

Please note that this is a new statement, please read it in full as some areas have been updated.

GUI & ILGU JOINT STATEMENT REGARDING CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19 19th March 2020 at 4.00pm

- Golf as a sport is open for club members
- All events in April postponed
- Club membership more important than ever

The GUI & ILGU recognise the significant impact that the current Coronavirus / COVID-19 crisis is having on golf clubs across Ireland.

While areas within golf clubhouses may not be available due to the need for social distancing, the sport remains open and accessible.

Club membership has never been more important.

Golf club members can still play and enjoy their golf while acting within the guidelines issued by the Health Service Executive in the Republic of Ireland and Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland.

Visitors (e.g. societies, open days) either require some form of screening or should be discouraged for the time being.

The Unions also recognise the need clubs may have for business support at this time. We will monitor options available, and engage with the relevant sporting bodies in due course to make representations for our member clubs.

As it stands, the period of restriction is due to end on 29th March 2020, however it is anticipated that this will be extended.

To provide competitors and host venues certainty for the immediate future, all GUI and ILGU Championships, inter-club matches and practice sessions, Provincial, District, Regional, National Coaching and World Handicap System meetings scheduled up to and including 30th April 2020 will not take place.

In line with the expert advice from the health authorities, all events will be postponed indefinitely as long as the period of restriction is in force. Once the end date for the period of restriction is known, the Unions will issue a revised calendar for the remainder of the year.

Clubs should note that the 9 Hole Championship qualifiers are included in the list of events postponed and the Unions will be in touch with clubs that have entered in the coming weeks.

List of events postponed: <https://www.golfnet.ie/news/golfnet/4641/events-postponed-list>

Note: The period of restriction referenced above relates to the decision of the government in the Republic of Ireland has made to limit public movement. It is recognised that different protocols may be in operation in Northern Ireland. The decisions and recommendations published by the Unions will apply to all golf clubs.

The restrictions do not prevent rounds of golf taking place, however we need to be cognisant of the social nature of our game and how this element of it is impacted.

It is important that clubs and members demonstrate social distancing practices to help prevent the spread of infection. Examples of non-compliance with social distancing have been evident amongst the general population.

Golf needs to demonstrate total compliance with the instructions laid out by the health authorities.

Golf is a great sport for people generally to get out and about, exercise and enjoy fresh air. It is played in an outdoor setting where the risk of contracting COVID-19 is low.

All golf clubs should, at this time, aim to keep their members and staff safe and well.

As such, everyone should be keenly aware of the vulnerabilities golf clubs will face:

- The older age profile of golf club memberships than of the general population must be borne in mind
- Groups having close and prolonged contact should be avoided.
- The social aspect of golf clubs should be curtailed, including limiting the potential for social interaction in accordance with the guidelines as issued.
- Siren starts with people congregating before and after are discouraged for the time being.
- Prolonged near contact as may happen during Bridge nights, Choir practices and other clubhouse-based activities is to be avoided.
- Society bookings where food and social interaction is involved afterwards should be limited in accordance with the latest guidance
- Common courtesies – handshakes and other embraces associated with the etiquette of the game – should be avoided and participants may bump elbows as an alternative.
- Social meals for groups in the clubhouse should be avoided

Golf Clubs should observe the need for the following:

- Increased social distancing
- Availability of hand sanitisers, both in the clubhouse and on-course
- Regular changing of towels
- Ask members not to come into the clubhouse with colds or any symptoms of COVID-19
- Regular cleaning of surfaces including door handles – hourly in public places
- Handling of scorecards is a vulnerability. It should be borne in mind that since the revision of the Rules of Golf in 2019, scorecards can now be in electronic form (via phone app etc) and the Committee can specify a method of electronic certification if this option is taken. Where this is not an option, competitions should be discouraged.

Some other measures that clubs may like to consider include:

- All ball washers, bins, sand bags, benches, divot boxes and non-essential furniture could be taken in off the course.
- All bunker rakes could be removed where players play the ball as it lies if possible. Alternatively players can lift, smooth the sand with their foot and place the ball.
- Clubs can choose to instruct players to leave the flag in the hole unattended at all times.
- Only permitting one person per buggy in line with social distancing guidelines

GUI, ILGU, CGI & Academy Offices

GUI Headquarters and provincial branch offices will remain open to fulfil essential functions only and otherwise we are instructing staff members to work from home.

Visitor access is restricted at Q House, Sandyford from Monday 16th March, therefore the ILGU Office will not be open to the public but will continue to operate remotely.

The GUI National Golf Academy is open for pre-arranged private lessons and custom fitting sessions only, observing the required precautions as advised by the health authorities.

PUBLIC HEALTH RESOURCES

All golf clubs should note, act upon and continually monitor the advice and guidance issued by the Health Service Executive (Republic of Ireland) and the National Health Service and Public Health Agency (Northern Ireland) in relation to the current coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

It is important that we all work together, following the advice of experts, in controlling the spread of COVID-19 infection.

This is a very fluid situation and we ask clubs to monitor the latest advice regularly.

HSE: <http://www.hse.ie>

PHANI: <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/>