

COYLUMBRIDGE HIGHLAND LODGES CLUB

Aviemore, Inverness-shire, PH22 1QN



From the Chairman – April 2021

Dear Fellow Member,

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on the lives of all of us, to a greater or lesser extent. It is my hope that none of our members have suffered serious illness, or losses, as a result. The Club's priority for all of us during this period, has been to stay safe and support the efforts of the authorities to contain, control and overcome this pandemic. Regrettably these measures have necessarily imposed great restrictions on travel and have required the suspension of venues such as Coylumbridge for prolonged periods. This has been an added blow to all those owners who have therefore been unable to enjoy and benefit from their Coylumbridge experience. To all those who have been affected in this way, I thank you for your understanding and for your patience.

We are delighted that the Scottish Government agreed a re-opening date of 26 April. The team at the resort is looking forward to welcoming you back to your home in the heart of the Cairngorms. Unfortunately, this is not an immediate return to 'normal', as many Covid restrictions will remain in place. Most significantly there may continue to be restrictions on travel, and on the numbers of people from different family units who can meet together or occupy lodges. It also seems likely that restrictions on pubs, cafes and restaurants, as well as popular tourist venues, will all continue for some months to come.

My advice is for you to plan carefully for your future visits to Coylumbridge. Consult the Club website where the most up-to-date advice will be listed, and if in any doubt contact the resort directly.

Club website www.coylumbridge.info
Login chlcmember
Password inverness
Resort office 01479 780277 or 811147

Rothiemurchus, Aviemore, and the Cairngorms will be as beautiful as ever, but we may have to adapt to changes in how we enjoy them, and our time at Coylumbridge.

This most recent second period of extended lockdown has presented its own challenges to the Club. Many arrangements, including routine maintenance, have gone well, but there have also been periods of extreme bad weather with near-record low temperatures. Despite daily checks on lodges, and maintenance of low-level heating, there were a number of frozen pipes and related problems. All necessary repairs have been carried out as appropriate. In relation to this, I would like to record special thanks to Ranald and his on-site team who have ensured that Coylumbridge is ready to accept owners. Special mention to Catherine Harris who has maintained the administration function throughout and has been on hand to deal with owner emails and telephone calls. To Alan Key who returned early from furlough following the departure of John Clarke and has managed the maintenance programme. To Christopher MacDonald, maintenance team member, who has stayed on site to provide daily lodge checking and 24/7 security. In addition, thanks to all those who were on furlough and, of course, Ranald himself who has had overall responsibility for everything on site. We are very fortunate to have a dedicated and committed team.

Every team requires a leader and at our AGM last year I welcomed Aileen Munro as the newly-appointed HGV UK General Manager, and noted that she had 'big boots to fill'. Aileen has indeed met that challenge and has been a great support to the Committee and Club throughout this challenging year.

Due to the suspension of operations, we fully appreciate that our members have missed out on their week(s) and understandably this has led to distress, frustration and some resentment at being expected to pay annual charge/maintenance fees for weeks which members were not able to enjoy. I understand those emotions as I was unable to occupy some of my own weeks at Christmas.

The base costs of operating the resort continue even during suspension; however, some savings were made, due to the furlough of HGV staff and savings on cleaning and laundry. In 2020 your Committee took the view that it was fair and equitable to rebate/credit those affected owners, who were in good financial standing with the Club, with the variable element of their maintenance fee (i.e the savings made or expenses not incurred). Our initial estimate was that this saving represented c.30% of the fee and 2020 rebates were made accordingly. Subsequent preparation of our audited accounts for 2020 has confirmed the accuracy of the 30% figure. It is our intention that all those affected from the most recent lockdown (from late December 2020 to 26 April 2021) will receive a similar rebate/credit. The accounts which are available to view on the website, show the cost of these refunds in 2020 amounted to just over £148,000. The 2021 figures will be greater.

I am pleased to be able to advise that Hilton Grand Vacations (HGV) our Managing Agent, will be launching a series of promotions, experiences, or added-value products as part of a new Lodge Owner Loyalty Programme, which has been designed to offer a 'thank you' to our loyal lodge-owners who return to Scottish HGV-managed resorts year after year. Details will be given at our forthcoming AGM and on the website.

On the matter of the website, I wish to record thanks to Nicky Petrie, HGV Senior Marketing Manager, and our own Natalie Johnson, who have overseen the complete redesign of our website. Please take the time to explore this fantastic resource which has great information about all aspects of Coylumbridge and how to enjoy your time in the area. A reminder to you all to please make sure that your details of address, email and telephone numbers are up to date. To update your email address, please use the HGV website, via **my.hgv.com/add-email**. You will need your Customer Reference Number, (or contract number), which is in the top right of your annual charge/fee invoice. When prompted, type 202 (the Club's property ID), followed by a hyphen, then your 4-6 digit Customer Reference Number. (So: 202-xxxxxx). You'll then be prompted to add your email address to complete. If you need additional help, contact +44 (0)1339 755558. Registering your email this way is solely for sending Club updates.

Committee Developments

Alan Walker stepped down from the Secretary role shortly after our 2020 AGM. My thanks again to Alan for his hard work and support over many years. The position of Secretary can be onerous and seemingly thankless! We were saved by newly-elected Natalie Johnson who volunteered to take on the Secretary role until a permanent successor was found. On behalf of the entire club membership, I thank Natalie for her dedication to this role, particularly at a time when the volume of member communications was dramatically rising. We appealed for a permanent volunteer Secretary, and I am delighted to advise that Joanne Hope took over as Club Secretary in February 2021. Joanne and her husband have been owners at Coylumbridge since 1996 and Joanne brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role.

For many years the CHLC Committee met three times a year (c. January, May, September) and in recent years these meetings were held at Coylumbridge. Since the first lockdown in 2020 we have been unable to meet physically, but such has been the volume of correspondence at the issues arising, Zoom meetings are currently more frequent. Hardly a day passes without some form of email communication within the Committee. As Chairman I am truly grateful to Natalie, Stuart, Aileen, Randal and Joanne for their dedication, commitment, and support both to me and more particularly to the Club and the wider membership. We are fortunate to have such a team who share a common vision for the future success of our Club and resort.

There are, however, more issues and challenges to be addressed than your small Committee can adequately cover, and for that reason we are looking for volunteers to serve on focus groups, and to support and advise the elected Committee. We envisage that these groups will meet remotely and will feed their conclusions and recommendations into the main Committee. We have not yet prepared Terms of Reference as that will depend to some extent on the volunteers who come forward. If you have an interest, strong opinions, or skills in any of the areas below, and are willing to give up personal time to help the Club, then you are just the person we are looking for. Please visit the club website and register your interest at: **coylumbridge.info/owners/workinggroups**.

We are looking for input in the following areas:

- Environmental and sustainability issues
- Review of Management Contract
- The refurbishment project
- Future Vision 2030

The forthcoming AGM 11 June 2021

At our 2020 AGM, held on Friday 16 July 2020, I expressed the hope that we would once again be able to meet in person for the 2021 AGM, but also incorporating attendance by video link.

Unfortunately this will not be possible and we must once again hold an online meeting. Notice of the meeting is included within this mailing. Registration will be online and votes must be cast online or by post ahead of the meeting. For more info, see: coylumbridge.info/owners/AGM2021.

Other matters

There are several other matters which I wish to draw to your attention, and I will be brief:

1. The Hotel

Contact between Britannia Hotels and the Club is non-existent, and with HGV it is very limited. Owners can still avail of the leisure facilities (pool, tennis), but this is subject to payment directly to the hotel and to availability. Access to the pool may be restricted at busy times with hotel guests having priority.

2. Lodge refurbishments

Given the dramatic impact which Covid-19 had e.g. resort closure, and the uncertainties which still exist re long-term impact, your Committee took the decision to suspend all but essential maintenance and refurbishment. This pause has prompted us to look again at the medium/long-term refurbishment strategy. Hence our request for input to a focus group.

3. The 2020 accounts

The audited 2020 accounts can be viewed on the website or copies can be obtained from the Secretary. We are indebted to HGV Senior Finance Manager, Susan Wilson, and her team, not only for the maintenance of records and production of annual accounts, but for all the work which goes on every month in preparing Committee reports, and for addressing the many queries from members regarding fees, etc. Susan will present the 2020 accounts at the AGM and answer relevant questions.

4. Sales and rentals

Nicky Petrie and her team have been active in preparing superb marketing material to take advantage of an anticipated upsurge of interest in 'staycations'. Keep an eye on the Club website for future updates.

5. Defaulting members and unpaid fees

Unpaid fees are a growing problem for the Club. Where there is genuine hardship or distress then the Club may take a sympathetic view. In all other cases, in line with our Constitution (and in fairness to the great majority of members who pay their fees on time) the Club will pursue unpaid fees with vigour and through the Courts if necessary.

6. Auction of weeks

The Constitution allows the Club to take possession of bad debt weeks and to offer them for sale in order to cover the unpaid fees. It is our intention to take action in respect of some of these default weeks and to hold an online auction. Details will follow as soon as possible, and notice will be given on the website.

7. Facebook group

Members are reminded that there is an unofficial Facebook group for owners. This is not run by HGV or by the Club but is privately managed. The Group enables the exchange of views and other forms of help and advice – facebook.com/groups/coylumbridge

8. Lyme disease

We must again remind owners and guests of the dangers of Lyme disease which can occur as a result of bites from ticks which are prevalent in the undergrowth. Detailed advice is provided in the Lodges Welcome Pack. Please read carefully. Lyme disease is a very serious ailment and prevention requires your active involvement.

9. Fraud

Please continue to be alert to the risks of fraud arising from any unsolicited contact from outsider seeking to buy/sell your timeshare week or offering (for a fee) to take over your maintenance fee contract. If in ANY doubt about these calls (especially unsolicited contact), please take advice provided by EUROCC on the Club website.

Finally, my thanks to you all for reading this, longer than normal, letter. My personal determination as ever, is to preserve and improve Coylumbridge for the enjoyment of current and future members. I am grateful to the Committee and to the HGV team for their support, but most especially to you, our members. I hope that I will be able to return to Coylumbridge in late July, and to meet with some of you then. Until then, take care, stay safe and follow the government guidelines.

Yours truly

David W. Gray

Chairman

Coylumbridge Highland Lodges Club