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STOKESLEY GOLF RANGE INTRODUCED FOOTGOLF TO THE NORTH EAST WITH THE SUPPORT OF HSBC

A Teeside-based golf course has introduced one of the UK's newest sports, footgolf, to the North East, with the help of funding from HSBC.

Stokesley Golf Range has developed a nine-hole footgolf course to complement the traditional golf course, driving range and crazy golf it already operates.

The company worked with HSBC's North East Commercial Centre to develop the project, securing a £70,000 funding package in a deal managed by Agriculture Manager Colin Truran. The funding was allocated from HSBC's £100 million SME Fund specifically for businesses from the North East.

Footgolf, as the name suggests, operates on the same basis and to the same rules as golf, but a player kicks a football into a hole in the fewest possible shots rather than a golf ball. Stokesley Golf Range's footgolf course spreads over five acres and includes nine bunkers, raised greens and a combination of three and four par holes.

The golf course is owned by the Marsay family, which has operated a 1,300 acre arable farm in Stokesley for several generations, and founded the course in 2006 as a means of diversification. Andrew Marsay discovered the game while on holiday in Thailand two years ago and thought it would be popular in the UK. Along with his brother Kevin and father John, the family researched the concept, secured funding and worked with their long-term golf course designer to develop a suitable course.

The footgolf course opened at the beginning of August and has already attracted nearly 4,000 visitors, many of whom are new visitors to the site. It is estimated that the introduction of the course will boost the business's sales by a third over the next year.

Andrew Marsey said: “It’s a fantastic game and can be played by people of all ages and all abilities. I played it while on holiday a couple of years ago and had a great time; I could see the opportunity for the UK market. We had a piece of land next to our driving range which we weren’t really using, which was an ideal site and the funding from HSBC enabled us to convert this and put up safety netting from the driving range.”

He added: “The response so far has been phenomenal and we have had people travelling from all over the North East and Yorkshire to play. It’s great because it is also boosting other areas of the business; people are saying that they didn’t realise there was a driving range or golf course here and are using these facilities after playing footgolf.”

Pat Dellow, HSBC North East Area Commercial Director, added: “I’m sure this new game will prove increasingly popular over the coming years and the business has already been overwhelmed by the initial response. This is a farming business that has experienced the benefits of diversification and generating an alternative income stream, and it is a company we were pleased to support on this project.”

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