



St Patrick's golf links near the seaside town of Carrigart in Donegal yesterday, as Jack Nicklaus flew in to sign a design contract that will see two courses redesigned as part of a €60 million project. Photograph: Trevor McBride

Nicklaus to redesign Donegal golf links

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One of the world's golfing greats, Jack Nicklaus, flew into Donegal yesterday to officially sign a design contract to redesign two 18-hole links courses.

The two courses are being redeveloped as part of a major €60 million project that will also see the construction of Donegal's first five-star hotel as well as the building of up to 200 luxury apartments, houses and retail units on a spectacular coastal site.

The Relton Development group, which has been involved in the restaurant, bar and property sectors in the Dublin region for more than 25 years, is the driving force behind the project. Early next year, details of an international hotel operator to manage the facility will be announced.

The Nicklaus Design company has

undertaken to redesign the St Patrick's golf links, which comprises two courses - Magheramagorgan and Trá Mór - which are close to the seaside resort of Carrigart. The former, designed by Eddie Hackett, was not completed until 1996, while the latter was designed in the same year by former Royal County Down assistant professional Joanne O'Haire.

Having briefly been shown around the course, Nicklaus estimated it would take about a year to a year and a half to complete. "There are some very nice holes, and what we have to do is to make it into a first-class golf course. We want to try and utilise what is there. This is a pretty special piece of property," he said.

Tim Kenny, executive vice-president of Nicklaus Design, said: "The land and the dunes comprising St Patrick's is what Irish

golf is supposed to be - raw, natural, wild, windy, with bunkers carved and created by Mother Nature. It is an incredible site."

Nicklaus was introduced to representatives of Relton Development two months ago by Thomas Crumlish and Patrick Sharkey of Crumlish and Sharkey, a Donegal-based corporate finance and project management firm. "We went to the developers and said that if they were going to develop a five-star facility, then they would have to get the best to design the golf courses. There was only one man to get - Jack Nicklaus."

Nicklaus Design has been involved in designing 290 courses in 29 countries.

Local business and tourism leaders have welcomed the news, and hope that the development of such a top-end facility will be a major boost to the Donegal region.