



DORNOCH AREA COMMUNITY COUNCIL

July 14th, 2023

John C. Strickland, Mayor
Village of Pinehurst
395 Magnolia Road
Pinehurst
North Carolina
28374 USA

REF: A cooperative liaison of mutual benevolence Agreement between the Village of Pinehurst, United States of America and the Town of Dornoch, Scotland

Dear John

We are delighted to be exchanging the first of our annual letters in accordance with the Mutual Benevolence Agreement fittingly started in this 150th anniversary of the birth of Donald Ross.

It was Sir Robert Gordon, Tutor and uncle of the 13th Earl of Sutherland who first recorded a game of golf played on Dornoch links in the 1600s. Sir Robert played the game with his nephew, and commented that '*About this town there are the fairest linkes of any pairt of Scotland*'. Since that time, golf has become the beating heart of the town of Dornoch and a major economic driver benefiting the whole of the county of Sutherland.

Like Pinehurst, Dornoch is growing and our population will be just over 2,000 once the house building already in the pipeline is complete. Dornoch is becoming an increasingly popular location to live and while it seems to be primarily those in later life who are coming, our school rolls are also growing which will hopefully keep the town alive and young in the future.

Business investment in Dornoch remains strong. The Dornoch Station Hotel is having a multi-million pound refurbishment and will reopen for business as a 4 star luxury destination at the end of this month. The Courthouse is open again after closing last year due to lack of staff. The Royal Golf has been revamped under new management and is due for a major refurbishment this winter.

The Royal Dornoch Golf Club is looking to enhance its facilities with a new clubhouse, with tenders due to be returned by the end of August. Should the price be right, construction will start at the end of October. Part of that project will see the beginning of the remodelling of the Struie Course with the addition of a new 9th hole to replace the 1st hole which will be lost when construction of the clubhouse starts. The Club has more ideas in the pipeline to build a number of other holes for the Struie that they believe will improve the course as a whole and attract people to play it in its own right and see it come out of the shadow of the Championship Course.

It has been a busy time for the Club with a record number of members and visitors playing the courses this year already. The boom in golf post Covid has certainly not subsided, and the town as a whole is benefiting greatly from the footfall and spend that this brings.

The Club has hosted two major events this year. Firstly, the Vagliano Trophy was played at the end of June. This is the amateur women of Great Britain and Ireland taking on their counterparts from Europe with the junior version played at the same time. While the weather wasn't kind, the golf was still exceptional with many spectators marveling at the talents of the players. Europe retained the women's title while the juniors had a drawn match, the best result the GB&I team have ever had, having lost all previous encounters since the inception of the event in 2011.

At the beginning of August the Scottish Amateur Championship was held and this saw the best male golfers in Scotland converge on Dornoch to find out who is the best in the land this year. The stroke play qualifying was shared with Tain GC, and such was the level of play new course records were set over both courses – by the same player! He carried on to play well in the match play stages reaching the final and going on to win the title! We had local interest in the event with Chris Mailley making it to the semi-finals. This is the fourth time that Royal Dornoch has hosted this event with each previous winner going on to have very good careers in the professional game, so we are keen to see where a win takes this year's champion.

Most importantly with regard to the Agreement, is the return of 8 junior golfers from Chicago after taking part in the Morcott Challenge. Started in 2005 by Royal Dornoch member Woody Morcott, this event is designed to bring the junior golfers of Royal Dornoch and the United States in contact to better understand each other's lives and culture through the playing of golf. Each year a team of 8 visits to play and stay with the other team with a number of visits and experiences programmed along with several games of golf. Next year the Chicago juniors will be visiting Dornoch to sample what the Highlands of Scotland have to offer. When they came in 2022 this included a visit to the Dornoch Highland Games which have just taken place. Quite an experience for them all!

Finally let me mention you a little about Historylinks Museum, founded in 1997, which among other artifacts some of which go back to the bronze age, houses a replica golf workshop containing tools and clubs used by two great golf professionals Donald Ross, who links us with Pinehurst, and Donald McCulloch, twice awarded the Military Medal for Gallantry during the First World War.

Historylinks Museum is a volunteer led, independent museum with a strong focus on community engagement. It works with schools, community groups and its own youth group, The Young Curators, to fulfil its mission of 'Keeping the Dornoch Story Alive'. Historylinks has 20 volunteers and employs three staff with the aim of making the history and heritage of the town and surrounding area accessible to all. Over 250 members belong to the Charity branch of our organization: Dornoch Heritage Society. Everyone at Historylinks looks forward to exploring how they can work together with Tufts Museum in Pinehurst to further the historical knowledge of the origins and heritage of golf in Dornoch and Pinehurst and if anyone from Pinehurst is intending to visit our Museum or explore their family history please let us know in advance so we can be sure to provide the appropriate welcome and help.

We very much look forward to seeing you in September.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Murray', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Patrick Murray, Provost
The Dornoch Area Community Council