



# Covid-19 Support Fund Supporting the Golf Industry During the Pandemic.

July 2021

Launched in May 2020, The R&A Covid-19 Support Fund was established to provide financial support to golf clubs and facilities facing challenges due to the global pandemic.

While golf has enjoyed a rise in participation and membership during Covid-19, the industry has endured significant difficulties within many parts of the world.

The R&A felt moved to act and the Covid-19 fund saw £7 million invested into golf across the globe. Annually, The R&A reinvests the proceeds from The Open, golf's original championship, into growing and supporting golf around the world.

Awarded principally via national federations, which set criteria that reflected the specific golf needs in their region, the Support Fund has assisted affiliated golf bodies in 44 countries to navigate the pandemic.

## Where the money was spent.

Among the four national federations in Great Britain and Ireland, funds were distributed according to the number of golf facilities in each country.

Monies were used to return workers to business, including essential greenkeeping staff who maintained courses during closure periods, as well as assisting facilities to implement Covid-19 protocols and ensure golf was one of the first sports to resume safely.

Many facilities also looked to the future and capitalised on the renewed interest in golf with funds utilised to attract new members and create an inclusive environment via The R&A Women in Golf Charter.

Internationally, funding was used to overcome the negative impact of the pandemic, as well as capitalise on playing opportunities. A diverse range of initiatives were supported, including junior golf programmes; campaigns to attract new and returning golfers and retain existing players; enhancement to IT services and website development; and provision of personal protective equipment.

Here we feature three national federations with differing stories on how the Covid-19 Support Fund has aided their golf landscape.



The state-of-the-art Short Game Academy at Parc GC, Newport

“We believed it was our responsibility to help affiliated national federations and golf facilities to navigate this crisis. Our **Covid-19 Support Fund** has helped facilities to weather the lockdowns, get ready for reopening and provide a safe environment in which the sport can be enjoyed by avid golfers, returning golfers and new golfers alike.”

PHIL ANDERTON, CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER AT THE R&A

## Wales.



In Wales, 33% of recipients put money into improving facilities, while 19% financed on-course sustainability projects, including drainage and eco-toilets.

Notably, an award from the Support Fund contributed to the delivery of a state-of-the-art Short Game Academy at Parc GC in Newport, Wales. The industry-leading fully inclusive facility can be used by people of all ages and abilities and is an excellent example to others for future developments.

Gillian O’Leary, Director of Performance at Wales Golf, said, “This funding was critical to the project and we are hugely proud of the finished facility.”

The all-weather flagship facility caters for all abilities, from high performance training through to inclusive coaching, ensuring that golf remains a sport for all. It includes two driving nets, an all-weather synthetic surface green with several surrounding chipping pods, as well as a bunker with targets. It has also been funded by Sport Wales, Wales Golf and Parc GC itself.

The area was designed so all golf shots can be taken from multiple locations with different scenarios, as well as being an area to conduct group sessions safely, comfortably and socially distanced for people of all abilities, all-year round.

Playing surfaces, and surrounding areas are fully accessible to all people, including those using a variety of mobility aids, including sticks and wheelchairs. The area also has a shallow bunker entrance, rest areas and netting for safety and storage for adapted equipment.

“This is the first project of its kind in Wales and we would like to thank all our partners for making this possible, Sport Wales, The R&A and, of course, Parc Golf Club who have fully embraced the vision of this project,” added Gillian.

“It will be accessible to a whole range of golfers and should be something that is in place for many years to come, not only for high performance players but also as an inclusive facility for all abilities. We can’t change the weather in Wales, but we can change the facilities so people can practice in a top-quality environment all-year round and not just during daylight hours.”

## Germany.



The German Golf Association (DVG) utilised funding in various ways to support golf, highlighted in three areas below.

### 1. Online campaign – ‘Golf is open again’

This nationwide online campaign ran from 3 July until 31 August 2020. The campaign aimed to create a visible signal that golf was back after lockdown and that there were several advantages to start playing golf, notably focusing on health aspects and to feel safe when performing an outdoor sport like golf.

The outcome of the campaign was impressive with almost 400,000 website clicks. The online campaign played a strong part in the positive development of increased golfers. German golf clubs welcomed thousands of beginners and generated more memberships to previous years. The campaign addressed all genders and age groups at the same time by using slogans and key visuals selected especially for the different target groups.



### 2. Biodiversity campaign

The funding has also allowed DGV to restart a biodiversity project, where they work together with several ministries of the environment and interior and hundreds of golf clubs in Germany. The aim is to strengthen the image of golf as an environmentally sensitive sport, especially in these Covid-19 times. The funding allowed Germany to bring forward this initiative, with six of their 12 regional associations and their clubs joining the project. This will continue in Germany over the coming months and years.

### 3. Youth challenges

With Covid-19 also impacting on competitive golf with a number of events cancelled, the financial support also enabled DGV to hold four youth challenges – bringing together 240 boys and girls. These extra challenges were held during the autumn to avoid any pause in players' performance development.

## South Africa.

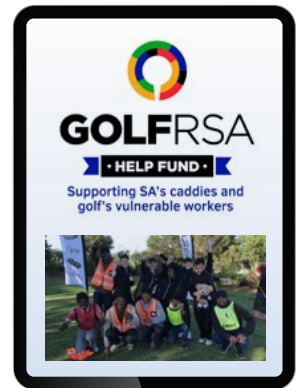


On and off the course, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused considerable challenges in South Africa.

GolfRSA is the unified body of the South African Golf Association (SAGA) and Women's Golf South Africa (WGSA), administering, operating and providing service to amateur golf in South Africa. During the crisis in South Africa the strategy from GolfRSA focused on working with government to enable a safe return to play and supporting those who work at golf facilities.

Grant Hepburn, GolfRSA CEO, reflects on the support of the Covid-19 Support Fund.

“The money received by GolfRSA from The R&A made a big impact in our golf landscape,” said Grant. “We were able to put some of the contribution into our own GolfRSA Help Fund, which was used to send over 17,000 food vouchers to over 4,000 caddies during the lockdown months. These people are from vulnerable communities and desperately needed the support.



“We were also able to purchase the HealthDocs app and supply it at no cost to all golf clubs in the country. This app allowed us to scan, trace and monitor all of our golfers nationally. The ability to have this data and information at our fingertips contributed to giving our government authorities enough comfort to allow golf to be the first sport back after lockdown.

“HealthDocs was also a big factor in being able to set up and cater for compliance and safety for three European Tour events that took place at the end of 2020. Those tournaments not only gave our economy and professional golfers a boost, but it also positively showcased South Africa.”

The R&A Covid-19 Support Fund also aided the **Challenge Tour** via the Northern Ireland Open, the **Golf Foundation** to support grassroots development and **The PGA of GB&I** to provide mental health, business, financial and employment support to its members. **The European Golf Association**, the **Club Managers' Association of Europe**, the **Rose Ladies Series** and the **Tartan Pro Tour** also benefited.