

DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

8 July 2009

FOSTER WELCOMES FIRST OVERSEAS GOLFER TO THE FIRST TEE OF THE FALDO COURSE

Tourism Minister Arlene Foster today welcomed the first overseas golfer to play The Faldo Course at the prestigious 5 Star Lough Erne Golf Resort.

The Minister officially welcomed Leigh J Pope, from Tara Preserves Golf Club in Manatee, Florida, along with his playing partners, Marty Healey from Ardglass Golf Club, Conor Swail from Roganstown Golf Club, and Alan Creighton from Naas Golf Club, to the course in advance of their 08.50am tee-off time.

Speaking on the first tee, the Minister said: "I am delighted to welcome Leigh as the first overseas golfer to sample this magnificent course, set in such breathtaking surroundings. I am confident that he will be impressed by the challenge.

"The development of world-class golf resorts, such as Lough Erne, have the potential to make significant contributions to our tourism offering and, therefore, the wider economy.

"Whilst many overseas visitors are already attracted to our world-renowned courses such as Royal Portrush and Royal County Down, the emergence of world-class courses, such as Lough Erne, in five star surroundings, adds a new dimension to our product offering. Invest Northern Ireland has committed to provide £3.5million to support the development of this impressive resort."

Leigh J Pope said: "Obviously I had no idea when we booked that I would be the first overseas visitor to play on what certainly looks like a tremendous course. It was a real surprise and is a great honour. I hope that my own and my partners' golf today does justice to the course."

Officially opened on 1 July, The Faldo Course is six-time Major winner and recently knighted Sir Nick Faldo's first golf course design project in Ireland. Already the course has been described by leading golf magazines as "a future classic...top 100 course in the making" and "the Emerald Isle's answer to Loch Lomond."

The Minister was accompanied by Jim Treacy, owner of Lough Erne Resort, who said: "Today marks another milestone in the development of Lough Erne as we build up to seeing Rory McIlroy and Pádraig Harrington going head-to-head in the "Duel on The Lough" on Wednesday 22 July, only three days after the finish of this year's Open at Turnberry. We look forward to welcoming more Golfers from around the world, as the reputation of The Faldo Course grows internationally."

NOTES TO EDITORS:

For media enquiries please contact the DETI Press Office, telephone 028 9052 9297. Outside office hours, please contact the Duty Press Officer via pager number 07699 715 440 and your call will be returned.