

Tuesday, 22nd October, 2013

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## Greener Greens for Scotland's Golf Courses

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Story published at 10:55, Tuesday, October 22nd, 2013

One of Scotland's most dramatic golf courses, Machrihanish Dunes, is celebrating the Year of Natural Scotland by herding an unusual bunch of 'locals' back onto the course.

Keeping it neatly nibbled during the winter months, the maintenance of this stunning coastal course is a labour of love for these 'natural lawnmowers'; a flock of 40 black Hebridean sheep.



The black Hebridean sheep in our photo come courtesy of Machrihanish Dunes and Southworth Development. A video has also been created and is available at <http://youtu.be/wQ52WyzAuME>

After swinging back into action on the course this weekend, these woolly wonders are not only a hit with visitors but provide a perfect example of environmentally friendly practice in Scotland, the Home of Golf. So much so, these 'natural lawnmowers' can be credited with helping Machrihanish Dunes secure the 2012 Association of British Travel Agents title of 'Number 1 Eco Golf Course in the World'.

David Southworth, President and CEO of Southworth Development, owners and managers of Machrihanish Dunes, said: "Here at Machrihanish Dunes we are very proud of our eco friendly status and in particular the iconic characters who have helped us achieve our environmentally friendly credentials.

"By using the 'natural lawnmowers' to thin out the rough on the course we are able to help preserve several rare and protected species of orchids that grow here on this site and in few other places. The added benefit is visitors can enjoy the company of these unique companions as they play a round."

VisitScotland Chairman Mike Cantlay added: "These woolly wonders will have people flocking to see them in action, mowing this truly breathtaking golf course. They really are a wonderful endorsement for this, the Year of Natural Scotland.

"Golf in Scotland is now a £1 billion industry and our reputation as the Home of Golf will be reinforced as we host one of the biggest events on the global golf calendar at Gleneagles in 2014 – the Ryder Cup. The green keepers there, however, will have to book our fleecy friends well in advance as I've feeling they'll be a big hit with golf courses across Scotland."

Thanks to its eco friendly practices, stunning coastal setting and dramatic Atlantic backdrop, Machrihanish Dunes came in at number 25 in the 'Golf World' Magazine: 2012-13 Top 100 Courses in Scotland'.



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***The black Hebridean sheep in our photo come courtesy of Machrihanish Dunes and Southworth Development. A video has also been created and is available at <http://youtu.be/wQ52WyzAuME>***

Another links course proving its mettle in terms of environmentally friendly practice is Askernish Golf Club in South Uist, which is now hailed 'the most natural links course in the world' by environmental experts after it was restored using only traditional design principles. The dunes' natural contours form the fairways, and no artificial chemicals are used in maintenance. Like Machrihanish Dunes, sheep and cows keep the grass manageable during the winter months without the need of potentially damaging mowing equipment.

At Gleneagles, the host of the Ryder Cup 2014, eco friendly credentials have been boosted by the purchase of three bicycles, used by staff when accessing its 850 acres of greens. With a real focus on sustainability, Gleneagles also grows its own organic grapes for the fruit platters served daily throughout the resort during the fruit season. And although the luxury resort does not take grape growing to the next, alcoholic stage, it does recycle all left-over wine corks by sending them to the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh for use in its innovative drainage systems.

Environmentally friendly golf doesn't need to be confined to the greens however, at Dundonald Links on the West coast, bee-hives have been introduced to increase on-site biodiversity. The added bonus is a sweet treat after the 18th hole; homemade Dunny Honey which is harvested by the course's greens crew.

In 2012, Dundonald also achieved its objective of sending zero amount of waste to landfill and on the golf course green waste such as grass clippings and woody waste are stored and screened for recycling. This has resulted in 3000 tonnes of top soil, which is used for all golf course construction.

VisitScotland has suggested many other places where golf and nature are combined:

- Spot Bottlenose Dolphins from Fortrose & Rosemarkie Golf Course which lies out on the Chanonry Point, guarding the entrance to the Moray Firth.
- Enjoy the whisky capital of Scotland whilst golfing in Speyside, in particular [Dufftown golf course](#) which is blessed with rolling fairways lined with heather.
- Tobermory Golf Course, on the Isle of Mull, offers superb panoramic views which includes Ardnamurchan, Loch Sunart and, on a clear day, the Isle of Skye.
- The Scenic beauty of North Berwick Links poses a true challenge to any golfer and offers magnificent views towards the sea, including the iconic gannet haven, the Bass Rock.
- The Boat of Garten in Inverness allows you to play near the Silver Birch forest, with the River Spey at your side and the majestic mountains of the Highlands as your backdrop.
- Cruden Bay Golf Course is internationally renowned and is one of the best golf courses in Scotland. The subtly contoured greens and magnificent panoramic views will make your visit a most memorable one.
- With the sea by your side and the famous Turnberry Lighthouse in the distance, there are few courses in the world that can match Turnberry for beauty or excitement.

Golf in Scotland [www.visitscotland.com/golf](http://www.visitscotland.com/golf)

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