



GOLFING UNION
OF IRELAND

One Governing Body

Workshop on Organisational Structure
Saturday 4 February 2017



Contents

Preface.....	2
Introduction / Overview	3
Main Points, Common Themes, Challenges & Governance/Guidance Balance	4
1. Main Points	4
2. Consistent Themes	4
3. Challenges	4
4. Governance/Guidance Balance	4
Working Tables/Clusters Feedback	5
1. Red Table (Club members) – Facilitator Kevin Stevens	5
2. Blue Table (Club members) – Facilitator Ethel Ruddock.....	6
3. Yellow Table (Union officials) – Facilitator Teresa Byrne.....	7
4. Purple Table (Union officials) – Facilitator Frank Bowen	8
5. Pink Table (Clubs and Officials) – Facilitator Sinead Heraty.....	9
6. Grey Table (Clubs and Officials) – Facilitator Sarah Crowe	10
Conclusion.....	11



One Governing Body



Preface

Members from the ILGU and GUI met for the first time in November 2015 to initiate discussions on the development of a new National Governing Body for Golf in Ireland. The Discussions Group (DG) was established and has four representatives from each organisation. The role of the DG is to develop a proposal for One Governing Body for Golf in Ireland, which is inclusive, modern, democratic and fit for purpose, and to present that proposal to the relevant Boards in the respective organisations.

Meetings have been facilitated by Jane Williams, Sia Partners who has knowledge of the workings of each organisation. Thirteen meetings have taken place to date and significant progress has been made.

The Consultation Process is one of the key elements of this project becoming a success. A first round of consultation was held in early 2016 with clubs/members, union officials and union staff. Fifteen meetings took place and the Discussions Group received positive feedback, and that there is broad acceptance that OGB is a good idea and, if done well, will underpin the success of golf into the future.

To make progress in a timely manner the Discussions Group has established eleven Working Groups in the areas of Finance, Communications, Organisational Structure, Future Club Formation, Club Services, Game Development, Championships, Volunteerism, Rules, High Performance and Course Rating/Handicapping.

The Organisational Structure Working Group identified the need to hold a workshop to gather feedback on a suitable structure for the new body, including the administrative and competition arms and to gather suggestions on ways in which the roles, responsibilities and functions of the body would be carried out. The views and suggestions from the workshop will go directly to the Working Group who are tasked with developing an initial proposal or series of options.

The eleven Working Groups will report to the Discussions Group in May and further work will follow that. Consultations on a draft proposal will be held in the autumn before being finalised for consideration by clubs and the two Unions towards the year-end and into 2018.

Introduction / Overview

The Discussions Group, on the recommendations of the Working Group identified the need to hold a workshop on the topic of Organisational Structure to gather feedback on a suitable future structure for the new body. The workshop was held to get ideas, views and suggestions from a cross section of officials and club members on a structure to support the One Governing Body in running competitions and administering the game of golf on the island of Ireland.

31 ILGU and GUI Union officials and 34 Club officials attended the workshop and were split into six different working tables, where each individual table addressed the topic of '**What structure should OGB have?**' There were two tables representing club members only, two tables representing union officials only and two tables with a mix of both club and union officials. All tables were facilitated by a member of the OGB Discussions Group. A rapporteur was nominated by each table who reported back the decisions and discussion of their table to the overall group of participants. The feedback gained will prove invaluable in the formation of a model future structure, which volunteers, members and clubs will benefit from.

All tables were given one hour and ten minutes to discuss the question and formulate their suggestions. There was noticeable interest and debate from participants from the outset.

Suggested sub topics of '**What structure should OGB have?**' varied between all the below listed:

1. What will clubs be looking to the OGB to do to for/with/to them?
2. With those services/decisions in mind, how would you structure the OGB?
3. What structure at regional level would work best to support golf clubs and the game of golf?
4. How important is a regional/local presence – on a scale of 'Vital' to 'not necessary'.
5. What would be expected to be at the centre/HQ?
6. Since structures cost money to support, should the OGB spend more or less than it does currently on its structure, regional and national?
7. How would you judge if the structure was working well?

A rapporteur/scribe presented the findings from each of the working tables to the plenary and there were some common themes emerging from all tables in terms of the potential administrative and competition structures. Below you will find an overview of the main points/common themes and challenges expressed by individual participants and groups. Further to this, there is detailed information on the ideas noted by each of the tables.

***Note** – The terms Province/District have been removed when referring to a future organisational structure and replaced with Regional as this word emerged from a number of working tables on the day.

***Note** – Phrases or words **bolded** throughout the report draw attention to the consistent and reoccurring themes which emerged from the six different tables.

Main Points, Common Themes, Challenges & Governance/Guidance Balance

There were a number of reoccurring points and continuous themes which emerged from most of the six working tables when addressing the question **'What structure should OGB have?'**

1. Main Points

- The new OGB should have a main office/headquarters – location of the new OGB was not addressed in great detail but a central location was discussed by at least one working table
- Zones and Regions were proposed on a number of occasions in place of the current Branch/District structure. Participants felt regional bases/offices are essential and sub divisional zones can be used for competition purposes
- It is essential for the new Governing Body to strike a good balance between the geographical spread of the new structure and an even spread of clubs in each region
- Administration and provision of Competition services from the new body do not necessarily have to be aligned
- A single subscription fee should be paid by all members to ensure fairness and balance
- Participants' attachment to Province/District did not emerge as an important factor vis-à-vis organisational structure

2. Consistent Themes

- A future organisational structure needs to assist effective communication
- Development of junior golf from the new OGB is essential
- Efficient and effective central and regional administrative structures are key
- Club liaison officers at regional level could assist in good communication from OGB to clubs
- Equality of funding for all regions is essential. There could be a central fund, where the OGB ensures there is a balance in spend throughout the organisation down to club level.

3. Challenges

- The promotion of equality is essential. There still remains inequality in various Golf Clubs, especially in Northern Ireland. Women on Club Committees is not a common occurrence and women make up a much smaller percentage of the membership
- Communication is key throughout all levels of the new organisation, especially from the top down to club level
- Term of office for volunteers is not consistent in the current unions and change is required to ensure 'burnout' or over use of volunteers does not occur.

4. Governance/Guidance Balance

- The OGB should outline confined limits of operating to clubs but allow a certain amount of autonomy for clubs to run their business
- The new body should try to reach an optimal level of guidance versus governance. Clubs want to be governed to a certain extent but club autonomy is required in terms of dealing with the day-to-day running of the club
- Best practice should be established at the top level and the new body should lead by example. Clubs will follow if suitable and model best practice is carried out at the top
- The OGB should provide clubs with a guide for them to refer to, covering different aspects of club activities i.e. ranging from addressing handicap building to sample constitutions for clubs to follow.

Working Tables/Clusters Feedback

1. Red Table (Club members) – Facilitator Kevin Stevens

The red table opened the discussion by addressing the expectation Golf Clubs have and will continue to have from the new Governing Body. Fourteen main areas emerged from this brainstorm:

- Standardisation of Procedures for both men and women
- OGB guidance to Golf Clubs in terms of drafting constitutions, competition structure and local rules, to name but a few.
- Continuity of club services currently provided by the Confederation of Golf in Ireland (CGI)
- Best practice guidelines in all areas of the Golf Club
- Development of Junior Golf
- New ideas and services on recruitment of members to the game i.e. Get into Golf programmes
- How to maintain Golf Club members
- Provide attractive programmes for all members
- Engage with other sports to encourage their members to play golf i.e. Number one second sport
- Propose new ideas for introducing people to the game
- Promote the health benefits of golf more widely
- Provide Clubs with guidelines on how to employ staff within the Golf Club e.g. Pro/Bar etc.
- **Run male and female Captains/Vice-Captains workshops**, and extend to other areas of the Golf Club, inclusive of handicaps and tournaments.
- **Guide but do not govern club competition structure.** The current ILGU structure works very well as there are District contacts for Clubs to liaise with.

With club services in mind, participants moved to discuss what structure they would like to see from the new OGB. Eight main points emerged from this discussion, resulting in the group wanting a National Governing Body, with **consistency of funding and even spread of clubs across all regions**. CGI advisory services are an essential part of the new OGB and they should be divided into smaller geographical areas. The table advised that they would like to see one National Board, like the current ILGU structure. A **regional competition structure** emerged as a key area for the new OGB. Eight main areas:

- Closer National Working Body
- Easy access for Clubs to the new OGB
- Structure which mirrors the current ILGU structure, where support is easily accessed and support is there in every area for a club
- Integrate the best of both the GUI and ILGU
- **Regional presence/base essential**
- Split advisory services into sub divisions within the regions e.g. eight sub divisions.
Competitions would have to be divisible by four.
- One Board for the new OGB – makeup TBC
- Openness to redraw existing boundaries for competition purposes. Change is required.

2. Blue Table (Club members) – Facilitator Ethel Ruddock

The blue group discussed the current structures of both organisations before they delved in to what a future structure could look and feel like. The current structure mirrors the fact that the governing bodies have been around for approx. 125 years.

The group broke down their discussion into two parts, focusing on what they wanted in broad terms from the OGB and what a suitable local structure could be. Feedback on the former included:

- A National Governing Body, with a **good geographical split and an even spread of clubs as inter-club match travel time is currently an issue.**
- A Body with a defined strategy, including culture, strategic intent for the future of golf, current club structure, a good governance model and transparency. **Involve younger people** in the consultation stage to ensure the OGB is attractive to all age demographics.
- New Body should cover all areas, covering guidance, recruitment, finance etc. Ensure there are more club services and an improved profile of what CGI does.
- Strong Governing Body which is inclusive of strategic thinking staff in all areas. Administrative regional structure is key, where all regional queries would be dealt with.
- Joint male/female committees are essential and will help to address competition and handicap issues.
- Recommendation to have one club committee which looks after all club events and club business matters.

The group believed there are some major problems in the current District/Branch structures, particularly in terms of inter-club matches. Ideas emerging from the blue table focused heavily on the importance of a suitable **regional structure**:

- Four provinces could be split geographically into **eight regional areas for competition purposes**. They could be numbered rather than named, which could benefit the competition structure.
- **All regions should receive the same funding from the National OGB fund** as the assumption is that the geographical split will be done to ensure an even spread of clubs.
- Regional requirements emerging:
 - o Single (joint male and female) committees in different areas e.g. handicapping/rules
 - o Single national committees in different areas with equal representation from all regions
 - o Regional financial transparency

The group agreed that if a structure mirroring some of the ideas above could be put in place then clubs members could benefit from an OGB that is:

- Accountable to its members
- Heavily volunteer based at grassroots level
- **Charging equal subscription fees for all members**
- Ensuring proportional representation of male and female in the new OGB and appointing board members with the appropriate skills (no discussion around % of gender representation)
- Encouraging male and female golf club members to play together at all levels.

3. Yellow Table (Union officials) – Facilitator Teresa Byrne

Ideas emerging from one of the all GUI and ILGU officials table were in tune with the overarching ideas from the plenary.

The group began by addressing some of the questions below, to provoke thought and inspire a consistent flow of ideas during the session:

- Is there a need for more than one Headquarters?
- Would the creation of zones be a good idea for competition purposes?
- Are clubs wedded to their province and where do loyalties lie?
- Is there a need to change the current ILGU and GUI administrative structures?
- Can the new OGB take the best bits from both the ILGU and GUI and use them as a basis for structuring the new organisation?
- Are substantial changes to the current structure required?

Regional Structures were presented as a good idea and could encompass:

- **Zones within the regions for competition purposes**
- **Even spread of clubs** i.e. 100 per region
- **Equal disbursement of funds from the National Governing Body to each region**
- Regional provision of club services

It emerged that club loyalty and attachment to the provincial/district structure was not as strong as was previously envisaged but clubs would like to play for an end 'trophy/pennant', be it a regional or zone award.

Group members acknowledged that the current GUI and ILGU structures have good elements and best practice from both organisations should be brought into the new Governing Body.

Communication issues were addressed and there was agreement that the current communication systems are not working well and a suggestion was made that this could be addressed through the proposed 'regional' structure. **A regional base/office could have closer contact to clubs** and therefore should automatically have a positive effect on communication to and within clubs. **A club liaison officer** was suggested as a solution in terms of improving what is currently in place.

The point was made that volunteers do so much for the current unions and there is a low level of appreciation for the work they do. This needs to be addressed in order to keep the current volunteering ethos and carry it into the new body. **Expectation versus reality** of what a volunteer can do and is willing to do is an area of concern for the new OGB.

The group concluded by summarising the issues that had been discussed and asked again if substantial changes were required. Regions i.e. North/South/East/West could solve the current issues as long as sub divisions exist for competition purposes. Emotive issues and attachment to the current structures did not strongly emerge, so an appetite for change was present.

4. Purple Table (Union officials) – Facilitator Frank Bowen

Officials at this table chose to address the issue of a future structure by first briefly outlining the current list of services provided by the two unions and the essential services for the new body:

- Handicapping
- Competitions
- Rules
- Club Governance
- Coaching
- Change Management
- Absorbing CGI services
- Availability of differing membership types, to attract a younger demographic e.g. family
- Changing competition formats i.e. 9 hole
- Course Rating
- Safeguarding
- Procurement
- Junior Recruitment
- Legal aspect
- Sustainability
- Role of affiliated club

A clear picture of the new organisation was painted by the group from the outset; **a central head office, four administrative regions and competitions/tournaments would be managed separately.** It emerged as essential that **the administrative process would be sub zoned within the regions** and if possible, traditional areas should be maintained.

The geographical distribution of clubs was addressed as a concern, due to the uneven split currently in place. The group proposed a county boundary structure as a possibility in terms of organising competitions, as this would minimise travel at the start of the inter-club competition process. The group addressed the issue of how important competition history is i.e. Barton Shield. They proposed keeping the historical competitions within the Region, to be managed by the new Regional base/office. The historical attachment to these competitions was prevalent from officials and important to them, and the suggestion was to continue with all current competitions under the new body, both men and women.

They agreed that the current funding of the two unions is adequate but not ideal and changes are required. The suggestion was made that **all regions would receive the same funding, as the assumption is that an even spread of clubs in each region will be achieved.** Each Golf Club member should pay the same affiliation fee to the new OGB also.

In conclusion, the union officials at this table felt it was key to have performance indicators in place when the new OGB is formed. A three – five year target review will ensure the body is accountable to its members and strategic in its thinking.

5. Pink Table (Clubs and Officials) – Facilitator Sinead Heraty

An effective **communications pathway** emerged as the key element from this group of club and union officials and a future structure needs to facilitate communication between the new Governing Body and its members.

Group members suggested establishing **eight areas/zones of approximately fifty clubs in each, resulting in four regions of 100 clubs.**

Participants felt this was the best approach, as long as the suggested structure could:

- Promote an efficient communication pathway
- Achieve a balance across all regions
- Distribute work evenly across each region i.e. equal number of volunteers in each
- Encourage more volunteers to become involved in the new OGB and not overload them with work duties
- **Entice more juniors to play the game and support them to stay in the game**
- Ensure it is cost effective, especially in terms of playing competitions
- **Improve the competition structure to strike a balance across all regions in terms of number of matches played for all clubs on the road to reaching a National final.**
- Continue to support the current interprovincial match structure – inclusive of all ages i.e. men/women/boys/girls

Some of the attributes to achieving this could be done through **charging a single affiliation fee for all members and allocating funds evenly across the regions.**

It was acknowledged that there are differing club sizes throughout the island of Ireland and the new structure should aim to strike a geographical balance of clubs within each region. An even spread of clubs emerged as the initial desire and seeking to strike a good balance of membership numbers across all regions should follow.

Travel time/distance was mentioned as an issue for the majority of clubs and urban versus rural areas was pinpointed as important. Group members thought that time to travel between/to clubs for matches needs to be addressed rather than distance as urban areas can suffer in these circumstances.

The group suggested **separating the administrative and competition structures** of the new governing body and gave a brief overview of what the administrative structure should look like:

- Central headquarters with regional bases/offices
- Headquarters could be based anywhere as long as the services are provided
- OGB should cover all main areas it currently does; Rules/CONGU/Coaching/Course Rating.

The group drew attention to the point that club officials rotate each year and they raised concern that as we move towards a new governing body, communicating with them needs to be addressed by the future structure and through the organisations communication pathway moving forward.

6. Grey Table (Clubs and Officials) – Facilitator Sarah Crowe

The second mixed table of officials and clubs acknowledged the need to strike a balance in the **distribution of clubs across the island of Ireland** as the current structure is east coast heavy.

They addressed the question of **'What structure should OGB have?'** bringing with them the realisation that members are at the heart of everything the current unions do and the new governing body will do and how it will conduct its activities.

There was unanimous agreement in the group that **the administration and competition structures of the new governing body should be dealt with separately** and a suggestion was made that the provincial names should be changed to e.g. Southern, Eastern etc.

In terms of the administrative structure, the group suggested:

- **Autonomous body at the centre and offices at regional level**
- Current provincial structure works well and the best elements of this could be brought forward into the new body
- Finance/HR of the regions will all be conducted through the regional offices
- Regional offices would be running golf for all within their region
- **Single affiliation fee for all members**

The group acknowledged the flaws in the current competition structures (imbalance of club numbers per province/district) in both unions but touched on the importance of the loyalty each member has to their club, county, province/district. Taking this into account they proposed several ideas:

- **Sub dividing each region into zones for the purpose of running competitions**
- Run county competitions - progress to metropolitan/zone champion – regional/provincial champion - and national champion
- Recreate a competition structure like the current NFL system.

It was felt that there was huge disparity in the importance the OGB paid to elite golfers over everyday club members. **Current communication channels to club members from the centre of the ILGU and GUI and at District/Branch level is not optimal.** The group agreed that club members currently feel disconnected from the respective unions.

A pyramidal structure was suggested for the new body, where there would be:

- **One National headquarters, centrally based**
- **Four administrative regions, separate to the competition structure**
- **Four regions would be broken down into zones for competitions purposes**
- **Regional bases will be based around club members and volunteers and regional offices will have direct contact with clubs**

A new structure, taking into account some of the above ideas would be desirable as long as it **facilitates direct communication with club members.** These emerged as the most important strands from this group.



One Governing Body



Conclusion

Attendees and participants on the day approached the workshop with enthusiasm and energy, which could be felt in the room for the entire session. The main ideas emerging from each table were predominantly shared by at least one of the other tables on the day and this resulted in the development a number of common traits and themes, which can now be brought forward by the Organisational Structure Working Group for further examination and research.

A number of challenges for the OGB and for its structure emerged from the day, particularly in the areas of Equality, Communication and Volunteerism. The Discussions Group has identified all of these issues/challenges and plans to address them in more depth before a future structure is drawn up and proposed for the new Governing Body.

The feedback received from the workshop proved invaluable to the Organisational Structure Working Group and will help in determining: What national and regional organisational structure would support the One Governing Body, member clubs and individual golfers, in running competitions, administering handicaps, supporting the development of clubs and the game of golf, and raising and maintaining the profile of golf in Ireland, which will underpin its future success? Put simply **'What structure should OGB have?'**

* We have received feedback from participants that reviewed the report. All of these are being brought to the attention of the DG at its next meeting. Some of these inputs reinforce support for the OGB, while recognise the challenges involved. Others reiterate a point of view which was mentioned at the meeting. Others make new suggestions and contributions. All of these will be considered by the DG.