

Trump International Golf Links Scotland  
Application for Outline Planning Permission for Golf Resort

Menie House, Balmedie, Aberdeen

Public Local Inquiry

10 June 2008

Precognition

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## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 My name is Martin Hawtree. I hold the degrees of Bachelor of Arts, Master of Civic Design, and Doctor in Philosophy. I am a golf course architect, the son and grandson of golf course architects, with over 35 years' professional experience. I am a Fellow of the European Institute of Golf Course Architects and was President of the former British Institute of Golf Course Architects from 1996 to 1998 before it became the European Institute.

1.2 I was first contacted by the Trump Organisation in May 2006. I was asked to work with Tom Fazio II, the golf architect for the project, as a consultant, commenting on layouts he produced and advising the Trump organization on matters to do with links golf and championship golf. My connection with the project arose out of my experience with links courses, and in particular with a number of Open Championship venues. In the last 10 years I had advised some 20 Clubs managing links courses, all of high reputation, and had worked on three new links course projects abroad. During my work with Tom Fazio II I became fully aware of the sensitivity of the site and was told of detailed discussions between him

and a wide range of environmental consultants, many of whom I was to meet during that Summer.

## 2.0 History of My Involvement

2.1 When I was first appointed, I was briefed on the project by the Trump team and spoke directly with Mr Trump on the telephone. I was therefore aware of Mr Trump's ambitions: to produce a world-class 18-Hole championship links course, in traditional Scottish style, capable of one day hosting a major championship. Mr Trump also wished to reserve land for a second 18-Hole course and a driving range; and land for other uses such as hotel, housing, holiday chalets, maintenance compounds and an area for turf grass research.

2.2 My initial inspection of the site left me in no doubt of its exceptional qualities of environment as well as potential for golf of a very high order. I considered the characteristics of the site more than supported the project's ideals and would allow their full realisation. Here was an opportunity to create a golf course of quite extraordinary power, beauty, and interest.

2.3 After my initial input as a consultant to the team, involving

discussions with Tom Fazio II over various draft plans he was to produce over the Summer and Autumn of 2006, Tom Fazio produced his final layout for the Championship course during the Winter of 2006/7. I produce Document T1. I understand that his layout for the championship course was submitted with the detailed planning application, which has since been withdrawn. My next involvement came in the mid-summer of last year when I was asked to walk the championship course which by that time had been pegged out in accordance with the Fazio layout. I suggested some alterations to the alignment of holes which I felt improved their appearance, beauty and playing interest. In the Autumn I was then invited to take over the project as golf course architect because Tom Fazio II was fully committed to Trump projects in the United States.

2.4 As lead architect, I had the opportunity to consider further alterations to the Fazio layout. My preference was to route certain holes less along the dune ridges and more through the lower-lying valleys and slacks. I was concerned at the volumes of earth movement needed to produce the Fazio layout so I looked for a more traditional alignment of holes between the dune ridges. I did not wish to change the topography of the dunes any more than necessary. Over the course of the next few months I was able to halve the quantity of earthmovement needed to realise the Fazio plan.

2.5 In October 2007 Mr Trump visited the site and together we made further alterations to meet his objectives of a pure links course. I produce Document T2. Broadly, the playing envelope remained the same as Fazio's; some holes were realigned, some even reversed to extract the fullest value of landscape, interest, and challenge from the site. Only at the southern end did the layout go out of that envelope and move up onto the northern slopes of the Blairton Dunes.

2.6 In September 2007 I had attended and spoke to the public hearing in Balmedie concerning the planning application.

2.7 Since December 2007 I have arranged a number of meetings with environmental consultants to the Trump Organisation to discuss my revised layout in relation to those consultants' interests. Professor Ritchie felt that the new layout represented an improvement over the previous one. We discussed methods of stabilisation of the mobile dune area and whether or not it would be possible to retain parts of the mobile dune area. Professor Ritchie believed this would be possible given that I had changed the routing of Hole 15 to run on the south-west side of a high dune, instead of the north-east side. He felt other smaller areas might also be retained in their existing state.

2.8 Dr Dargie was only able to report back to me recently and he indicated that the use of more of the dune slack areas entailed a greater loss of valuable habitats. This was partly because I had introduced a semi-rough border around fairways and a transition zone to link golf course grasses with the adjacent natural habitats, this zone to comprise a mix of golf grasses and indigenous plant material. I felt not to do so presented an unrealistically narrow corridor for play, and I wished to avoid a sharp edge between golf course turf grasses and indigenous plant material. So the width of disturbance was that much greater than that drawn in the Fazio plan. My assistant Marc Westenborg recently met Dr Dargie to discuss adjustments to tee and green positions which might be made to avoid certain very sensitive areas. In my experience such an iterative process of reworking the layout in relation to the site, particularly on environmentally sensitive sites such as this, does not stop until grass seed is in the ground.

2.9 So to conclude this history, the layout of the championship course meets all of Mr Trump's objectives for championship challenge and landscape drama, and my own concept of a traditional links course which minimises earth movement or disturbance to dune ridges. There are

refinements still to be discussed with the environmental consultants on exact locations of tees, greens and fairways, to minimize habitat and dune disturbance.

### 3.0 The need for the SSSI land to produce successful world-class links.

3.1 I have been advised of the impact that the golf course will have on vegetation habitats, dune morphology, and in particular the SSSI land. It is obvious that on a site as large as this the golf course could be placed elsewhere on the site and need not enter the dune area at all, let alone the SSSI. In what follows I wish to demonstrate why incursion into the SSSI land is necessary to produce a successful world-class links course.

3.2 A links course is any course occupying an area of stabilised wind-blown sand forms such as dunes, slacks, hummocks and hollows and plains, normally set on a raised marine platform. This is the terrain on which golf started in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and to which it was largely confined until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The style and featuring of modern-day golf course featuring has basically derived from these early links courses, which is why sand bunkers still appear on inland, non-sandy sites for golf courses. The history and featuring of Scottish and later English links golf were in a manner exported inland all over the British Isles and further

afield. Links golf produces one of the purest and most natural forms of the game where its origins in rugged terrain, sandy hazards, stiff winds, close-cropped (by rabbits and sheep) turf are revealed in excelsis.

3.3 A world-class links course might be defined as one which attracts many visitors from all over the world who come to play here because of 1) the special features of the locality for tourism and golf; 2) its history as a club; 3) the great and memorable championships which have been played over it; the heroic, sporting legends that surround the course; 4) the challenge of its playing demands and the enjoyment of its sporting character, brought about through design and sometimes centuries of design modifications; 5) because of the richness, drama, and interest of its links/coastal landscape and seascape; 6) because of good management involving hospitality, welcome, marketing, production of high standards of course condition. Every golf course is in some respects different from any other; great courses simply magnify a difference of playing challenge, enjoyment, locality and scenery.

3.4 The Menie site has no sporting history, no legends, no championships. What it would have, would be superlative topography, landscape, drama, alternating spaciousness and enclosure, a great many panoramic views along the dunes and out to sea, a rich texture of vegetation habitats

surrounding the golf holes, and, if I do my job properly, a very challenging but enjoyable course for all. Whilst many might come to visit the course as a result of the attraction of the Trump marketing brand, they need a reason to return again and again and for that to happen marketing may be a hollow substitute for the real thing, a spectacular, genuine links course, with all of the challenge and features present in other world-class links courses but in many respects magnified, especially on the SSSI land, to an almost Olympian level.

3.5 It is not for me to question Mr Trump's ambition or dream for the Menie site. However, I do believe that something like the present layout of the championship golf course is needed to fulfill his goals and aspirations for the Estate. As nearly as it is possible to do, I would guarantee the world-class status of this course. I could not do so for any other arrangement or location. The site is the most exciting piece of links land I have seen in my working life. I believe it would produce a golf course of exceptional stature and allow many thousands of visitors to enjoy this stretch of links coast.

3.6 I am aware that part of the site outside the SSSI contains sensitive habitats and rare plant species. My understanding from the ecologists David Bell and Tom Dargie is that mitigation is possible. A substantial

part of the dune and slack backdrop to the course would remain untouched and produce as much wild-life as is encountered in other links courses. What cannot be mitigated is the fixing of the mobile dune system in the SSSI by stabilizing it, to allow golf to be played without frequent inundations of sand over the grassed playing areas. The reasons for incorporating parts of the SSSI into the golf course are as follows and they are based on working acquaintance with other world-class links courses, including Muirfield, Carnoustie, Royal Aberdeen, Nairn, Jubilee Course at St Andrews, Glasgow Gailes, Prestwick, Montrose, Portmarnock, Lahinch, Ballybunion, Royal Dublin, Royal Birkdale, Burnham & Berrow, Hunstanton.

3.7. 1. The scale of the dune topography and landscape is as varied, striking and spectacular as any other of the above courses, if not more so. Variation and drama increase significantly in the SSSI.

3.7. 2. The topographical playing interest of the holes is equal to the best of the others. The frequency with which a golfer playing the present layout would move across different contour lines equates with other great links courses and intensifies within the SSSI.

3.7. 3. The holes will be wider-spaced than any other links course I know,

allowing the natural surroundings to play a large part in the experience of playing the course. Density is least within the SSSI which is in keeping with its vastness of scale. I have produced two brochures by way of illustration of the extent of wild life and plant species in the surrounds and Rough grasslands of links courses and the manner in which they are managed: one for Royal County Down Golf Course, produced for the Walker Cup last year (Document 28B) and one for Royal Liverpool Golf Course, produced for the Open Championship in 2006 (Document 28A). The wider, inter-fairway spaces at Menie should allow an equal or greater amount of wild-life.

3.7. 4. The landscape and seascapes are very dramatic, as dramatic as the Cashen Course site at Ballybunion, the only other site I know that comes close to this one for spectacular scenery. The course would be cradled between the two high domes at either end and in between rise up to tees for wide glimpses of course, dunes, and sea, and then fall back into enclosed narrow valleys with gothic-like towering dunes close by. Nowhere is this rhythmic sequence more intense and dramatic than within the SSSI.

3.7. 5. The vegetation of some trees, grey dune, gorse, wet slacks, wet and dry heath with heath and crowberry, offer a tapestry the equal of

Royal County Down, Glasgow Gailes, Dooks. Within the SSSI I would hope in consultation with Professor Ritchie to retain certain areas of blown sand which will add a new landscape image to the usual repertory of links scenery, but was one frequently encountered in the early years of links golf. The remainder of the dome would be stabilised into grey dune, in time producing its own variety of plant material and wildlife.

3.7. 6. The SSSI land combines brilliantly with the rest of the site to produce an exhilarating finish to the round, rising up to the high 10<sup>th</sup> green, set in an amphitheatre of dunes, descending off the dome with the 11<sup>th</sup>, and re-emerging into light with the 12<sup>th</sup>; then a dramatic change of direction with the 13<sup>th</sup> short hole (the only place on the site where this direction can be secured), then one of the most spectacular drives on the course, if not the Country, at the 14<sup>th</sup> tee , followed by the slow descent and then following sequence of rises from the 16<sup>th</sup> up to the climax of the 18<sup>th</sup> tee with 11 holes spread out below, the club house in the distance and the coastline curving away towards the city.

3.8 I have produced Document T5a, a photograph of part of the ‘dome’ of the SSSI over which the 13<sup>th</sup> Hole would play, together with a photo-montage of my idea of how the finished hole and adjoining stabilization of the sand might appear, Document T5h.

## 4. Conclusion

4.1 In short the site and the consequent championship golf course would lack for nothing. There are in principle no weak holes. At so many other courses, including those of world class, one would wish for differences - a more visually stimulating last 9 holes at Royal Aberdeen; more dunes at Nairn; more spectacular holes towards the finish at Royal County Down; less urban, industrial views at Lytham, Lahinch, Carnoustie, Glasgow Gailes; more sea views at Royal Birkdale, Portmarnock. The site at Menie comes fairly close to an ideal. There is nothing that I can see which is missing.

4.2 If the course did not enter the SSSI, the consequence would be a weaker, less visually striking championship course, a second course which would be the poor brother of the main course and might well not function correctly as a reserve, being in part on non-links land. One would look across at the dome and its towering dunes and forever wish that the course had been developed in this area.

4.3 This golf course has to compete with other new commercial ventures as a sound investment and to complement the existing great golf courses nearby. I believe the sleeve of coastal dunes into which the present golf

course layout has been introduced will do just that. With erudition and clever reproduction the site of the first nine-holes plus additional non-SSSI land might produce another Cruden Bay, Murcar, Royal Aberdeen - all world-class golf courses; but there would be no point: the Menie links must establish itself on its own terms as the most stimulating stretch of golfing links anywhere in Scotland and for that to happen I believe the SSSI land is necessary.

Martin Hawtree

19 May 2008