

(Sent to all national TV, radio and written press and selected regionals)

‘TEEING OFF’ AT THE UK’S FIRST CHILDREN’S AND FAMILY GOLF COURSE

Youngsters are set to benefit from an exciting range of new golfing opportunities at The Hermitage Family Golf Course in Edinburgh. This was the clear message from the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, Patricia Ferguson, MSP, today, as she officially opened the UK’s first purpose-built children’s and family golf course.

The facility, funded by a £200,000 **sportscotland** Lottery award, will also play a key role in delivering ‘clubgolf’, Scotland’s national junior golf strategy, which today launched the roll-out of its programmes nationwide across Scotland.

Speaking at the opening Ms Ferguson said:

“Scotland is the home of golf and I hope that our budding Open Champions of the future enjoy the new course and take this great opportunity to experience the game.”

“This new course will introduce Scotland’s young people to the game in a fun and exciting way and alongside the clubgolf initiative it will give young people more opportunities to get physically active and ensure that game in Scotland has a bright future.”

The design of the new course, with its variety of 12 holes ranging from 60 – 250 yards, was carefully considered to ensure that it would provide a fun and stimulating experience in a safe, controlled environment in which to introduce children and people with disabilities, as well as beginners of all ages, to the game of golf.

The facility also boasts an education centre, which aims to heighten awareness of environmental, ecological, wildlife and heritage issues on the course.

The new facility will provide youngsters with a quality introduction to the sport and will also help to create clear pathways for them to develop their potential through the clubgolf programme.

Scotland's golf clubs play a pivotal role in the delivery of clubgolf programmes, with their involvement vital to the development of clubgolf and the sport at local, regional and national level.

One hundred and twenty nine clubs have already signed up to deliver Stage 1 of the clubgolf strategy, and more than 50 new facilities are being developed. Over 23,000 nine year olds will be introduced to clubgolf's introductory game, firstclubgolf, at schools across Scotland this year. clubgolf's target is to retain 10,000 nine to 14 year olds in club programmes in 2006.

Julia Bracewell OBE, Chair of **sportscotland**, said: "**sportscotland** is delighted to have supported the development of this fantastic children's golf facility with an award of £200,000 from the Lottery funded Sports Facilities Programme. This course at Hermitage is one of the growing number of golf facilities to have established a formal partnership with the clubgolf programme, which aims to provide youngsters with a quality introduction to the game and encourage increased participation at a recreational or competitive level."

"I am convinced that there are many more potential Open Champions and Ryder Cup players out there in Scotland and through clubgolf and facilities like Hermitage, we will make it far easier for them to be discovered and developed."

Andrew Renton, Chairman of the Hermitage Educational Company Ltd, said: "The path we have been down has not been easy but we are all proud of the

facility we now have at The Hermitage. Our aim is to help the Executive's objective of introducing young people to lifelong activities. We hope others will be encouraged to adopt a similar approach to the provision of facilities for introducing golf to children and beginners, particularly in urban centres."

Andrew Coltart, the Former Ryder Cup team member and Hermitage's Patron who was at The Hermitage today to award prizes to competitors in the Pro-Am, is giving the project his full support.

"The course is fantastic and it has a tremendous lay out," he said. "The first six holes are relatively wide open, with minimal problems for the children to develop their game. Once they know what they are doing they can progress to a further six holes that are a bit more of test.

"Without a doubt, a child that starts to play golf here could go on to play at the highest levels. Children are our future ambassadors and we need to encourage them. The Hermitage is a fantastic place to do that and I would have loved to come to a place like this when I was a kid."

For further information, contact:

Rob Eyton-Jones, PR Manager, clubgolf
Tel: 07775 746981

NOTES TO EDITORS

- clubgolf is a partnership between the Scottish Golf Union, the Scottish Ladies' Golfing Association, the Professional Golfers' Association, the Golf Foundation and sportscotland. The strategy has been developed as a direct result of the Scottish Executive's commitment to introduce every nine-year-old child in Scotland to the game by 2009.
- City of Edinburgh Council, The R&A and HBoS are all supporters of The Hermitage Family Golf Course. Leading golf courses that have afforded The Hermitage use of their facilities to raise funds for the Charity which manages the project include, Dalmahoy, Craighelaw and Muirfield. The SGU, the R&A and St. Andrews Links Trust have given additional input.
- For more information on the facilities at Hermitage, please visit www.go-swing.org
- For more information on clubgolf, please visit www.clubgolfscotland.com