



Brancepeth Castle Golf Club

Gender and Fairness in Competition Policy

Introduction

The issues regarding transgender people competing in sport has been researched for many years, and is ongoing. Guidelines relating to golf were published by the R & A in December 2024¹. Based on those guidelines England Golf published the “England Golf Gender and Fairness in Competition Policy” in January 2025². A guideline published by the Durham County Ladies Golf Association (DCLGA) on 21 February 2025³ is entirely in keeping with the England Golf policy. This in turn creates a need for Brancepeth Castle Golf Club (BCGC) to formulate a Club policy.

Our policies are written firstly to be compatible with UK law, secondly with regard to guidance from our sport’s governing bodies (eg R & A, England Golf, regional bodies), and finally to ensure we have a sustainable club where all members can enjoy golf and socialising. BCGC welcomes any person to play here as long as they abide by the rules and regulations of the club. We respect the right of every person to hold an opinion, and the right to express it in an appropriate context. However, our Code of Conduct reminds us that, when at the club, members are expected to behave respectfully, recognising the right of other people to hold a different opinion. Also, our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy reminds us that gender reassignment is a protected characteristic enshrined in law (Equality Act 2010). Discrimination, harassment, or victimisation of any person on the basis of this (or any other) protected characteristic is not acceptable in our Club. However, that policy also states our commitment to ensure fairness in competition, which is the issue addressed by this policy.

The Board takes the view that we should accept and adopt the principles in the England Golf policy¹. England Golf acknowledges that the evidence relating to gender diversity in sport is incomplete and evolving, and so will review its policy regularly. Our policy will also be reviewed in keeping with that principle.

1. General principles

- 1.1 BCGC respects the legal right of all individuals to adopt a gender identity different from their sex assigned at birth.
- 1.2 BCGC welcomes any person to play golf and use our facilities long as they abide by the Rules and Regulations of the club. This policy does not negate any part of the Club’s policies relating to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Code of Conduct, and Disciplinary Procedures.
- 1.3 BCGC accepts, and is guided by, the principles stated in the “England Golf Gender and Fairness in Competition Policy” published in January 2025¹.
- 1.4 BCGC accepts its obligation to be subject to policies issued by recognised golfing organisations regarding golf competitions organised by those organisations.

- 1.5 This policy will be reviewed from time to time, taking into account any new guidance given by recognised governing bodies including, but not exclusively, the R &A, England Golf, Durham County Golf Union and Durham County Ladies Golf Association.

2. Handicaps

- 2.1 All entrants into Club competitions are required to have a valid WHS Handicap Index. WHS requires a golfer to be identified as either male or female, and an individual can only hold one gender category of WHS handicap at a time.
- 2.2 A golfer wishing to change their registered gender on WHS as part of a gender reassignment process must inform the Chair of the Handicaps and Competitions committee. The matter will be managed in accordance with R &A and England Golf policy. Currently this involves removal of the existing WHS record and starting a new record as if they were a new golfer.

3. Handicap competitions

- 3.1 For men's competitions, competitors are required to hold a WHS handicap which identifies that they are a male golfer. For women's competitions, competitors are required to hold a WHS handicap which identifies that they are a female golfer. For mixed competitions, competitors may compete in the gender category in which they hold their WHS handicap.

4. Scratch competitions

- 4.1 For men's competitions, players may compete in a competition if any one of the following circumstances apply:
- their sex assigned at birth is male
 - they identify as a transgender man
 - they identify as non-binary
- 4.2 For women's competitions, players may compete if any one of the following circumstances apply:
- their sex assigned at birth was female, and they have not undergone or commenced any process to transition to a transgender man
 - they identify as non-binary, but their sex assigned at birth was female and they have not undergone or commenced any process to transition to a transgender man
- 4.3 For mixed competitions:
- a player may only compete as a female golfer if any one of the following circumstances apply:
 - their sex assigned at birth was female, and they have not undergone or commenced any process to transition to a transgender man
 - they identify as non-binary, but their sex assigned at birth was female and they have not undergone or commenced any process to transition to a transgender man
 - a player may compete as a male golfer if any one of the following circumstances apply:
 - their sex assigned at birth was male

- they identify as transgender man
- they identify as non-binary

5. Combined competitions

- 5.1 Where there is a competition that allows individuals to compete for both a scratch and a handicap prize, the eligibility requirements for players to win in either section of that competition will apply in accordance with sections 3 and 4 above.

6. Reporting concerns

- 6.1 In the event that a member has a concern regarding an individual's eligibility to participate within a competition, they should not attempt to raise those concerns directly with the individual. Any concerns should be directed to the Chair of the Handicap and Competitions Committee, the Club Safeguarding Officer and the Women's (or if appropriate the Men's) Captain. This should be done respectfully and confidentially, and wider discussion is strongly discouraged.
- 6.2 If any concern under this policy is identified during an event, the competitor should be permitted to continue, and the Club contacted afterwards as stipulated in section 6.1 above.

9. Investigations

- 9.1 The Club has the right to investigate a concern, raised in good faith, that an individual intends to compete, or has competed, in an event in contravention of this policy.
- 9.2 Such investigation will be led by the Chair of the Handicaps and Competitions Committee, supported by the Safeguarding Officer and the Womens' Captain (or if relevant the Mens' Captain). Other advice may be sought, including from England Golf, but investigation should be carried out with as much discretion, sensitivity and confidentiality as possible in the given circumstances.
- 9.3 A club member who is subject to an investigation under this section is required to co-operate fully in good faith. Failure to do so may result in a decision to provisionally suspend the individual from competing in an eligible competition, pending a resolution and/or disciplinary proceedings being instigated which, where a competition has already been played, could result in disqualification of individual results and/or the forfeit of any prize already won. The Club also has a right to temporarily suspend an individual from competing in an eligible competition where further investigation is required before a conclusion can be reached.

9. Disciplinary Proceedings

- 9.1 Where an individual is found to have contravened this policy, either intentionally or negligently, the Club may, at its sole and absolute discretion, disqualify the individual results obtained within the relevant competition. In such an event, any associated prize, status, or other such award, shall be forfeited.

9.2 Where a club member is found to have contravened this policy, either intentionally or negligently, the Club may, at its sole and absolute discretion, instigate further disciplinary proceedings. This will be carried out in accordance with the current Club Disciplinary Policy, and includes the right of appeal.

10. Malicious or Bad-Faith Allegations

10.1 Where an allegation is raised in respect of an alleged breach of this policy, and there is reasonable suspicion or evidence to suggest that the allegation has been made either in bad faith and/or with malicious intent, the Club reserves the right to investigate and/or take appropriate action against the individual who made the allegation, including, but not limited to, disciplinary sanction.

11. Miscellaneous issues

11.1 This policy applies only to competitions run by the Club, and for which prizes are awarded by the club. It does not apply to social/casual golf, nor must it necessarily apply to competitions arranged by subsections of the club.

11.2 Should an issue arise which is not foreseen within this policy, the Club reserves the right to address the issue in a manner which it considers is reasonable, appropriate and in keeping with the general principles of this policy.

11.3 There is a group of rare chromosomal/genetic conditions, labelled differences in sex development (DSD's), that lead to unexpected development of an individual's physical sexual characteristics. This policy cannot be applied to a golfer with such a condition, and they are advised to contact, in confidence, the DCLGA welfare officer (welfare@durhamladiesgolf.org.uk) or England Golf (compliance@englandgolf.org)

12. Definitions

12.1 The terms used in this policy are as defined in the England Golf Gender and Fairness in Sport Policy²

References

1.<https://www.randa.org/en/articles/the-r-a-introduces-fair-competition-policy-for-its-professional-and-elite-amateur-championships>

2.<https://static.whsplatform.englandgolf.org/clubs/1000-1/uploads/pdf/eg%20policy%20for%20gender%20and%20fairness%20in%20competition%20final%20draft%20%2001%2025.pdf>

3.https://www.durhamladiesgolf.org.uk/_files/ugd/3193d9_ed51cfbed5a459b93d6395eaa4549ae.pdf