



THE SCOTTISH OFFICE

Environment Department

## *Planning Advice Note*

PAN 43

# GOLF COURSES AND ASSOCIATED DEVELOPMENTS





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April 1994  
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ISSN 0141-514X  
ISBN 0 7480 0895 0

## *planning series:*

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- National planning policy guidelines (NPPGs) provide statements of Government policy on nationally important land use and other planning matters, supported where appropriate by a locational framework.
- Circulars, which also provide statements of Government policy, contain guidance on policy implementation through legislative or procedural change.
- Planning Advice Notes (PANs) provide advice on good practice and other relevant information.

Statements of Government policy contained in NPPGs and Circulars may, so far as relevant, be material considerations to be taken into account in development plan preparation and development control.

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## *introduction*

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1. Golf is growing in popularity on a scale not seen since the 1920s. This is leading in many parts of the country to proposals for new courses and improved facilities. In some cases these are linked to proposals for associated development such as housing and hotels. Recent research by the Scottish Sports Council<sup>(1)(2)</sup> indicates that new proposals will continue to come forward in response to a large unsatisfied demand by Scottish residents to play golf. That demand is based primarily in the major urban areas.

2. Through the Scottish Sports Council (SSC), Government policy is to encourage and increase participation in sport, including golf. Increased participation can be achieved not only through greater use of some existing courses but also through the construction of new ones. The availability of a golf course, sensitively designed to fit into the landscape can also help to improve the image of an area and in doing so assist in the promotion of tourism.

3. The location, siting and design of new courses and facilities will typically present developers, planning authorities and other interested parties with a wide range of issues to consider. Not least amongst these will be the policies in development plans dealing with the countryside and green belts. To assist that consideration, this Planning Advice Note:

- provides background information;
- sets out the locational and land-use context of Scottish Sports Council research;
- restates the existing national planning policy framework;
- identifies the planning issues associated with golf courses and related developments; and
- gives advice on development plan policies.

## *background*

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### *The Provision of Courses*

4. Scotland is known worldwide as the home of golf. The game was first played in the 16th century on the east coast links and history has endowed the country with many famous courses. As well as serving the domestic market Scotland's courses are top golfing holiday destinations. The tradition of golf, the enjoyment of playing, tourism and media attention all serve to attract and inspire a growing number of players which are the keys to the growth in demand for golf.

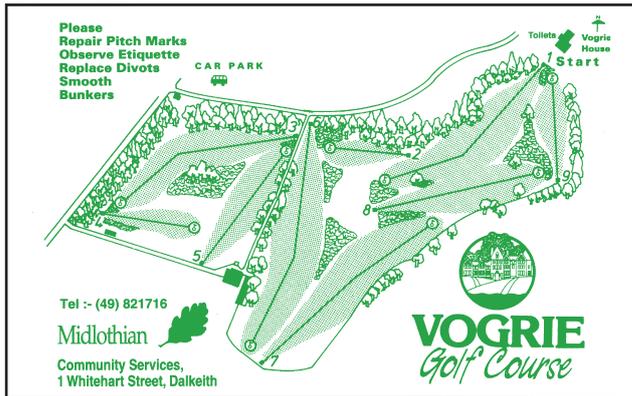
5. Today there are over 450 golf courses in Scotland (of which over two-thirds are 18-hole). The provision of 18-hole courses per head of population (1:12,900) is higher than any other part of the UK and most of the world. The vast majority of private clubs are run with modest facilities, and particularly in rural areas and at off-peak times they maintain a tradition of being open to the golfing public. In their capacity as open spaces, golf courses perform other valuable amenity functions, including refuges for wildlife.

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(1) *Study of Golf in Scotland, Research Report No.19, Scottish Sports Council, 1991.*

(2) *Golf in Scotland: Developing Local Provision, Information Digest FP5, Scottish Sports Council 1991.*

## Regional Provision



6. Of the 18-hole courses, 263 are private and 49 are municipal. 120 9-hole courses are private and 19 are municipal. In Borders, Dumfries & Galloway and in the Highlands and Islands (including Argyll and Bute) there are over 110 golf courses, just over half of which are 9-hole but there are only four municipal courses; three in Borders and one in Highland. In the central lowlands, Tayside and Grampian regions, there are 340 golf courses, three quarters of which are 18-hole. Even where public provision is high supplemented by current public access to private courses, demand cannot be satisfied around Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen. Overall provision needs to be assessed relative to population, the participation rate, the frequency of play

and the physical capacity of courses.

7. SSC surveys undertaken in 1990 indicated that in both urban and rural areas, 15 per cent of the Scottish adult resident population had played golf at least once in the past 12 months (compared to 12 per cent in 1973). Therefore it is in the cities, especially Glasgow where demand is greatest. In particular some city courses are over-subscribed indicating a need for new facilities. Given the density of development in cities it is likely that much of the unmet demand can only be found beyond the built-up area. Within the older urban areas, the scale of vacant or derelict land may offer opportunities for 9-hole courses and practice facilities including driving ranges. This would assist in improving the environmental quality of an area as well as providing a much needed sports facility.

8. Provision of 18-hole units varies from region to region as shown in Table 1. In the four main cities provision per capita is considerably lower than in their respective regions and other areas, although the city figures understate potential access to courses in adjoining districts.

**Table 1: Regional and Urban Levels of 18-hole Provision**

Scotland/Region	Population per 18-hole unit*	City
Scotland	12,900	
Borders	8,600	
Central	15,700	
Dumfries & Galloway	8,200	
Fife	10,900	
Grampian	10,000	
Highland	19,500	Aberdeen
Island Areas	6,500	
Lothian	13,000	
Strathclyde	13,900	
Tayside	17,000	Edinburgh
	16,600	
	76,800	Glasgow
	10,300	
	34,000	Dundee

*NB 18-hole units include 9-hole courses, measured as half a unit.  
Source: Scottish Sports Council, Information Digest FP&*

## Proposed New Provision

9. In February 1990 the Association for the Preservation of Rural Scotland carried out a survey of proposals in Scotland. Their findings, updated to April 1993, are summarised in Table 2 and illustrated in Map 1. Some of the proposals were only tentative; in others planning applications had not yet been determined but some 70 had received planning permission although progress on construction has been varied.

**Table 2: Golf Course Proposals between 1986 and 1993\***

	Number	%
Recreational/tourism led: projects in rural areas mostly associated with housing	65	43
Stand-alone golf courses: with little or no development other than club house	68	45
Commercial proposals: with ancillary golf course	14	9
Major strategic development: golf course incidental	4	3
Total	151	100

*\*Proposals total 751 sites comprising 179 golf courses.  
Source: APRS and The Scottish Office*

10. On the whole it has been the proposals for stand-alone (i.e. without related development) and pay-as-you-play courses which have been developed. Forty have been approved and 15 (38%) are under construction or already built. Of the 30 recreational/tourist led projects which have been approved only 3 (10%) are known to be under construction. There are indications that developer interest in the latter type of project has peaked while interest in stand-alone and pay-as-you-play courses is continuing. Even so, fewer than five new courses open each year and it is likely that this will be the order of future development. An 18-hole golf course can cover some 50 hectares, illustrating the significance of each new proposal.

## Course Use and Capacity

11. The 15 per cent of adults who regularly play golf could be expected to play 2 to 3 times a month. Consequently as participation rates do not vary greatly across Scotland, course use varies widely. Rural courses may see as few as 12,000 rounds a year but many municipal courses have to withstand the wear and tear of up to 70,000 rounds. Many private clubs in or close to urban areas operate on about 25,000 rounds and in general about 40,000 rounds is a prudent maximum. It is relatively easy to book a game outside the central lowlands of Scotland, but there may be significant over-subscription near the conurbations. The greatest pressure is felt on certain public courses which are fully booked most of the time.

12. The SSC report showed that nearly two-thirds of all golfers travel less than 8 km. to courses, about the same distance travelled by club members. But access to

# Golf Courses and Associated Development Proposals 1986 - 1993

Map 1

Recreation/Tourism projects mostly associated with housing



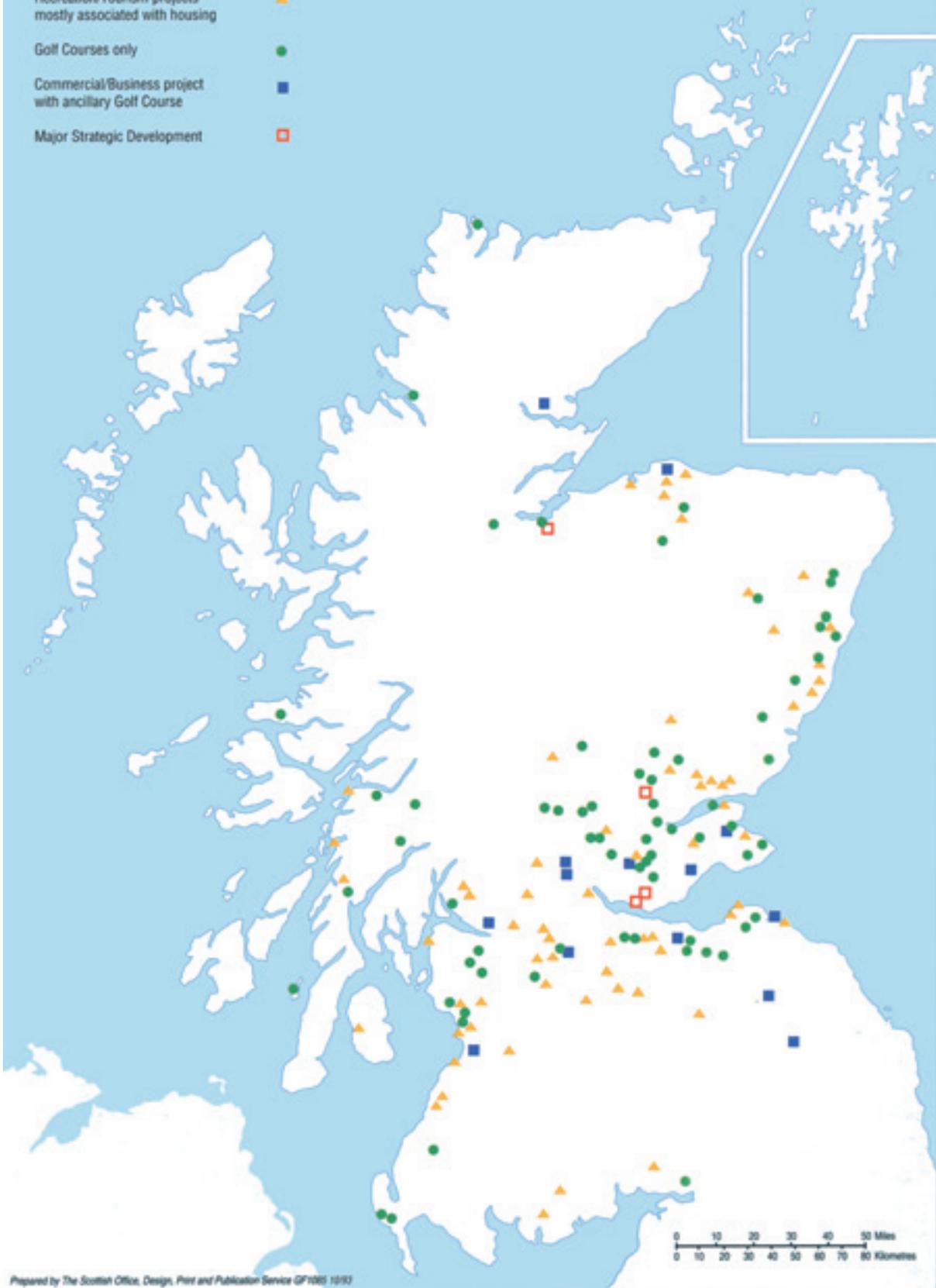
Golf Courses only



Commercial/Business project with ancillary Golf Course



Major Strategic Development



Prepared by The Scottish Office, Design, Print and Publication Service GP1085 10/93

municipal courses, driving ranges and 9-hole courses finds non-members travelling on average 19.5 km. Variations within this range mean that for planning purposes, a 10 km average journey length provides a suitable yardstick.

## **Demand Factors**

13. The SSC study examined levels of participation in areas of Scotland where the waiting lists, use and capacities of the courses were found to be in balance. Through this approach it established an expected level of the demand for golf. By matching this level of demand against the available supply across Scotland the SSC has been able to review the “Sport 2000”<sup>\*</sup> estimates of golfing provision and has identified an unmet demand equal to the capacity of about 60 18-hole municipal courses in and around Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen.

14. Map 2 illustrates the SSC’s priority areas for developing additional provision in response to unmet demand from potential golfers assuming an ideal maximum journey of 10 km. Most of the demand will need to be met on new courses but also through some spare capacity on existing courses and on new practice grounds and driving ranges. Most of the unmet demand arises from the major centres of population.

15. The closer that new courses can be located to major centres of demand, the less distance people will need to travel. The greatest aggregated demand is for the equivalent of over 20 9-hole courses in and around Glasgow. But the areas of opportunity for the construction of new courses extend beyond the immediate centres of demand, in some cases into areas where no specific local deficiency in golf course provision has been measured, for example in north east Fife in relation to demand arising in Dundee.

16. Opportunities for new golf courses are also influenced by other land use and transportation factors and by the greater distances some golfers are willing to travel. Ideally new courses should be distributed so that most golfers have less than 10 km to travel to a golf course. Outside the shaded areas in Map 2, new facilities are less likely to meet the demands of potential golfers. Map 2 should therefore be seen as a guide to the locations which could satisfy the majority of the unmet demand and taking into account the views of the SSC, structure plans could give strategic guidance.

17. Fewer than a third of the club or municipal courses have arrangements with hotels or tourist boards for allocating spare tee-off times to visitors or for participating in package arrangements. Where there is spare capacity, some of the unmet demand could be met on existing municipal and club courses given the will to ensure its release.

18. Map 1 shows that the distribution of the 151 proposals in Table 2 is not confined to the areas where the SSC has identified unmet demand. In areas where provision is already satisfactory, new courses might widen choice locally or offer improved facilities for tourists. In areas of unmet demand however, the SSC will usually endorse new courses and practice facilities.

19. Furthermore the SSC report suggests that demand from golfers to use “country club” style facilities is limited. At existing courses only half the golfers use the bar or changing facilities and a quarter use none of the facilities at all. Sixty per cent of golfers spend less than an hour at the course after the game. Consequently, relatively modest proposals can make a significant contribution to meeting demand.

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<sup>\*</sup>*Sport 2000: A Strategic Approach to the Development of Sport in Scotland, Scottish Sports Council 1989*



20. Interest in the development of new courses in rural areas arises also from Scotland's golfing heritage and is likely to remain strong. Such demand is generally focused in the vicinity of the famous courses which attract growing numbers of tourists. Tourism development is promoted by the Scottish Tourist Board (STB), local area tourist boards and the Scottish Enterprise and Highlands & Islands Enterprise networks and is an important employment generator in the diversification of the rural economy. In some cases a foundation of local need for proposals will help to deal with low tourist patronage in the off-season and other factors which beset tourism. In relation to demand for new or enhanced tourist facilities planning authorities are advised to consult the SSC and where appropriate the STB, particularly in rural areas.

21. The likelihood of new prestige golf courses breaking into the championship circuit is relatively remote although they could attract other economic benefits to the area. Already 4 of the 7 British Open courses are in Scotland but access and accommodation difficulties at Carnoustie would need to be resolved before its reinstatement on the Open circuit. In addition Gleneagles hosts the Scottish Open, has good transportation links and hotel accommodation and continues to attract new business activity to the area.

## *policy framework*

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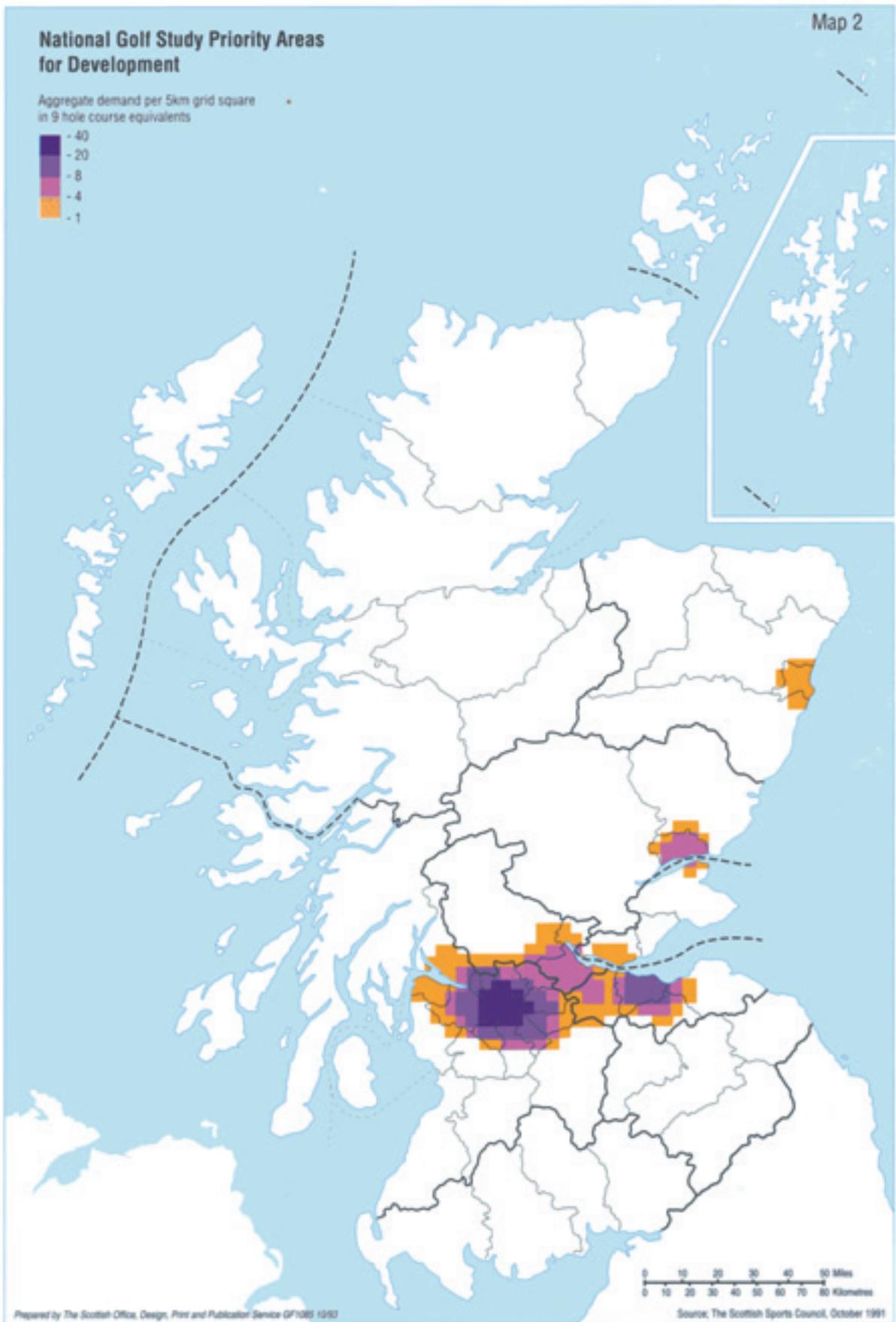
22. The context for determining planning applications is set out in Circulars and National Planning Policy Guidelines. Forthcoming NPPGs on sport and recreation, development in the countryside and coastal planning will update or give new direction to those themes and may be relevant to golf. But they are unlikely to alter significantly the existing national planning policy context for the appraisal of golf courses or related development.

### ***Countryside and Green Belt Development***

23. SDD Circular 24/1985 (Development in the Countryside and Green Belts) relates to development other than housing. It states that existing settlements are more likely to be able to accommodate additional rural development, where servicing costs are lower, impact on agriculture and amenity generally can be minimised, and urban sprawl, the coalescence of settlements and ribbon development can be prevented. The Circular suggests that;

“structure plans should define the general circumstances and criteria for areas within which well designed and well located development, which does not affect land that is important for the maintenance of agriculture, damage the scenic or nature conservation interest of the land, or make undue demands on public services, can be successfully merged into open countryside”

The Circular adds that local plans should be specific in defining any areas in which development in the open countryside may be favoured. Where existing local plans provide for such exceptions only in general terms, the first opportunity should be taken to amplify those statements to give clear advice to developers about how, why and where that development may take place and about any special conditions which are likely to be applied in those areas.



24. NPPG3: Land for Housing, supersedes Circular 24/1985 in relation to housing in the countryside although the overall policy remains similar. The NPPG states that the Government's policy on new housing in the countryside continues to be based on the principle that it should be encouraged on suitable sites in existing settlements unless particular circumstances are clearly identified in development plans or there are special needs.

25. Government policy attaches particular importance to the maintenance and protection of green belts around our towns and cities. Development within green belts approved in development plans continues to be strictly controlled. One of the purposes of green belts is to provide for recreation and they may in some circumstances be suitable locations for golf courses, bearing in mind their relationship to the SSC priority areas for development. Golf courses using existing buildings or with no associated development other than a clubhouse and equipment storage, are likely to cause the least impact and could remove uncertainty about the development potential of the inner and most critical parts of green belts. Associated development such as new housing is however likely to be incompatible with green belt policy unless such sites can be justified as part of an overall strategic appraisal of housing land requirements in a structure plan and where they do not undermine the continued overall effectiveness of the green belt. In some cases, where sensitively designed, there may be appropriate locations for driving ranges within green belts but sites within urban areas, closer to the unmet demand should also be examined.

26. Development plans should indicate the locations which might be acceptable for new courses, golf related settlements and associated development in the terms set by Circular 24/1985 and NPPG 3, allowing for the construction, extension or change of use of existing buildings in connection with golf. They should also reaffirm the protection which is normally afforded to the countryside including measures to provide for any loss of access, for example footpaths and informal recreational opportunities, on land taken for golf courses.

### **Listed Buildings, Archaeology and The Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes**



27. The Government's policies give a high priority to conserving the nation's cultural heritage which includes historic buildings and scheduled monuments as well as the parks, gardens or landscapes in which they may be set. Golf course developers are often attracted to such locations and special care will be needed in considering the implications of new proposals alongside the continuing need to protect the historic, archaeological and visual qualities for which the cultural heritage is important. Golf courses may offer a use and a future for some historic buildings in the countryside but associated development such as new housing may well be incompatible with either the historic buildings or their designed landscape setting.

28. Statutory planning procedures exist to identify and protect listed buildings and scheduled monuments and to deal with the development proposals which may affect them. Reference should be made to Historic Scotland's Memorandum of Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (new edition 1993) on the statutory processes governing these designations, with guidelines for the detailed consideration of cases. Guidance and advice on the appropriate treatment of archaeological sites within development proposals, including the requirement to obtain scheduled monument consent, is contained in NPPG 5 and PAN 42 on Archaeology and Planning. In addition, the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (Scotland) Order 1992 (the GDPO) requires the

Secretary of State to be consulted where development affects a category A listed building, an historic garden or designed landscape included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland, or a scheduled monument. Planning authorities hold relevant copies of the Inventory which can also be obtained from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). The GDPO also requires SNH to be consulted in relation to historic gardens or designed landscapes. In addition to this PAN, advice is currently being prepared by Historic Scotland in relation to proposed development affecting designed landscapes and historic gardens.

### **Land for Housing and New Settlements**



29. NPPG3: Land for Housing, recognises the role which new settlements may serve where developments linked to leisure and tourism would have an acceptable environmental impact and where there is likely to be a market for the houses. Leisure and tourist developments can also improve the attractiveness of an area and in turn bring employment benefits. However the leisure or tourist facility should not in itself provide the basis for approving housing development which would not normally be acceptable in planning terms.

30. Where leisure uses such as golf courses are proposed with related housing in high amenity rural areas, special attention needs to be paid to their overall impact, particularly on landscape character and the settlement pattern. The housing element should be considered within the development plan requirement for housing land and assessed against development plan policies. Paragraphs 42-46, 56 and 75 below provide further justification for this approach.

31. Where time-share accommodation and holiday chalet villages feature in golf related development proposals, they do not normally exhibit the characteristics of a new settlement so the accommodation cannot be counted against housing land supply in development plans. Their impact in terms of local economic and social benefit should be considered in relation to policies for tourism. Structure plans should however determine the overall strategy for leisure facilities leaving detailed considerations to local plans.

32. PAN36: Siting and Design of New Housing in the Countryside describes how new housing groups in the countryside can derive their inspiration from village layouts rather than suburban estates. Developers should be encouraged to apply this principle to golf related settlements demonstrating an understanding and regard for the surroundings. Layouts should seek to avoid the creation of an urban frontage that presents an alien suburban character. Layouts should also show that the advantages of open outlooks provided by the design of the housing arrangement in relation to fairways and greens, have taken account of the need to ensure the safety of residents who might otherwise be at risk from wayward golf balls. The orientation of new properties should also aim to maximise their energy efficiency.



33. To provide for unmet demand course-owning clubs may seek to develop parts of their land to finance extensions and developments especially in urban areas. But golf courses in addition to their sports use, perform valuable functions for walking, as habitats and wildlife corridors and they can improve the visual amenity in urban areas. The prospect of new development on golf courses should have regard to these additional functions.

### **Agricultural Land and Farm Diversification**

34. SDD Circular 18/1987 (Development Involving Agricultural Land) states that as the need to maximise agricultural output declines, so the need to diversify the rural economy into other kinds of activity on and off the farm increases; introducing other types of employment and development provided that it is on a scale appropriate to rural areas.



Planning authorities should consider the implications for agriculture of new proposals alongside the implications for economic development and the continuing need to protect the scenic and other qualities for which the countryside is valued.

35. Development continues to be restricted on prime agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3.1). A stand-alone golf course, together with any necessary ancillary developments requiring planning permission such as car parks, access roads and clubhouses, can be considered reversible in the terms set by Circular 18/1987 and therefore acceptable in general as an alternative use for agricultural land. Other related developments such as housing, or

any subsequent irreversible development of the golf course land itself, should be treated as planning applications in the normal way and considered in the light of existing policies, land quality and consultation procedures applying to development on agricultural land generally.

36. Taking Circular 24/1985 into account, proposals for the reuse of existing buildings in rural areas should not be refused unless there are specific and convincing reasons which cannot be overcome by imposing conditions. Section 50 agreements can ensure that the land could return to agriculture if required. Where agricultural land is an adjunct to the country estate or a feature of a Garden Inventory site, aspects such as historic field boundaries or earthworks may require careful assessment and protection when development proposals are brought forward.

37. The Scottish Office booklet, Farm Diversification and Planning Permission (1990) gives advice about alternative uses of agricultural land and appropriate conversion of redundant farm buildings. In general it indicates the need for planning permission for new outdoor sports activities and reference is made to the principles of Circular 24/1985. Substantial new housing development should not be regarded as diversification.

## **Environmental Assessment**

38. SDD Circular 13/1988 (Environmental Assessment) introduced the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1988. Schedule 2, Part 11 of the Regulations; "Other Projects", is relevant to proposals such as holiday villages or hotel complexes. EA may be required where in the case of a golf course associated with such development, the planning authorities consider that the proposal might have significant environmental effects.

39. EA may be valuable in demonstrating how golf related developments could be environmentally sustainable. This may include consideration of the impact on landscape character, tree cover, water courses and wetlands and habitats such as sensitive grassland and scrub vegetation. Patterns of informal recreational use, historic, cultural and topographical landscape features and archaeological remains are also vulnerable to disturbance. The most pressing cases for EA may be where proposals overlap with, or lie adjacent to, sensitive locations, in particular, SPAs, SSSIs and NNRs.

40. Environmental statements should describe the likely significant effects of new proposals. In relation to golf related proposals which merit EA, environmental statements may include the consequences for the environment of new structures, hard surfaces, landscape impact and traffic generation and the enhancement of or impact on local habitat diversity where agricultural land is removed from productive use. Archaeological interests should be dealt with under the requirement to describe the likely significant effects on the cultural heritage.

41. EA for golf related developments is likely to be the exception rather than the rule. Where it is undertaken, the EA process should elicit better understanding of the relevant environmental issues both for developers in producing designs and for planning authorities in considering whether to grant planning permission. Circular 13/1988 advises that developers should approach planning authorities at as early a stage as possible in cases where there is likely to be any question of the need for them to provide an environmental statement.

## ***golf related planning issues***

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### **Ancillary Development - Commercial Considerations**

42. Fewer than a quarter of recently proposed golf course projects with ancillary development are within the areas of unmet demand identified by the SSC. This provides some evidence not only that developer interest lies primarily with the related development rather than the golf course but also that proposals are chiefly in areas where there is no overriding demand for additional golf course capacity. While in some cases ancillary development can assist in offsetting costs, the SSC suggests that:

"inexpensive pay-as-you-play golf course provision close to population centres may be at least as viable as major golf, leisure and residential complexes, and may contribute more to the development of the sport in Scotland."

*Source: SSC Information Digest FP5*

43. Partnerships between developers and local authorities could share the initial capital outlay until the courses are open and earning income. The key however is to keep costs to a minimum. There are many new golf courses where quality has not been

compromised by low capital outlay. Competing uses for development land, particularly in central Scotland and the green belts, make the prudent funding of low cost golf courses an even more important aspect in the overall package.

44. Where a golf course proposal forms part of a mixed development with another use such as an hotel, a conference centre, a country club, villas or chalets, or with a combination of these, the developer may suggest that only the complete package will be viable. For example, where the restoration of a country house is involved, developers may claim that the other developments are required to raise the capital for the repairs of the house. In these circumstances there is a risk that the site will become overdeveloped to the detriment of the very qualities which attracted the proposal in the first place. Developers and planning authorities should consider the other mechanisms available to secure the objectives of the repair of great houses, through the use of repairs notices, grant-aid, tax concessions available to the owners of outstanding buildings and land, or by conversion to form a number of dwellings, with owners sharing the use and upkeep of the policies.

45. The costs of providing access, drainage and other infrastructure which are borne by developers rise steeply the more complex the development becomes. Some initial costs can be avoided by retaining natural landforms and indigenous planting which are the foundations for a good golfing environment. High initial capital costs may in turn appear to be balanced by revenue generated by sales from associated housing development, the scale of which may outweigh the central function of the golf course. The importance of the golf course amongst the other elements of the proposal will therefore be of material interest to the planning authority. The use of a suspensive condition or a Section 50 agreement may in some circumstances be the most practical means of satisfying both parties on matters such as development phasing, course management and achieving continuing public accessibility to golf by ensuring the provision of pay-as-you-play courses rather than those with restricted membership.

46. Golf course operating costs can also vary considerably according to the number of rounds, the course design and the initial investment. In England the Eastern Council for Sport and Recreation advise that for a course taking say 50,000 rounds per annum, developers should not economise on initial layout or drainage, as maintenance, management and even rebuilding costs are consequently high.

### **Grant Assistance**

47. Local Enterprise Companies operate a range of assistance schemes to encourage economic development and environmental improvement. While they have no direct responsibility for the provision of sports and recreation facilities, they may be able to provide advice and assistance related to proposed developments where this is consistent with and complementary to their activities.

48. Grants and loans are available from the Royal & Ancient Golf Club for certain projects. Further financial assistance for golf developments may be available through the Foundation for Sport and the Arts.

### **Practice Facilities**

49. Practice grounds or putting greens also meet the needs of golfers and may only require 1-2 ha of land. The SSC operates a purpose-designed model golf practice area at the Scottish National Sports Centre, Inverclyde. It features driving bays, a variety of different greens and conditions. The SSC hopes that it will stimulate the development of more practice facilities. In Scotland, a quarter of all clubs have no facilities of this kind.



50. Driving ranges can also contribute to overall provision either operating independently or in association with new courses. They are normally more intensive land uses than golf courses with different visitor patterns and potentially higher levels of traffic generation. The additional buildings or the galleries, especially if they are 2-tier, can appear intrusive unless sensitively sited. Ranges may need high fencing and generally require floodlighting to permit evening use. Urban or urban fringe rather than open countryside sites may be preferable as they are closer to their markets and reduce the need for excessive travel, provided they satisfy other planning objectives. Driving ranges in green belts should only be sited where they do not make an unacceptable impact on landscape setting.

### *Transport and Parking*

51. The capacity of the surrounding roads needs to be capable of accommodating anticipated flows. The standard of the rural road network varies widely and prior consultation with the appropriate roads authority may identify the best means of accommodating increased traffic. It would be desirable to locate driving ranges and golf courses close to bus routes. It is estimated that at the weekend peak hours (07.00-09.00, 12.00-13.00 and 16.00-17.00) as many as 50 cars per hour may leave and enter an 18-hole course but this is only a rough guide. Other surveys indicate that broadly half of all golfers have arrived by 10.00 but summer weekday peaks can be around 16.30-17.30. Over a third of people practising at driving ranges arrive after 18.00.



52. Parking provision for an 18-hole golf course should be between 100 and 120 spaces, based on a maximum peak summer day use of 250 golfers with each staying five and a half hours and each car arriving with an average 1.4 golfers. In many cases, and for most days of the year 100 parking spaces should be quite adequate. Where

new courses are likely to provide for tournaments, provision should be made at the planning application stage for the large number of cars likely to be attracted to the events in order to avoid local traffic congestion. Such occasional extra parking provision need not be surfaced. Additional parking will be required for any ancillary developments in accordance with the planning authorities' parking standards.

## *golf course design*

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53. Golf course design is a specialist subject and expert advice could assist developers and planning authorities when new courses are being proposed. This section sets out some of the important siting and design matters that have to be addressed.

### *Siting and Maintenance*



54. The existing landscape of the site and its surroundings will be the starting point for course design. The principle of a golf course and any associated development should be examined at this stage. Often the task will be to merge the course into the landscape, particularly where it is already of a high quality. As a result prominent or exposed sites on high ground or for example on islands, by the coast or on sites with an upland backdrop may need careful attention. In some cases however it will be possible to enhance both the on-site environment and that of the adjoining property.

55. Degraded landscapes particularly in urban areas, on the urban fringe and on land previously damaged by mineral or other workings may benefit from the environmental enhancement of a golf course. There are good examples on a former landfill site at Gartlea in Airdrie and on land recovered from colliery bings at Dora by Cowdenbeath and in



Blantyre. Where a golf course has enhanced the local environment there may be scope for extending the benefits through further improvement schemes or using the amenity value of the course to attract other development. The development plan can indicate the opportunities taking into account overall environmental quality and the existing business and industrial land supply.



56. The plans for a course will show whether the design will be expensive to construct. Clearly if extensive earth moving is needed to create a new landform or water feature, or if the design relies upon the planting of mature or semi-mature trees, the construction costs are going to be relatively high. These costs may be reflected in the scale of related development associated with the golf course itself. In these circumstances a simplified design might reduce or remove entirely the need for related development.

57. A par-72 course should be about 5,500m-5,800m long with two equally balanced 9-hole loops depending on site constraints. Tournament play generally requires 6,100m. Eighteen-hole courses typically cover 50-70 hectares; more where historic designed landscapes are used. 9-hole courses covering 20-30 hectares with a shorter playing time can benefit new entrants to golf.

58. Wear and tear takes its toll on courses which are not designed for all seasons; even the Open courses take two years to recover from the event. Some grasses are more robust than others on fairways and particularly on greens. While this is a detailed design matter, care of the course as a whole, which may contain rare plant communities or wildlife, ultimately lies with greenkeepers whose skills can run hand-in-glove with good conservation.



59. Coastal erosion on links courses subject to storm action has prompted some clubs as far apart as Royal Dornoch, Nairn, Elie, Turnberry and Southernness to take steps to stabilise dunes in order to protect greens and fairways. Planning authorities should consider very carefully the long term consequences of siting new courses in similar areas. The need for sea defences may alter local landscape or ecology to an unacceptable degree and be costly to maintain. Saline water tables may cause difficulty in establishing new coastal golf courses.



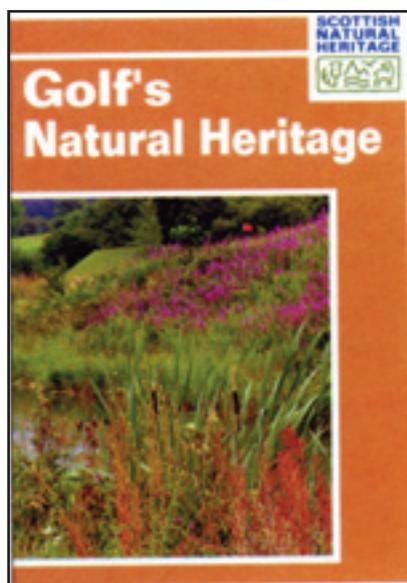
## Natural Heritage

60. An essential quality of the early Scottish courses was that they took advantage of the natural features of the landscape. Links, parkland and moorland courses all feature natural hazards such as dunes, drumlins, moraines, tree clumps and rough ground cover. Proposals for any new golf courses in such areas should demonstrate that the landscape will not be adversely affected to an unacceptable degree.



61. Course design should show an understanding of the local landscape character, cultural heritage, nature and geological conservation and the opportunities for habitat creation and informal recreational use. There is considerable scope for choice in the placing and design of club houses and maintenance buildings within the 50 or more hectares a new course may occupy. On driving ranges the scope may not be so wide and the selection of the whole site may be just as important as the location of any associated buildings. Certain aspects of PAN 36: Siting and Design of New Housing in the Countryside and PAN 39: Farm and Forestry Buildings may be appropriate to the siting and design of some of those new buildings. Since the buildings may form the focus for holes 1, 9, 10 and 18 they can be the key to overall course design.

62. Layout design should be based on a thorough survey and analysis of the selected site, including its ecology, archaeology and landscape history. A survey (which may contribute to an environmental statement) can indicate where tees may be constructed without the need for terraces; where they can be placed to minimise impact and how fairways might be kept within existing internal boundaries such as hedgerows and dykes. Artificial water hazards can be constructed in the less prominent parts of a site.



63. Lower investment in earthworking and planting can reduce the level of maintenance including the application of pesticides and fertilizers and help to minimise visual impact. Areas of existing native woodland, shrubbery, gorse and heather can form the basis for "roughs" augmented by indigenous planting where required. A management plan for the golf course should address long term objectives for the conservation of the natural heritage as well as daily maintenance issues. Advice on integrated management planning for landscape, nature conservation and heritage issues on golf courses is provided in "Golf's Natural Heritage", published in 1993 by SNH.

## **Cultural Heritage and Historic Landscapes**

64. Considerable care in design and layout is required to avoid eroding the historic setting of listed buildings or scheduled monuments with for example associated development or large car parks. Experience has shown that the context of buildings and gardens and the pastoral character of many historic designed landscapes is difficult to reconcile with the contrast of new planting, rough and fairway which a golf course may require. In some cases planning authorities may conclude that the cultural value of a building, monument, or parkland outweighs the advantages of a golf course proposal.

65. Where it is considered that a golf development can be accommodated in an historic landscape or can include and re-use an historic building, planning conditions can ensure that ancillary development is properly phased in relation to the golf course and managed in the long term.

66. Historic Scotland and SNH are able to provide informal advice at an early stage to both planning authorities and developers. A detailed planning application is the best means of demonstrating that development can be accommodated on the proposed site in a manner which is sympathetic to the landscape or the setting of a listed building. Applications should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the site and its history and provide details of the scale and layout of the course including the extent and layout of any associated development. The extent of earthmoving and planting required will be important issues in the overall assessment of the effect of the development on the character and historic interest of the designed landscape and any listed buildings.

67. For sites included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes (and the forthcoming update) or in other historic landscapes of known importance, planning applications for golf courses and associated development will require the most careful assessment by planning authorities. In general such developments should not be permitted in Inventory sites where a downgrading of historic landscape character or architectural quality would occur.

68. All construction activities associated with the development of golf courses which involve ground disturbance can have serious implications for archaeological remains. Such activities include earthmoving to create greens, bunkers and hazards, drainage, irrigation, tree planting, other landscaping, roads and tracks and the construction of any associated buildings. However golf courses can be created without disturbing archaeological remains provided these are identified before construction commences and the design suitably adapted. In order to identify any archaeological interest in a site and determine the best means to protect it advice should be sought at the outset from the appropriate Regional or Islands Archaeologist or from Historic Scotland. The National Monuments Record of Scotland maintained by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland is an additional source of information.

69. Where it has been agreed that archaeological remains are to be preserved it is important that their protection is secured throughout the lifetime of the golf course. This is particularly important where design or management changes involving ground disturbance are planned after the golf course has been established. The position and extent of protected remains should be accurately mapped in consultation with the archaeological authorities. Planning conditions or agreements may be necessary to ensure the long term protection of the archaeological heritage. Further information on the management of archaeological remains is contained in Historic Scotland's leaflet *Managing Scotland's Archaeological Heritage*.

## *development planning*

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70. The policy context set out in Circulars and NPPGs should be reflected in structure and local plans and will be a material consideration in deciding individual planning applications. Particularly in the areas of unmet demand identified by the SSC, planning authorities should consider whether development plan alterations and replacement plans should include policies and proposals for golf courses and related development.

### **Structure planning**

71. It is for each planning authority to determine whether golf courses and related developments are issues which require specific treatment in structure plans. Planning authorities will find it helpful to establish the spare capacity of existing courses in association with clubs, federations, the SSC, the Scottish Tourist Board and local area tourist boards before formulating their policies and proposals. Where an authority decides that a policy framework for the provision of new courses and other facilities is necessary then it should be set within the wider context of a strategy for sport, leisure and tourism. An important input to this will be the SSC Information Digest FP5. The areas of unmet demand for golf courses are focused on the countryside around towns and cities and in the green belts and this could provide the basis for strategic policies in structure plans. It may also be appropriate to include guidance for the preparation of local plans.

72. The scale of all the unmet demand identified by the SSC is unlikely to be satisfied in the short term. It will therefore be important to set out a long term approach to the issue as an integral part of the structure plan's vision for the area. The advice in PAN 37: Structure Planning is that plans should have a long term perspective with a time horizon extending at least 10 years beyond the expected date of approval.

### **Local Planning and Development Control**

73. "The purpose of local planning is to guide development and changes in land use so that the physical environment can best serve the community" (PAN 30 - Local Planning). Authorities seeking to increase the provision of courses, irrespective of whether they are to be publicly or privately owned, may seek to identify sites in local plans. Policies which provide positive guidance to developers should also be set out.

74. Policies will have to address development issues affecting existing courses, new courses and related development. In formulating their local plan policies planning authorities should aim to:

- indicate how Government and structure plan policy on development associated with new courses will be applied;
- set out planning policy and proposals relating to existing and new courses;
- state preferences for landscape protection and enhancement, conservation and habitat management for existing and new courses;
- safeguard existing landscape character and natural heritage interests;
- safeguard historic buildings, archaeological sites and designed landscapes.

75. Where a planning application includes a golf course and related development, key issues for determining the way in which the proposal is evaluated will be whether the golf course is of primary or secondary significance to the development and the comparative scale and value of the scheme's components. The general policy framework is set out in paragraphs 23-41. Other essential factors which should be considered are:

- a foundation of local need or tourist demand for the golf course;
- the suitability of the site for the associated development in geographical, geological, topographical, nature conservation, cultural heritage and landscape policy terms;
- the retention of access to existing public open space or the creation of opportunities for new access;
- respect for and use of existing elements of natural and cultural heritage value and the scope for enhancement.

### **Consultations**

76. Where appropriate, consultations should be carried out with:-

- the Scottish Sports Council;
- the Scottish Tourist Board or local area tourist board;
- the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department regarding developments on agricultural land;
- Historic Scotland on historic gardens and buildings, designed parklands and landscapes, ancient monuments, conservation areas and archaeology;
- the appropriate Regional Archaeologist for information and advice on archaeology;
- Scottish Natural Heritage on a range of natural heritage issues, including designed landscapes and landscape in general;
- the Scottish Wildlife Trust for detailed advice on nature conservation;
- a landscape architect and ecologist for expert professional advice on golf course design and natural and cultural heritage conservation.

## *conclusions*

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77. The need in Scotland as indicated by the SSC, lies primarily in the provision of modestly budgeted new courses and the enhancement of existing facilities with the aim of meeting the demand of potential golfers currently unable to enter the sport. Improved facilities could also cater for visitors to Scotland.



78. Development plans can assist in providing guidance on appropriate locations and assist in identifying places where their impact particularly on landscape character would be unacceptable. New courses can encourage participation in the sport and relieve pressure on existing facilities. They can help to improve the image of an area, attract or diversify economic development and assist in the promotion of tourism. Accessibility to the game is a tradition in Scotland which should be maintained. Above all the growth of golf within the overall context of sports provision should be encouraged in the areas of unmet demand and where appropriate reflected in policies and proposals in development plans.

## *note*

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79. Enquiries about the content of this Planning Advice Note should be addressed to Graham Marchbank (031-244 7525). Further copies and a list of current NPPGs and PANs may be obtained from Sandra Carey, Area 2-H, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ (0131 244 7540)



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## *annex 2 organisations providing information and advice*

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Secretary to the Trustees Foundation for Sport and the Arts P0 Box 20 Liverpool L9 6EA	
Historic Scotland 20 Brandon Street Edinburgh EH3 SRA	031-2443144
Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews Fife KY16 9JD	0334-72112
Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland John Sinclair House 16 Bernard Terrace Edinburgh EH8 9NX	031-662 1456
Scottish Golf Union 181A Whitehouse Road Edinburgh EH4 6BY	031-339 7546
Scottish Natural Heritage Landscape and Restoration Branch 2 Anderson Place Edinburgh EH6 5NP	031-446 2400
Scottish Sports Council Caledonia House South Gyle Edinburgh EH12 9DQ	031-3177200
Scottish Tourist Board 23 Ravelston Terrace Edinburgh EH4 3EU	031-332 2433
Scottish Wildlife Trust Cramond House Kirk Cramond Cramond Glebe Road Edinburgh EH4 6NS	031-312 7765

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