**GOLF IRELAND**

**VOTE  DATE​**

Both the ILGU and the GUI will hold respective meetings where affiliated clubs will be invited to attend to vote on the Golf Ireland Proposal. The ILGU AGM and the GUI EGM will both take place on 19th January 2019.
Details for the respective meetings will be confirmed in due course.

 **​​BACKGROUND**

The Irish Ladies Golf Union and the Golfing Union of Ireland have, since November 2015 been discussing the potential establishment of One Governing Body for Golf in Ireland. ​

The Discussions Group (DG) was established and has four representatives from each organisation. Meetings have been facilitated by Jane Williams, Sia Partners who has knowledge of the workings of each organisation.

**​Discussions Group Members**
Frank Bowen - Golfing Union of Ireland
Teresa Byrne – Irish Ladies Golf Union
Pat Finn – Golfing Union of Ireland
Sinead Heraty – Irish Ladies Golf Union
Brege McCarrick – Irish Ladies Golf Union
John Power – Golfing Union of Ireland
Ethel Ruddock – Irish Ladies Golf Union
Kevin Stevens – Golfing Union of Ireland
**Facilitator**
Jane Williams – Sia Partners
**Project Manager**
Sarah Crowe

**Why are we doing this?**
Ireland is one of the top three countries in Europe with the highest participation rates for Golf, at approx. 4% participation. The decline in membership numbers in Ireland and elsewhere is a concern and there is a possibility that with the current downwards trends, Ireland could fall down to less than 1% participation, in line with the European norm.

In general, Golf in Europe is growing due to the modern and family friendly structures that are being put in place.  Ireland need to undertake a similar philosophy; to place more emphasis on junior boys/girls and female participation, create innovative ways of playing the game, and implement structures that suit modern families, who cannot commit to the time it takes to play a round of golf.

Since 2004 in Ireland, Golf Club membership has declined by approximately 50,000 and 30 clubs have closed.  Over the last decade, both male and female membership has significantly decreased, with Ireland experiencing a 26% decline in male adult membership, 25% in female adult membership, 16% in junior boys and 22% in junior girls.

**Benefits of Golf Ireland**
Club Membership Growth
Attracting new golfers and new members will be easier if there is one clear and consistent message; golf can be challenging, it can be fun, but above all it is enjoyable whether you are a man, a woman, a boy or a girl, an elite player, a social player, an average player or a beginner. Golf is a health promoting hobby and is unique in that it is a game that can be enjoyed by all. Golf Ireland will promote golf as an integrated family-oriented sport with wide appeal, and one that can compete successfully to be one of the most popular leisure activities.
Improved Support for Clubs
Club Support is not a core function of the GUI or ILGU. It is something that was introduced by the Unions in 2013, via the CGI, but with limited capacity to support the needs of all clubs. Golf Ireland is committed to making Club Support a core function. The new body will have a department responsible for supporting clubs in the areas of governance, business planning, membership growth and retention, communications, marketing etc.
 A True Governing Body
No entity has ever been truly responsible for the game of golf in Ireland. GUI and ILGU were established in the early 1890s for the purpose of organising championships and international matches. Society has changed hugely in the past 125 years and it is important for golf to have a modern governing body that can respond to all needs of member clubs today, including club support and growing the game.
 Empowering Clubs
The business of Annual Meetings of the GUI and ILGU is restricted to matters relevant to those bodies, such as championships and inter-club events.
Clubs have no input into matters of broader importance to golf, such as golf development, promotion and club support. This will change under Golf Ireland as clubs will have their voices heard as members of THE governing body for golf in Ireland.
 Improved Club Structure
Having one governing body will remove the requirement for a men's club and a ladies club. The GUI and ILGU, by virtue of being separate, require separate clubs or sections within each golf facility. Golf Ireland will work with Golf Clubs to develop a range of efficient management structures to ensure the future success of the game at club level.
More Funding for Golf
Whilst the ILGU and GUI have enjoyed good relationships with funding agencies and international golfing bodies, golf in Ireland has never been represented by a single voice, resulting in poorer than deserved support for golf clubs in sports capital funding. Golf Ireland will be positioned to speak on behalf of golf in Ireland and is committed to lobbying on behalf of golf to improve these levels of support.
Greater Attraction to Commercial Partners
Golf Ireland will be more attractive to governmental agencies, commercial partners and sponsors. One simple structure is easier to understand and fits much better with the aims and values of companies today.
Promoting an Equal Environment
Countries with one governing body of golf tend to have a much healthier ratio of female to male members, reflecting the equal environment promoted by the governing body. If golf in Ireland is to thrive, it is imperative that this ratio is brought closer to European norms.

Improved Media Coverage
Achieving media coverage for amateur golf is difficult, particularly nationally, and too often it focuses on the negative gender difference aspects of the game. Golf Ireland would have the potential to improve that media perception by proactively promoting the positive aspects of the game and tackling the negative stereotypes.