



ENGLAND  
GOLF

# A letter from our CEO

6 May 2020

In the first few weeks following the lockdown of 23 March, the most frequently asked question to myself and the staff at England Golf was 'why are golf courses closed?' We were able to refer to the conditions of lockdown which made it incompatible for our facilities to remain open – a position validated by government.

In recent weeks, and increasingly prevalent as I write, is the changed question of "when will golf courses re-open?". A huge change in mindset. The change in the thought process must create a new mindset... our safe return to playing the game has to be responsibly planned.

In collaboration with the other home nations, The R&A, PGA and wider golf industry, the case for an expedient and safe return has been presented to government. The emphasis is on health and safety, not only for players and operational staff, but everyone who might in some way be affected in allowing our game to re-start.

Our 'Play Safe, Stay Safe' call to action framework has been well received by our stakeholders who fully understand that the fight against COVID-19 is far from over.

This week we asked our golf clubs to complete a survey on behalf of The R&A to assess the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on golf and help inform further discussions with government on the future resumption of the game. This survey will accompany our thoughts on not just how difficult it has been, but also how difficult (perhaps even how much more difficult) it will be with a phased return and limited income streams available.

## **It is now for government to decide the next step...**

I want to be clear on this. We will always champion golf's cause, but have supported and will continue to support government when it comes to how best to preserve life during the pandemic.

The Republic of Ireland government has allowed a return to golf on 18 May, which of course heightens expectation levels here in England as well as the rest of the UK.

We wish our Irish colleagues well and will doubtless learn from them as we continue to do so from other European countries who are playing again. But let's keep our faith in our own journey and remain realistic about where we are on the road back.

We are, hopefully, moving towards some sort of lockdown easing that our Prime Minister may announce this coming Sunday. If scientific evidence and other expert advice continues to be more positive in our nation's fight against the virus then maybe the light at the end of the tunnel will brighten.

The safe return of playing golf will be incredibly important for the physical and mental wellbeing of millions of golfers. Let's see this period of lockdown through together and then re-start the playing of our beautiful game with the same passion, integrity and character we have always shown.

Last week a friend said to me that the first thing he will do when it is safe for golf to return is put all his energy into the opening tee shot. The second thing he will do is hit a provisional!

Please keep the faith, stay fit and healthy and keep everything crossed that a safe return to playing our game isn't too far away.

Jeremy Tomlinson  
Chief Executive, England Golf

