



ADVANCED  
General Certificate of Education  
January 2010

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## Geography

### Assessment Unit A2 3

*assessing*

#### Module 6: Skills and Decision Making in Geography

[A2G31]



TUESDAY 2 FEBRUARY, AFTERNOON

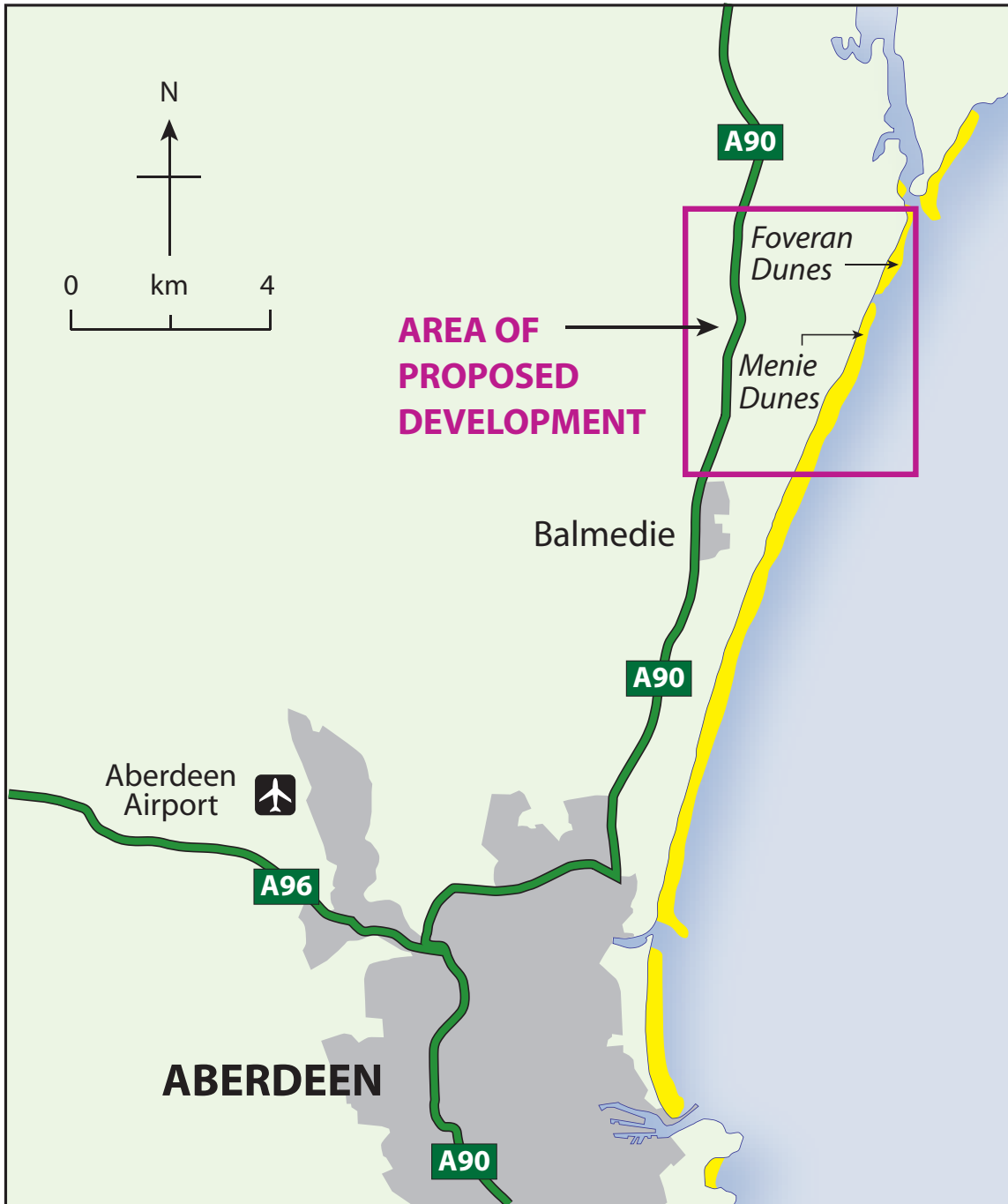
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#### CHECKLIST OF RESOURCE MATERIAL

- Resource A** – Map of area
- Resource B** – Detailed map of proposed development
- Resource C** – Plan of the resort hotel and some of the proposed villas
- Resource D1** – Aerial view looking south over the proposed development site
- Resource D2** – Mobile dunes within the proposed development area
- Resource D3** – Range of dune habitats with low-lying dune slack
- Resource D4** – Hole 13: present view and projected change
- Resource E** – Background to the proposed development
- Resource F** – Arguments against the proposed development
- Resource G** – Arguments for the proposed development
- Resource H** – Quotations related to the development

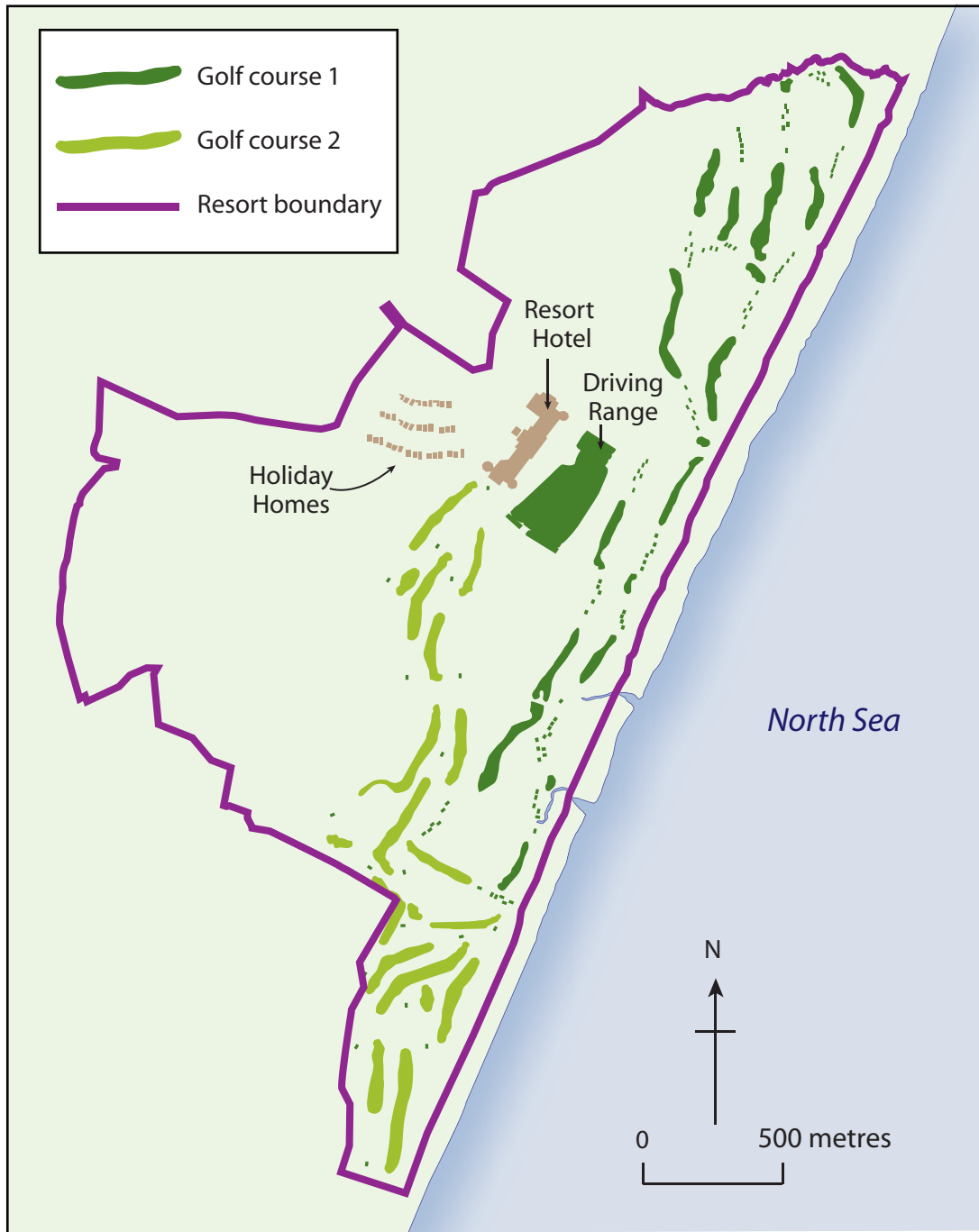
RESOURCE A

MAP OF AREA



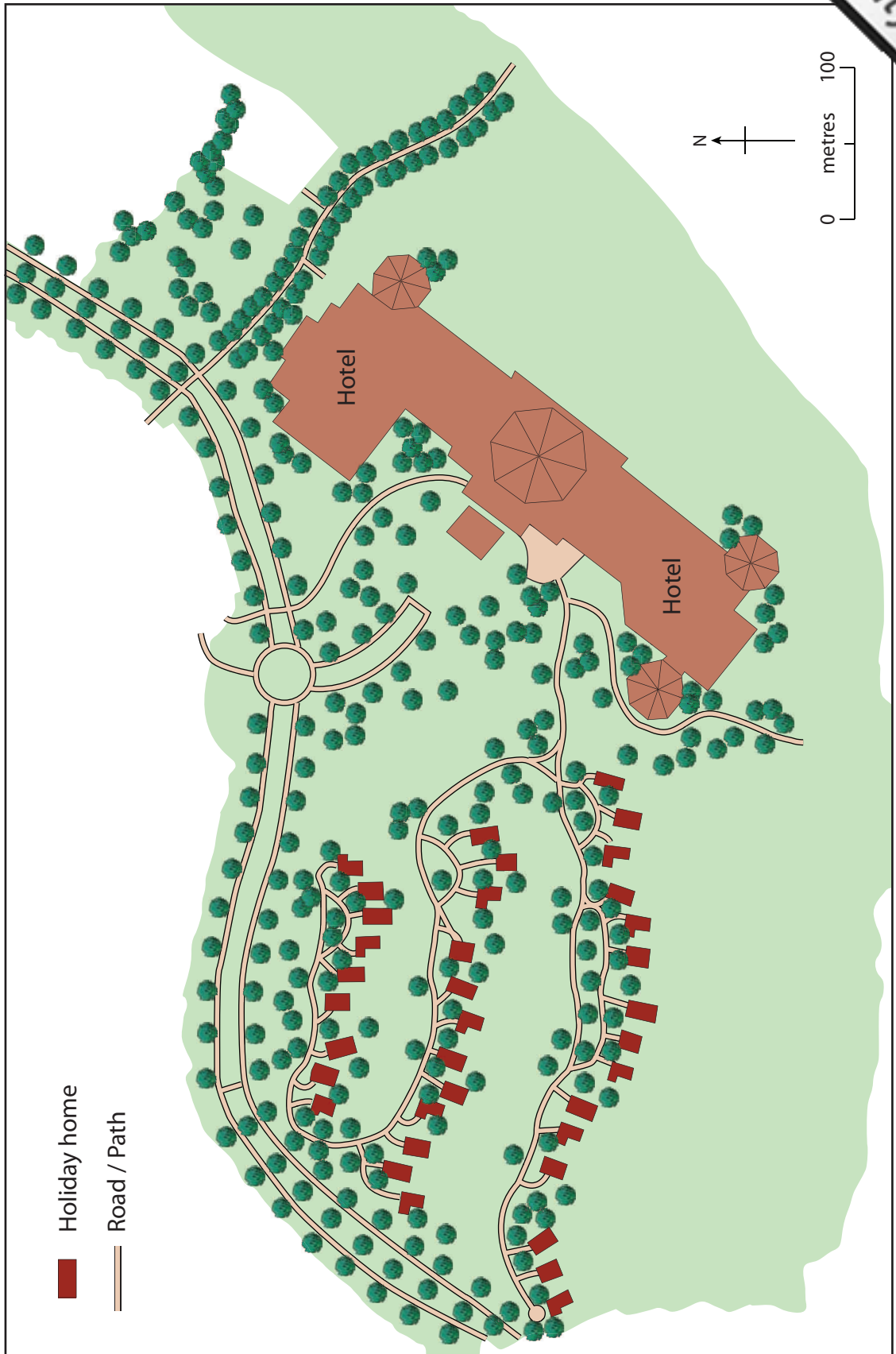
### RESOURCE B

#### DETAILED MAP OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT



# RESOURCE C

## PLAN OF THE RESORT HOTEL AND SOME OF THE PROPOSED VILLAS





**RESOURCE D1**

**AERIAL VIEW LOOKING SOUTH  
OVER THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SITE**



© Trump International Golf Links Scotland (TIGLS)



## RESOURCE D2

### MOBILE DUNES WITHIN THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AREA



© Trump International Golf Links Scotland (TIGLS)

## RESOURCE D3

### RANGE OF DUNE HABITATS WITH LOW-LYING DUNE SLACK



© Trump International Golf Links Scotland (TIGLS)

## RESOURCE D4

### HOLE 13: PRESENT VIEW



© Trump International Golf Links Scotland (TIGLS)

### HOLE 13: PROJECTED CHANGE



© Trump International Golf Links Scotland (TIGLS)

## RESOURCE E

### BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The billionaire US property developer, Donald Trump, has applied for permission to turn sand dunes at the Menie Estate, located 16 km north of the Scottish city of Aberdeen, into a £1 billion golf resort. The site of the development comprises the Menie Estate, an area of 452 hectares located north of Balmedie between the A90 and the sea. The main aim is to create a world class golf resort which is planned to include:

- 2 full-size 18-hole golf courses;
- golf clubhouse;
- golf academy;
- maintenance building;
- driving range;
- 450-bedroom 5 star hotel;
- conference centre and spa;
- 36 four- and eight-bedroom golf lodges;
- 950 holiday homes in four blocks;
- accommodation for 400 staff;
- 3 parking areas and access roads; and
- 500 luxury homes.

According to the developers, the aim is to create the “greatest golf course in the world” designed to attract major championships such as the Ryder Cup.

In July 2007, planning officials recommended approval for the project, which it is claimed would create more than 800 jobs during the peak season. However, the north of the site incorporates about one third of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (the Foveran Links SSSI). Furthermore, this section of coastline is designated an Area of Landscape Significance.

Donald Trump claims that his Scottish roots – his late mother was a Macleod from the Isle of Lewis, North West Scotland – are one of the main reasons that he wants to proceed with the development. However, he has warned that, if obstacles are created, he will locate the proposed development elsewhere, possibly in Northern Ireland.

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## RESOURCE F

### ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Local residents in the quiet nearby village of Balmedie object to the proposed development. They see it as a “gated community” with too many luxury houses which would change the nature of the local community. House prices are already high in Aberdeen and surrounding areas and there is a fear that property prices will rise further if rich outsiders are attracted to the area by the luxury properties and the other facilities offered by the golf resort. This may lead to local people not being able to afford to live in their own area. It will also reduce privacy and increase traffic on local roads.

The dunes on which “the world’s greatest golf course” is to be built are one of the most spectacular habitats in the whole of Scotland, on a remote and beautiful stretch of the coastline. They are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and one of the top five sand dune systems in the United Kingdom in terms of their importance to the environment. It is predicted that development will destroy one third of the Foveran Links SSSI, a wildlife site of national importance. Seven species of endangered birds on the ‘Red List’, including redshank, skylarks and lapwings, are threatened by this golf development. These birds depend on the rich dune ecosystem and the adjoining beach. Aberdeenshire Council is required by Scottish law to conserve biodiversity. Allowing this development to go ahead will reduce biodiversity in the council area.

While the development will undoubtedly bring jobs to the area, which some people may welcome, the unemployment rate in both Aberdeen city and the surrounding area is less than 2%. The need for increased employment in the area is less important than the need to conserve this precious environment.

Although it is possible to incorporate a golf course successfully into a rural environment, achieving this in an Area of Landscape Significance is much more difficult. In such locations the quality of the environment, its biodiversity and ecological status need to be considered before any development is permitted. A golf resort could be developed elsewhere in the area without destroying these protected dunes.

The warning by the developer that he will relocate elsewhere in Europe is an empty threat which should not influence the decision. All member states of the European Union are legally required to apply the same environmental safeguards as those in Scotland. The time taken to find an alternative site would be better used seeking a solution that would work in this area, but without destroying the dunes. So far the developer has refused to consider keeping his development in the area but moving it away from the protected dunes.

If this development were to be allowed, there is a fear that **all** protected areas in Scotland could be under threat and that Scotland’s priceless natural heritage could be sold off to create jobs in the short term. The Scottish Wildlife Trust, among others, are concerned about the potential environmental impact of the development on one of the most important sand dune systems in the UK.

**Table 2: Direct habitat loss due to the development within the Foveran Links SSSI (in hectares)**

Habitat	Area of SSSI within proposed golf resort	Projected loss from golf development
Bare mobile sand	13.8	10.9
Beach sand	3.1	0
Mobile dunes	17.5	2.7
Dune slack	8.6	2.6

The part of the site which lies within the Foveran Links SSSI is unrivalled nationally. The moving sand (**Resource D2**) is what makes the site special; stabilising that to provide a golf course (**Resource D4**) will reduce most of the value of the habitat (**Table 2**) and reduce the biodiversity of the dunes. Although the developers claim that the damage can be minimised, the chances of success are poor; the area will be so badly damaged that it is unlikely that it will remain of scientific interest.

There are also implications for public access to the beach and dunes, reducing recreational opportunities for local people. The scale of the development is entirely out of keeping with the area and the proposed housing would not bring economic benefits to local people. It will create a sprawling corridor of urban expansion, the scale of which would have an adverse impact on the character of the landscape. The planning policy for the Scottish countryside is that houses should not be built, except where specific exemptions apply. The proposed housing in this development does not qualify.

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## RESOURCE G

### ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Aberdeen is seen as the gateway to the North Sea oil reserves. Since the 1970s, residents of this relatively remote part of Scotland have experienced a considerable increase in income and employment as a result of the oil revenues that have come into the area. Recently, however, oil industry profits have declined. Many business leaders in the area argue that the building of this important golf resort in a largely neglected part of Scotland could be the biggest boost to the area since those oil reserves were discovered, and will help to replace the jobs lost since oil incomes declined.

While the Aberdeenshire Council have rejected the plan, many people within the Council and elsewhere are united in condemning their decision. For every letter objecting to the proposal, Aberdeenshire Council has received three letters of support for the planning application: 105 to 327. There is also a petition objecting to the proposal but it has only 28 signatures. Local opinion may be divided but more people support the proposal than are against it.

With more than 200 km of beaches in this part of Scotland, the development will only affect a small proportion of those. In any case the developer, Donald Trump, argues that the course will actually improve the local environment.

“Each and every golf course I have built has got awards for environmental protection, and I do not think anyone has got as many awards as we have ... I believe, when we are finished, the course will be better environmentally than before we started. It’s possible I could lose a great deal of money. It would cost a lot less money if we did not care about the environment.”

This area will also benefit enormously from these proposals in other ways. There will be a 400% increase in the numbers of tourists attracted to the area as a consequence of the building of the golf resort. This will bring increased opportunities for local businesses and vastly increase the employment possibilities for local people.

It is accepted that the SSSI in the dunes, and the habitats to the south of it, are environmentally significant and there will be severe adverse impact on the dunes in some places. However, much has been made of the shifting sands within the dunes on which the golf courses will be built, and the diversity of species supported by the various habitats. This is said to be a unique environment and thus in need of protection. However it is likely, although not provable, that the dunes will stabilise naturally by the end of the century, without any development. Large masses of sand tend to be colonised with vegetation, unless other factors interfere with this natural process. In the process many of the species associated with the present dunes would probably disappear naturally. The current dynamic nature of the dunes may be temporary and so the range of species may decline naturally in the long term.

By identifying low-lying dune slacks (**Resource D3**) which are some of the most sensitive areas, and designing the courses around them, habitat loss will be minimised. Opponents of the scheme allege that dune slacks will be destroyed. Information from analysis of Geographical Information Systems shows that, in total, three smaller dune slacks will be destroyed. Of the 38 dune slacks in the area, just 17 will be affected at all by the golf course.

It is planned that some of the habitats that will be affected by the development will be translocated elsewhere, so reducing the impact on the sensitive ecology of the area. While it may take up to five years to complete, the habitat translocation is estimated to have a high success rate.

Scottish National Heritage claim that the “site possesses the best range of [dune] slacks in Great Britain in terms of stages of development”. In fact, this is imprecise and exaggerated as there are three other sites in Great Britain with a similar quality of dune environment.

The Chambers of Commerce in Scotland, the Scottish Council for Development and Industry, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Confederation of British Industry all support this development proposal. Scotland’s economy has not escaped the global economic downturn which started in 2008. Business owners in Scotland argue that developments like this one are required if money is still going to flow into NE Scotland. With a struggling economy, this development will boost the construction industry, creating much-needed employment. Construction costs could exceed £1 billion, bringing major benefits to the local and national economy.

**Table 3: Benefits of the development**

	Resort under construction		Resort in operation	
	Extra jobs created	Wealth generated in the area per year (£ million)	Extra jobs created	Wealth generated in the area per year (£ million)
Aberdeenshire	6230	205	1250	47
Rest of Scotland	740	57	190	11

There will also be many jobs provided for the area after the resort is completed, bringing wealth into the local economy. While many of the jobs will go to local people, the impact of this development will not just be in the local area but also nationally.

The development will help to diversify the economy, building tourism and raising the area’s profile internationally. There is, at present, a shortage of high quality hotel accommodation in the area, which will be remedied, bringing advantages for the business and tourism markets.

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## RESOURCE H

### QUOTATIONS IN RELATION TO THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

“We have to look to our long-term future. We need to ... diversify our economy and this scheme would be the perfect platform for that ... It is in [the developer’s] interests, as well as in everybody else’s, to preserve our wildlife.”

*Kate Dean, Leader of Aberdeen City Council*

“The destruction of part of Aberdeenshire’s beautiful unspoilt coastline [is] too high a price to pay for this development ... we hope that Scotland will continue to offer and promote the best golf courses in the world, but not at this expense.”

*RSPB Spokesperson*

“Leisure and tourism are worldwide industries that have come to be regarded as the fastest growing markets and it is these markets that Scotland is uniquely placed to exploit. Future generations will look back in dismay if we do not seize this unique opportunity and support these proposals.”

*Ian D Cowie, Knowles Food Services*

“Balmedie is a beautiful natural stretch of beach – has anyone walked on it as the sun sets like I have been doing for years? It would break my heart to see it being ripped up by JCBs and [to be] told that I’m no longer allowed to walk there.”

*Vikki, in submission to forum*

“I have two jobs and I’m still struggling to make a living up here. Rich Americans move in and how are we expected to pay the inflated prices that will appear once businesses realise that they have a lot of money?”

*Jim Robinson, in blog*

“The environmentalists ... are suggesting that a golf course might be detrimental to some sand dunes. How many jobs have these ... dunes created over the last 4000 years? How many mouths does this place feed? Ask the environmentalists that!”

*James Robson, in letter to Sunday Herald newspaper*





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