

WELCOME FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the first edition of **FOReUM**. It is produced by the Committed to Green Foundation, an independent charitable organisation dedicated to the promotion of environmental sustainability in golf.

The newsletter will also service the recently launched European Forum for Sustainable Golf (EFSG) - a partnership of golfing and environmental organisations, set up to exchange information on golf's environmental impact, and to develop practical projects which benefit both golf and the environment. The activities of the Forum will be communicated to you via this newsletter.

It is in the nature of CTG's work, and a basic principle of the Forum, to be participative. As such, this is your newsletter, just as it is your Forum. We would therefore ask you to contribute letters and articles to CTG and the Forum on any matters relating to golf and the environment.

We would also ask that you help to circulate the newsletter to other contacts you may have, and to colleagues within your own organisation. Please encourage others to register their email addresses with us so that we can add them to the mailing list.

We hope this newsletter will develop over time to become a useful addition to the European golf industry as it addresses the challenges and embraces the opportunities of environmental stewardship.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts and to working with many of you to demonstrate golf's commitment to care of the environment.

Jonathan Smith
Committed to Green Foundation

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LAUNCH OF EUROPEAN FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE GOLF

The European Forum for Sustainable Golf, a major new initiative designed to assist the European golf sector in addressing environmental sustainability issues was recently launched in Brussels by the Committed to Green Foundation. The launch was marked by the personal attendance of top officials from the European Commission, WWF International, the European Golf Association, the International Olympic Committee Sport and Environment Commission and the United Nations Environment Programme.

The European Forum for Sustainable Golf is an independently operated, stakeholder led initiative which will:

- provide a centre for information exchange between organisations;
- improve cohesion of environmental strategies within golf;
- assist in the identification of priority sustainability issues to be addressed, and develop partnership projects to do so;
- promote new environmental innovation within golf;
- promote environmental initiatives and practices carried out within golf to external organisations and the public; and,
- provide a credible interface between golf, government regulators and environmental NGOs.

The founding principles of the Forum are independence; good science; stakeholder participation; and transparency.

EFSG LAUNCH continued over.....

EFSG LAUNCH continued:

The Launch was attended by a broad cross section of golfing and environmental organisations, which included representation from golf's main governing bodies; golf federations; greenkeeper associations; golf course architects institute; golf course owners and administrators associations; and research institutes.

Founding partners in the development of the Forum are Deutsche Bank and Volvo, existing partners of globally renowned golf events. The Launch was sponsored by Ransomes Jacobsen.

Speaking at the Launch, Catherine Day, Director General of the EC Environment Directorate said: "The European Commission is pleased to see the golf sector take this important step towards sustainability. Without the correct mechanisms in place golf would remain unable to tackle the environmental and social challenges which it faces. The independence of this Forum is paramount, adding credibility to the work of the diverse range of organisations within the sector. We hope the sector will embrace the Forum and participate fully through its stakeholder led initiatives – towards outcomes that are beneficial to Europe's people and environment."

Björn Nordberg, President of the European Golf Association also presented at the event, saying: "Golf does indeed face many environmental challenges. We must apply the principles of sustainable development to golf course development. We must be good environmental stewards, minimising water use and protecting water quality. We must conserve landscapes, biodiversity and cultural heritage. There are many examples of new and existing golf courses bringing environmental benefits, alongside those to the community and economy. However, if golf is to thrive, it is in all our interests for good practice to be more widely replicated and scientifically reported".

The Forum will be governed by a Steering Committee, chaired by Maria Strandberg, Director of Research and Development with the Swedish Golf Federation and Scandinavian Turfgrass Foundation. Steering group members will be representative of golfing and environmental organisations and specialists in golf environment issues.

LINKS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD

The Launch of the EFSG has created a new conduit for information exchange and partnership working with a range of external organisations—so important if golf is to effectively communicate its environmental stewardship.

In particular, the Committed to Green Foundation were delighted to receive such a positive endorsement from the European Commission Environment Directorate.

The Forum provides exactly the mechanism the Commission have been seeking to facilitate exchange of information on environmental issues and golf's adoption of sustainable development and management practices.

Through the Forum, the Commission and other important government agencies and NGO's such as WWF, UNEP and Birdlife International, will be able to see the collective effort of the golf industry towards environmental sustainability.

All four organisations encouraged golf bodies to play an active part in the Forum.

POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Two early priorities and opportunities for partnership working with the EC have emerged. The first is the research, development and promotion of sustainable development guidelines for new golf courses. It is hoped that this work will set out a consistent process, supported by technical information, to enable golf course developers and architects to put forward the most sustainable project proposals. A key element will relate to the correct application of EIA. The same guidance will be invaluable to local and regional planning authorities, in enabling them to better evaluate proposals, and to offer more informed and constructive feedback to developers, architects and their technical consultants.

Once these guidelines are established, there could be potential to then develop related standards which can be used as the basis for the environmental accreditation for new golf courses.

The second priority issue is the development of a clear Environmental Management and Accreditation System for existing golf facilities. At present a number of different systems are used, none of which combine the necessary robust and credible structure of registration, audit and verification, whilst remaining user friendly and directly relevant to golf.

There is an opportunity to finally develop such a system, which may involve the fusion of EMAS accreditation with the Committed to Green Environmental Management System.

Discussions are currently underway with the EC on both of these topics and we will be seeking your thoughts via a consultation questionnaire shortly.

THE FORUM—HOW IT WILL WORK

As mentioned earlier, the Forum belongs to the golf sector. It is not under the sole ownership of any one organisation. It has been set up by the Committed to Green Foundation, who will undertake its administration.

It was established in response to many golfing and environmental requests for such a mechanism. It was established to provide, for the first time, a meeting place for a wide range of golf organisations to discuss and take action on the common theme of environmental sustainability. In addition it will provide a formal interface between golfing and environmental organisations—which has been welcomed by those external bodies.

But how will it work? Whilst we have a very good idea of how the Forum will be structured, what topics it will address and what its wider function is, it would be wrong for the Foundation to dictate its structures and projects. This is for the Steering Committee and Focus Groups to decide, and will evolve over time.

We can say that the Forum will be led by a Steering Committee (invitations just sent), Chaired by Maria Strandberg, which will carry representation of a cross section of golfing and environmental organisations. We anticipate around 18 to 20 people will sit on the Steering Committee. We will invite representatives from other parts of the world to listen and contribute—the US Environment Institute for Golf, the Audubon Society, and others.

The Steering Committee will then appoint Chairpersons for a range of 'Task Groups'. This should happen late in 2005, after the first meeting of the Steering Committee in Autumn 2005. We anticipate that the priority Task Groups will cover Communications, Sustainable Development and Technical Issues. An Accreditation Sub Group is also being considered but this will be formalised as discussions with the EC on the future development of an accreditation system become clearer.

Some of the priority projects that have been suggested for the Forum , in addition to the sustainable development guidance and accreditation scheme, include:

- Portfolio of environmental evidence for golf
- Communications strategy
- Guidance on setting up national golf environment partnerships
- Eco efficiency and 'business environment' guidance
- Study tours and exchanges
- Regular technical and training workshops
- Annual Forum Conference
- Golf and climate change guidance
- Golf and water resources guidance
- EIA training workshops

We hope that many of you will be involved in the activities of the Forum as they grow over the next two to three years.

If you have any thoughts on priority projects or suggestions for the Forum Steering Committee to consider, then please let us know.

Environmental Management Systems (EMS) and Accreditation for Golf Facilities

*Golf needs one clear Environmental Management and Accreditation System.
This is the message we keep hearing...*

For many years the golf sector has been dabbling with a number of different forms of Environmental Management and Accreditation. This has culminated in a slightly dilute approach, where golf facilities can choose between a number of programmes, including the more rigid, costly and less 'golf' relevant schemes such as **ISO 14001** and the European Commission's **EMAS**.

In the mid 1990's, in recognition of the fact that neither of these two systems were well suited to golf, the European Commission decided to fund the development of a specific golf sector programme. This was, and is, **Committed to Green**.

Since the launch of CTG in 1997 we have learned a great deal about what golf facilities want from an EMS and associated accreditation label. We know that if facilities are going to make the effort they want a meaningful label. We also know that they are very sensitive to the amount of effort (time and money) that goes into getting it. Two characteristics that are not all that easy to reconcile!

However, we believe that it is feasible to create an environmental management and accreditation system which is:

- Robust and credible, (i.e. worth getting)
- Not too costly and time consuming
- Flexible for all types of golf facility
- Relevant to golf, and beneficial to the management of golf courses

What's more, **we do not think we are far away from having such a system.**

We are about to run a sweeping review of Committed to Green, to address many of the concerns that have arisen over the past 7 years (too rigid, too much paperwork, lack of clarity over how you start and where you finish, lack of promotion etc.). One key challenge to CTG has been to establish a system for **registration and verification** in different countries. Whilst this is working well in some countries, many others do not have the people in place to provide the administration.

A solution would be to trim CTG back to being the Environmental Management System (EMS) for golf, which then merges in to an existing formal accreditation system. At present we are considering EMAS due to its direct link to the European Commission, credibility and flexible nature.

Imagine this.....develop an **environmental programme** for your golf facility based on the golf relevant CTG EMS and then register this system with EMAS. Get your **verification through EMAS**, and become a leader in environmental management as an EMAS certified site.

EMAS for small businesses has also been reviewed recently, which may suit golf facilities very well. Costs for registration are likely to be around €500, with each three year verification costing between ,€1,000 and €2,000. What do you think of these figures? Too much for a very credible environmental accreditation from the European Commission? Bear in mind that golf facilities may be able to access local SME and environmental grant aid to assist with such costs!

We will involve many of you in the forthcoming questionnaire review of CTG and other systems, and we hope to be running a concurrent trial of CTG EMS with EMAS - to see if it is something that can be rolled out in the future.

We would of course be very pleased to hear your views on how we should be taking this forward to **develop a management and accreditation system which satisfies all the requirements**. You can e-mail or write to us at any time on this matter.

NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Whilst there is much to be done at a pan-European level if we are to portray a comprehensive and credible programme for golf and the environment, there is perhaps an even more important national perspective.

Golf in every country needs to demonstrate its care of the environment to national government, government agencies, relevant NGO's and the wider public. This can only be properly achieved through the establishment of National Golf Environment Initiatives. A few already exist, in countries like Italy, Sweden, Netherlands, Scotland and England.

Ideally these initiatives should in themselves be partnerships or industry forums. Take the EFSG model and apply it to every large country, or consortia of smaller countries, in Europe. What a joined up effort this would represent, what good it would do golf.....and to relatively small financial cost!

It would also enable golf organisations within different countries to come together to set national priorities and projects— to establish national 'Sustainability in Golf' Strategies, each weighted to the different legal and cultural situations in each country. These strategies should ideally be driven by a neutral partnership of golfing and environmental organisations.

Where such partnerships already exist, we see numerous benefits to golf:

- Joint project funding, with government input
- Increased recognition of golf's social and environmental contribution
- Public awareness projects
- National technical guidance for new development and various environmental issues
- Government recognition and support for golf that balances economic development with wider society and environmental benefits
- Provision of highly valued advisory services to golf facilities

A priority project of the EFSG will be to produce guidance and case studies which demonstrate why national action is fundamental if golf is to accrue the benefits of being a proactive sectoral leader in sustainability.

FUNDING UPDATE

The Foundation are currently in close discussions with a number of commercial partners, who have expressed considerable interest in funding the ongoing administration and development of the Forum, and some of the project activity mentioned previously.

These partners are existing golf sponsors, who recognise that they can put something back into the game of golf, by enabling golf organisations to demonstrate their environmental care. They recognise the importance of this to the long term sustainability and success of the game itself.

The existing partners, who have enabled the Forum to be developed to this stage, are Volvo and Deutsche Bank.

We are hopeful of securing a number of lead partners in a three year programme, by the end of 2005. This would secure the running of the Forum from 2006 to 2008.

THE COMMITTED TO GREEN FOUNDATION



Fenton Barns
North Berwick
East Lothian
Scotland
EH39 5EP

Tel. 0044 (0) 1620 850659; Fax. 0044 (0) 1620 850764
E-mail. jonathan.ctg@virgin.net; www.committedtogreen.org