delivering clubgolf.

Constraints and sustainability

As noted earlier, it is unlikely to be possible to persuade every local authority, and primary school, to deliver firstclubgolf to every 9 year old every year. In any case, this could result in more children wanting to move on to clubgolf than interested clubs and coaches could cope with.

It will be difficult to persuade enough clubs to become involved with clubgolf, and, where clubs are involved, it is too often based on the commitment of a few individuals rather than a wholehearted commitment by the club as a whole. Clubs also need help in converting more clubgolf participants into club members.

It will also be difficult to recruit, and then retain, enough volunteer coaches, since this depends on finding individuals prepared to take on what is a substantial and lengthy commitment for no monetary reward. More needs to be done to acknowledge that commitment.

There are particular problems in delivering clubgolf in urban areas, where local authorities may not be looking for higher levels of use of their courses, may find

it difficult to recruit coaches, and may have other priorities. Urban and suburban golf clubs may also have 'full' junior sections and therefore little direct self-interest in becoming involved.

There are doubts about the long-term resourcing of clubgolf, given the 'spinning plates' job that regional managers have to do as the programme builds up, ie managing their existing clubgolf clubs while continually recruiting more. Some clubs also take the view that they need more support in delivering what they regard as a national initiative, and there is current (January 2008) uncertainty over the future of **sportscotland**. There may be scope for clubs to charge more for clubgolf coaching, provided these additional funds found their way into the overall clubgolf budget.

However, provided targets are suitably revised, and full advantage is taken of experience to date, effective management and communications systems, and the findings of this evaluation, the clubgolf programme should be sustainable – albeit at a relatively high cost of delivery per child.

ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS

Children

The majority of primary school children who responded to the survey enjoyed firstclubgolf (68%). Boys were rather more likely than girls to say they found it enjoyable (73% and 63% respectively) and were more likely to want to learn more about golf (68% compared to 57% of girls). This variation in interest levels is reflected in the fact that the 50: 50 boy:girl ratio in firstclubgolf changes to about 70:30 in clubgolf.

Of those who responded to both the 2006 and 2007 waves of the clubgolf tracking survey, only 6% had dropped out of golf altogether during the period, although this percentage would probably have been higher among the non-respondents. clubgolf was highly rated by respondents to this survey with 84% rating the coaching as 'good' in 2007. In both years the majority of these children had played golf outwith clubgolf (85%), with boys and children with golfing parents more likely to have taken part on this basis.

As with the online tracking survey, about 70% of respondents to the clubgolf Stage 1 and Stage 2 self-completion survey were boys. The coaching (and the coaches) received high ratings (74% 'very good') while bad weather and putting were the least liked aspects of clubgolf. Almost all the players responding to this survey wanted to take their golf further (97%), although girls were less likely than boys to think they would be playing golf when they were grown-up (69% and 86% respectively) .

Key findings from the case study discussion groups were:

- Many clubgolf children were also involved in lots of other sports and leisure activities, but put clubgolf near the top of the list.
- The competitive and fun elements of clubgolf were both enjoyed, as were making new friends and going on trips to golf events, but children were particularly keen to get on to a proper golf course as soon as possible.
- Overall, children thought many of their friends had the wrong impression, ie golf is not boring or just for grown-ups.

Parents

Parents' own interest in golf was often stimulated by their children's involvement in clubgolf. Amongst those who responded to the survey of parents, over half (55%) expressed an increased interest in playing because of their child's clubgolf participation while 11% had actually started to play more often.

This survey of parents also found that, from their perspective, the best aspects of clubgolf were seen as:

- the sound and inexpensive introduction it gave to golf, and the fact that no immediate commitment to paying for equipment or play was required (mentioned by 37% of parents);
- the coaches (22%);
- the opportunity clubgolf offered their children to make new friends (13%).

The discussions undertaken with parents as part of the case studies also highlighted the suitability of golf for children to whom other more active or team sports did not appeal. Other 'strengths' from a parents' perspective included their children getting exercise in the open air and the emphasis on discipline, good behaviour, safety, and skills.

However, some of the parents spoken to during the case studies indicated that they would like to have had more feedback on their children's progress and more information about what happened after the initial clubgolf coaching. Non-golfing parents also had some concerns about the costs involved if their children wanted to take golf further, whereas golfing parents were more concerned about the way children were treated at some golf clubs.

Deliverers

The survey of firstclubgolf deliverers found that those who delivered this level of coaching (mainly class teachers or classroom assistants (71%)) were very positive about the equipment (92% 'very good') and the lesson plans (75% 'very good'). These resources helped overcome the apprehension of deliverers who were not themselves golfers, and they found the group sizes and number of sessions quite acceptable. The main constraints on delivery identified through this survey were restricted space and pressures on staff time.

In the case study discussions, Active Schools Co-ordinators emphasised the need to see firstclubgolf in its wider context, ie their concern with 'activity' rather than sport as such and the fact that many other introductory sports and activities were now competing with firstclubgolf for school time.

However, firstclubgolf was seen as excellent, in terms of the equipment, lesson plans, appeal to otherwise 'non-sporty' children, and integration with a well-resourced national programme that offered interested children a clear pathway to follow. In that respect, positive local links between clubs and schools were seen as vital.

The survey of clubgolf volunteer coaches and case study discussions found that their training and materials gave them confidence, not least in unfamiliar areas like child protection and discipline. They volunteered because they wanted to help children and put something back into golf ('very important' to

71%) and their reward was seeing the children enjoying themselves and making progress ('very important' to 87%).

Coaches make a huge commitment to clubgolf, particularly where they have to coach every session rather than being on a rota. There should be more communication with coaches, more networking opportunities, and more recognition of their efforts.

Coaches adjust the clubgolf 'blueprint' to suit their local circumstances, they want to deliver clubgolf on their own clubs' terms rather than pursuing a 'numbers game', and many do not want to go beyond Stage 1 coaching.

Clubs

Responses to the September 2006 survey of clubs suggested that only about a third of junior members play regularly, so many clubs should be able to take more juniors – provided they want playing and not simply paying members.

Based on that survey (and with the question repeated in the SGU's survey of clubs in October 2007), the main reason (quoted by around 50%) for clubs not being involved in clubgolf is that they are already involved in some other form of junior coaching. Other reasons given by about 20% or more of clubs not involved include:

- probable difficulty in finding coaches;
- being at capacity in terms of numbers of junior members;
- lack of space for junior facilities;
- not knowing enough about clubgolf;

Overcoming these perceived barriers (and persuading uncommitted clubs) is likely to require continual prompting by clubgolf regional managers, use of the clubgolf Facilities Digest DVD and 'peer pressure' by clubs which are successfully running – and seeing the benefits of – clubgolf.

Clubs which are involved see clubgolf's best features as:

- the opportunity it gives all children to try golf;
- its well-structured and thorough coaching programme;
- the support of clubgolf regional managers.

These clubs also see clear benefits from their involvement in clubgolf, including:

- its usefulness where clubs have no pro;

- the opportunity to recruit new junior members;
- good training materials which can be flexibly applied to suit each club's circumstances.

Clubs tend to run clubgolf on their own terms (while adhering to its principles), and it does pose significant challenges, such as:

- the recruitment, training, organisation, and retention of coaches;
- keeping young children 'on task' and behaving properly when their levels of interest and ability range widely;
- too much bureaucracy and, in some instances, not enough ongoing support from clubgolf;
- getting, and keeping, club members 'onside'.

Clubs are concerned about whether they can keep the coaching effort going (they see it as easier for local schools to continue to produce a steady stream of children wanting to move on to clubgolf), about how children will be taken on beyond Stage 1 (since many coaches do not want to take on Stage 2), and about how to get maximum benefit for their clubs in terms of new junior members, since some clubs are disappointed with the numbers joining so far.

Many of these issues also emerged from the case study discussions with club representatives. Reducing the reliance on key individuals by getting more corporate commitment by clubs and doing more succession planning is important, and clubs also want to see clubgolf continuing to improve its overall communications, so that clubs get all the information they need, more opportunities to network and share best practice, and have their coaches' contribution to meeting clubgolf's national targets more explicitly recognised.

COST EFFECTIVENESS

It is not straightforward to define clubgolf's achievements (outputs) or quantify the contributions to the programme (inputs).

Around 5,850 children received clubgolf coaching in 2007, though some were already club members (and therefore not being introduced to the game by clubgolf), and some would not pursue an interest in golf after their coaching. Also, around 26,000 children experienced firstclubgolf at school.

The Scottish Government's contribution of £500,000 in 2007 was approximately matched by contributions from the partner agencies, taking the overall budget to at least £1 million. In addition, there were about 20,000 hours of unpaid voluntary coaching to which a notional value could be attached.

Assuming total inputs of around £1.25 million, the cost of coaching each of the 5,850 children in 2007 was therefore about £215 – offset by the average parents' contribution of about £40 per child.

This cost will reduce over time as the fixed costs of the programme are spread over more children, and would reduce further if parents were asked to contribute more.

clubgolf is generating significant numbers of new young participants in an active outdoor sport which teaches important lessons about rules and etiquette, it is providing potential new members for clubs that badly need them, and, in time, it will create more high performance Scottish golfers.

While the cost of delivery per child appears relatively high, account should be taken of the fact that clubgolf regional managers also become involved in wider aspects of junior golf development in their areas.

FUTURE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Internal monitoring of progress and management of clubgolf resources can now be carried out effectively using a comprehensive spreadsheet model developed by the project manager.

'External' monitoring should cover the wider 'environment' in which clubgolf takes place, ie patterns and trends in golf participation (and reasons for non-participation), club membership and other junior golf development programmes in Scotland and elsewhere.

'External' evaluation should involve continuing to assess the response to clubgolf by those who participate in it, ie children (and their parents), and deliverers (schools, coaches and golf clubs).

CONCLUSIONS

While it is clear that there are variations in the take-up and delivery of clubgolf around Scotland, there is no doubt that the programme is popular with the children (and their parents) who take part, that it is supported by a good number of committed volunteer coaches and administrators, that it is demonstrably increasing interest, participation and proficiency in golf among children in Scotland, and that it now has a foundation on which to build a sustainable long-term programme.

clubgolf has proved that – when introduced to golf in this way – most girls and boys thoroughly enjoy the game, and many are keen to take it further. By helping to overturn some previously negative perceptions of golf among children, those who developed and are delivering clubgolf can take great credit – not least because it comes at a time when the game of golf in Scotland needs new young players.

It is unlikely that clubgolf will meet the targets originally set for 2009 in terms of the numbers of children participating, and these targets should therefore be revised based on experience to date and the findings of this evaluation.

Also, there are considerable challenges still to be faced, not least in recruiting and retaining enough clubs and volunteer coaches to deliver clubgolf, and in integrating clubgolf with other junior golf programmes and with Scotland's overall 'One Plan for Golf'.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Targets

The clubgolf board should revise the clubgolf targets based on experience to date, forward projections, the findings of this evaluation, and whether or not other junior programmes are incorporated into the national strategy. The new targets should be challenging but achievable, and the participation and facility targets should be compatible, ie the target number of facilities (and coaches) should be capable of delivering the target number of participants.

Issues

Strategy and partnerships

The clubgolf board should consider incorporating other suitable junior coaching and development programmes along with clubgolf in a more comprehensive national junior strategy.

clubgolf should be fully integrated into a 'One Plan for Golf' which in turn more fully incorporates the commercial sector of facility operation and the 'informal/recreational' sector of golf participation.

The SGU and SLGA should help clubs strengthen their membership base, and their numbers of juniors (and girls) in particular.

The clubgolf board should review the 'clubgolf' name, and then promote and communicate the agreed brand more effectively.

The clubgolf board should consider ways of strengthening working links with local authorities and regional sports partnerships.

Constraints and sustainability

As noted earlier, the programme's targets should be revised in line with what is likely to be achievable in practice.

At local cluster level, clubgolf should work to strengthen links between clubs and schools where necessary, and more clubs and local authorities (particularly in urban areas) should be persuaded to take on clubgolf.

With the support of the SGU, clubs need to be persuaded to make a corporate commitment to clubgolf, and encouraged to update their junior membership recruitment and management policies.

Maximising coach recruitment and retention should be a priority for the clubgolf board and management team.

clubgolf's resourcing needs to be kept under review, particularly at regional manager level, to ensure effective ongoing support of existing clubgolf clubs can continue alongside recruitment and development work.

Ways of making clubgolf more self-funding should be examined by the clubgolf board and management.

Attitudes and opinions

The clubgolf board and management team should examine in detail the findings of the surveys and case studies carried out as part of this evaluation, and incorporate the findings as appropriate into clubgolf policy and delivery.

Cost effectiveness

As part of the forthcoming review of clubgolf strategy, the clubgolf board should examine delivery options and the wider role of clubgolf regional managers in the light of both the relatively high cost per child currently involved in delivering clubgolf, and the key role of junior golf in the overall 'One Plan for Golf'.

Future monitoring and evaluation

A comprehensive national survey, the first since 1990/91, should be carried out to identify and quantify levels, patterns, and changes in golf demand and participation in Scotland, and thus determine the context for clubgolf.

The SGU and SLGA should gather accurate figures on junior membership numbers and characteristics from golf clubs, and SGU should include clubgolf-related questions in its periodic surveys of golf clubs and facilities in Scotland.

The clubgolf board and manager should continually monitor other junior programmes in Scotland and elsewhere, and incorporate features from them into clubgolf where appropriate.

On a sample basis, clubgolf should continue its annual self-completion surveys of clubgolf participants and deliverers, and should continue the online tracking survey of participants piloted in this evaluation.

clubgolf should consider whether further case study work is required, to obtain external and in-depth feedback on particular situations or issues, eg the specific issues associated with delivering clubgolf in urban areas.