

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

Menie House, Balmedie, Aberdeen

Public Local Inquiry

10 June 2008

Summary of

Precognition

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Golf Course Architect

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 My name is Martin Hawtree. My qualifications are set out in my precognition.

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. 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. 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 The history of my involvement in the project, the change in my role as consultant to that of lead architect, the evolution of the layout plans from Document T1 to T2 which I have produced are described in the precognition. The changes in plan were aimed at enhancing certain features of the site, realizing Mr Trump's objectives of a pure links course, and reducing the quantities of earthmovement.

2.4 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.

2.5 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.

2.6 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 In paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 I describe the nature of a links course and its importance in the history of golf, and set out my own understanding of what could be meant by a 'world-class' golf course, embracing such ideas as attraction for tourism in general, a venerable history with many sporting legends, golfing challenge, exceptional scenery, and good and welcoming management.

3.3 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 a very challenging but enjoyable course. 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.

3.4 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.

3.5 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.

3.6. 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.

3.6. 2. The topographical playing interest of the holes is equal to the best of the others and intensifies within the SSSI.

3.6. 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 (Document T28B)

and one for Royal Liverpool Golf Course (Document T28A). The wider, inter-fairway spaces at Menie should allow an equal or greater amount of wild-life.

3.6. 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.

3.6. 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 Gables, 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.

3.6. 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.

3.7 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

