

Dromoland Castle to host women's Irish Open

€400k event to be staged at revamped Co Clare venue at the end of September

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You could say that a wrong has been righted with the return of the Women's Irish Open to the Ladies European Tour schedule, with **Dromoland Castle** in Co Clare set to host the tournament – with a €400,000 prize fund – from September 22nd to 25th.

It seems a long decade since Catriona Matthew last hoisted the crystal trophy, at Killeen Castle in 2012.

In that time, Irish women's golf has gone from strength-to-strength – spearheaded by Leona Maguire's ex-

ploits in the Solheim Cup and on the LPGA Tour, where she claimed a breakthrough win in the Drive On Championship last month – and, so, the tournament's return, albeit overdue, is very much to be welcomed.

Although the tournament clashes with the Walmart Championship on the LPGA Tour, Maguire is expected to be the headline act in Co Clare for a tournament that has a winner's roll-of-honour that features some of golf's biggest names, including Suzann Pettersen and Laura Davies.

Dromoland Castle – which was designed by Ron Kirby and

JB Carr and currently undergoing a €2 million upgrade ahead of the Irish Open – will become the 10th course to stage the tournament.

It was first held at St Margaret's in 1994 (won by Davies, who defended at the same venue the following year) and was also staged at CityWest, Luttrellstown Castle, Ballyliffin, Letterkenny, Faithlegg, Killarney, Portmarnock Links and Killeen Castle.

World Invitational

The tournament wasn't staged between 2004 and 2007 and then a longer break between 2012 and 2022.

The Women's Irish Open will be the second tournament of 2022 to be held in Ireland, with the ISPS Handa World Invitational – a co-sanctioned event on the LPGA Tour and the LET



■ **Dromoland Castle** in Co Clare will host the first Irish Women's Open in a decade this September.

– being held at Galgorm Castle on August 11th-14th.

In welcoming the Irish Open's return to the schedule, Alexandra Armas, the chief executive of the LET, said: "It is

our objective that all the players who want to come and play on the LET can make a living from golf. This means more tournaments, bigger prize funds as well as increased TV

coverage. We are grateful to **Dromoland Castle** and the Irish Government for their support in enabling the Women's Irish Open return after a 10-year absence."

Catherine Martin, the Minister for Sport, said: "My department is engaged in various sports schemes that advocate for the development of women's sport . . . the staging of world-class events are important for the development of high-performance sport and as a valuable promotional tool."

Golf Ireland ceo Mark Kennelly said: "The promotion of female participation is a key strategic goal for Golf Ireland. We are delighted that the Women's Irish Open is returning this year and believe that the event at **Dromoland Castle** will be a fantastic showcase for women's sport."