Cricket and golf join snowsports under threat from climate change

• Skiing industry in Scotland could be finished within 50 years
• Cricket hit by increased rainfall while links suffer coastal erosion

By Martha Kelner / Wed 7 Feb 2018 / theguardian.com

The future of snowsports is under threat, according to a report into the impact of climate change on grassroots and elite sport.

Although it has been well below freezing as athletes prepared for the Winter Olympics in South Korea this week, winter temperatures in the Alps, where many British competitors train, could rise by up to 4C by 2100. By then, only six of the past 19 Winter Olympics venues could be sufficiently cold to act as host cities.

The Met Office has warned the skiing industry in Scotland could collapse within 50 years as winters become too mild for regular snowfall.

The Team GB snowboarder Aimee Fuller, whose annual training venue in Switzerland has undergone huge change in the past decade, said: “Snowboarding is really susceptible to the impact of climate change and we can see the impact on our sport in the mountains on a daily basis.”
In the UK, the governing bodies of cricket and golf are growing increasingly concerned about the effect of extreme weather related to climate change. According to the England and Wales Cricket Board, 27% of England’s home one-day internationals have been played with reduced overs since 2000 because of rain. At least 175 days of play, equivalent to around 16,000 overs, have been lost in five of the past 10 years in the County Championship.

Some of the most famous golf courses in the country, including St Andrews, are at threat from climate related coastal erosion, according to the report from the Climate Coalition, which also notes the toll extreme weather is taking on junior football.

The future of county cricket is in jeopardy, according to Dan Cherry, the head of operations at Glamorgan, where the rate of rain-affected matches has more than doubled since 2011.

“Our experience is becoming the norm for almost every club and it’s difficult even for first-class counties to be commercially viable with such an impact,” Cherry said. “It’s been worst in recent years – during the 2017 season five of our seven T20 Blast fixtures were badly affected by rain, with three being totally abandoned. T20 Blast is a great way to get new people through the gates but they won’t come back if this keeps happening and it’s damaged the club to the tune of £1m. If we don’t take it seriously, climate change will fundamentally alter the game.”

Sea-level rise poses the most serious threat to golf in the UK, including at St Andrews, known as the home of golf. Some believe a 20% decline in golf club membership since 2005 can be partially ascribed to worsening weather trends.
Steve Isaac, the director of sustainability at the R&A, said: “Golf is impacted by climate change more than most other sports. We are witnessing different types and timings of disease, pest and weed outbreaks.”