



# **North Inch Golf Course**

## **Business Plan**

**For the period: 2022 - 2027**

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*This plan has been created by:*

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>People</i>
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## Section 1: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

### **A brief history of our golf course**

Records show that golf has been played on the North Inch in Perth since as early as 1457 when King James II and parliament banned the playing of golf as time which should have been spent on archery practice was being spent on the golf course.

In 1502, the Royal household accounts of King James IV show an entry for 21<sup>st</sup> September. Fourteen shillings was paid by the King to a bow maker in Perth for the manufacture of golf clubs. This is accepted as the first recorded purchase of golf equipment ever in the world.

It is thought that the original course was 6 holes and started somewhere along the Charlotte Street line to Rose Terrace corner, ironically on the only part of the North Inch that is no longer part of the golf course.

In 1803, the land where the current 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> holes are played, was added to the Inch and became part of the course. Over the next 200 plus years the course has grown into the current 18-hole layout, the final piece being designed by Old Tom Morris on land gifted by Mr J F Pullar of the cleaning and dyeing family and who was the then Captain of the Royal Perth Golfing Society.

North Inch Golf Course is a Municipal golf course owned and operated by Perth & Kinross Council. The golf course is a community facility and is offered as an accessible and affordable way of playing golf and encouraging a healthy lifestyle.

### **Current Golf Market**

In 2019 there were 180,281 registered golfers in Scotland, a drop of 19,433 since 2015 (9.75%). Despite this drop in membership numbers in 2019, golf still remained the largest membership-based sport in Scotland and is the only sport to enjoy more than 10% participation amongst people aged over 65. Scotland also had the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest percentage of registered golfers per % population in the whole of Europe. Of the 180,281 registered golfers in Scotland, the gender split is 87% male and 13% female.

## **2020 Great Britain and Ireland Golf Participation Report**

In the recent Great Britain & Ireland Golf Participation report, it has been revealed that golf enjoyed an increase in participation by 2.3 million on-course adult golfers in 2020. Since the covid-19 pandemic it has also been revealed that the average age of golf participants has decreased by 5 years to 41 years. The research was led by golf's governing body the R&A and undertaken by Sports Marketing Surveys.

The majority of golf clubs throughout the UK have seen a large increase in membership and participation numbers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Exact detail of the UK data will be forthcoming in the near future. In 2020 North Inch Golf Course saw a membership increase of 25% and rounds of golf played increased by 39%. We plan to capitalise on this renewed popularity for playing golf and will aim to develop this further.

### **Golfers experience mental and physical health benefits**

The impact of Covid-19 restrictions on mental and physical health and loneliness has been considerable with the research showing how golf has helped in these areas.

#### Key findings include:

Among avid/regular golfers, 31% identified they had experienced some negative impact on their feelings of loneliness/isolation as a result of the pandemic. Of these, 79% identified playing golf had a positive impact.

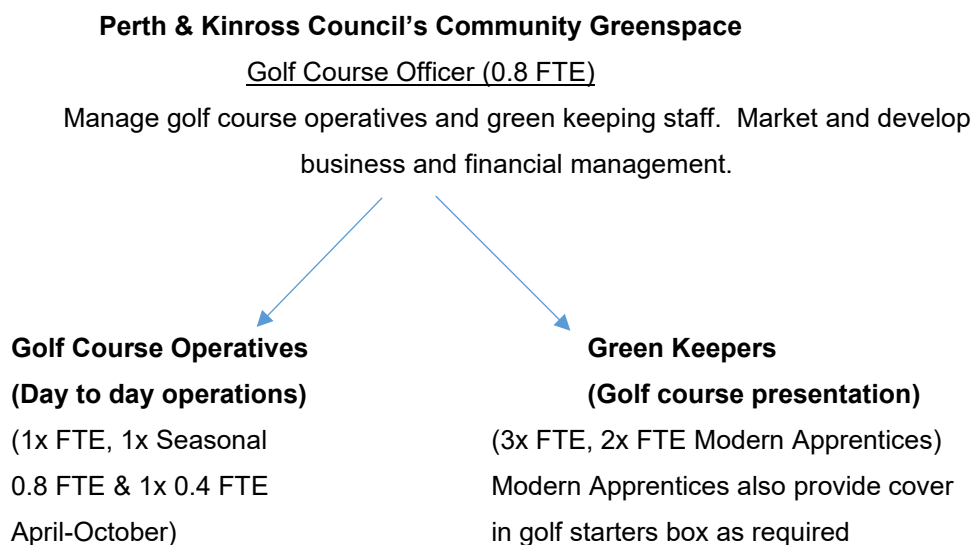
Among lapsed/returning golfers, 44% identified they had experienced some negative impact on their feelings of loneliness/isolation as a result of the pandemic. Of these 92% identified playing golf had a positive impact.

North Inch Golf Course (NIGC) has an opportunity to make an impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of the people of Perth and Kinross. Since the golf course reopened at the end of May 2020 following the first lockdown, there have been an increase in the number of community and wellbeing groups who have contacted NIGC requesting access to play golf. They have identified golf as a great way to have a positive impact on their group members and service users. As a community asset, North Inch Golf Course has the opportunity to become sector leading and create initiatives where playing golf is used as the driver to improve personal

wellbeing. As a low impact sport, golf can be played by all ages and abilities together and already has the highest participation level of any UK sport in the over 65 age group. The social interaction associated with golf, makes it a champion amongst sports in the combined physical and mental health benefits that can be attained through participation.

### North Inch Golf Course Structure

North Inch Golf Course is owned and operated by Perth & Kinross Council. The key management personnel and their responsibilities are detailed below:



### The North Inch Golf Course Business Plan Objectives

The North Inch Golf Course aims to deliver an improving service that reflects the demands of its users while providing Best Value.

Our initial 6-year business plan was implemented in 2016, running through until end of financial year 2021/22. At the start of the plan North Inch Golf Course was performing poorly and was requiring an ever-increasing annual subsidy from the council to cover costs. Usage numbers and revenue had dropped consistently over the previous decade and the future of the golf course was uncertain. The initial business plan was designed to transform the golf course business. This was to be done by improving golf course condition and growing usage and revenue, resulting in a reducing subsidy.

This new 5-year North Inch Golf Course Business Plan primarily focuses on retaining and strengthening the relationship with existing users through continuous

consultation, ensuring the golf course remains both affordable and accessible, enjoyable to play and adding further value to season tickets.

It also works to attract new customers by raising awareness of the North Inch Golf Course within the local catchment area and wider market, as well as targeting the Perthshire visitor market.

Our Modern Apprenticeship programme is allowing us to train young people working alongside Elmwood College in Fife. This 2-year course sees the students qualify with an SVQ in Sports Turf Maintenance.

The objectives of the business plan are aligned with the themes of the Perth and Kinross Offer, ensuring that this public service can be delivered sustainably, and the plan is aligned with the priorities of the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan, with further additional objectives that we wish the North Inch Golf Course to embrace.

1. Economy – Promote Perth and Kinross as a great place to live, work and visit by providing a first class, affordable golf course to play.
2. Education – Develop a Modern Apprenticeship training programme in the field of sports turf maintenance and horticulture.
3. Environment – Developing non-playing areas within the golf course to promote biodiversity.
4. Equalities, Empowerment and Fairness – working with local community groups to offer access to play golf for those who may otherwise not be able to do so.

The additional objectives that we wish the North Inch Golf Course to address are:

1. Poverty.
2. Physical and Mental Wellbeing.
3. Skills, Learning and Development.
4. Employability.
5. Digital Participation.
6. Skills, Learning and Development.
7. Maximise income & reduce/remove the operating deficit.
8. Ensure standard of service provision meets user expectations.

## Situational Analysis

### SWOT ANALYSIS

Our SWOT analysis identifies what we are good at, what we can do better, as well as the things which may have a positive or negative impact on our golf course:

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scenic &amp; walkable course</li> <li>• Location / Catchment area</li> <li>• Affordable, accessible golf</li> <li>• Enjoyable course for all standards</li> <li>• Well-conditioned golf course</li> <li>• Family friendly</li> <li>• Online Booking System</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of clubhouse facilities</li> <li>• Previous poor reputation</li> <li>• Limited practice facilities</li> <li>• Winter Flooding</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Season Ticket sales growth due to excellent conditioned golf course and affordable membership.</li> <li>• Visitor growth through local/national online promotion</li> <li>• Increased participation of golf through Covid pandemic, due to physical and mental health benefits gained from playing the sport.</li> <li>• User Group to act as conduit for funding opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential economic pressures due to Covid recovery</li> <li>• Wetter summers</li> <li>• Aging membership (this has reduced during pandemic)</li> <li>• Available leisure time</li> </ul>

### More Of / Less Of

Every business has things that they would like more of, and things that they would like less of. This is our list:

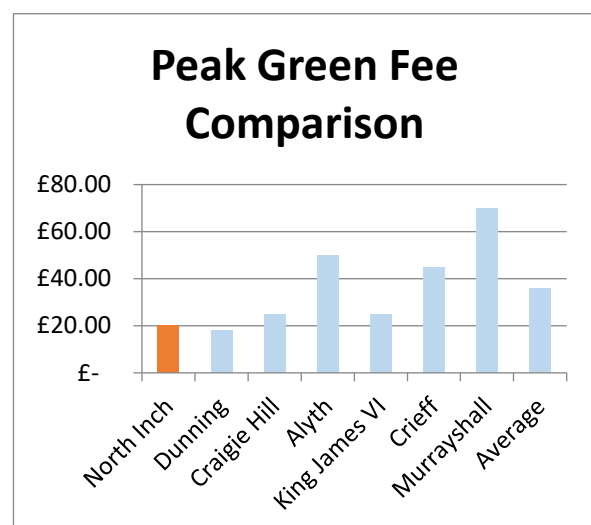
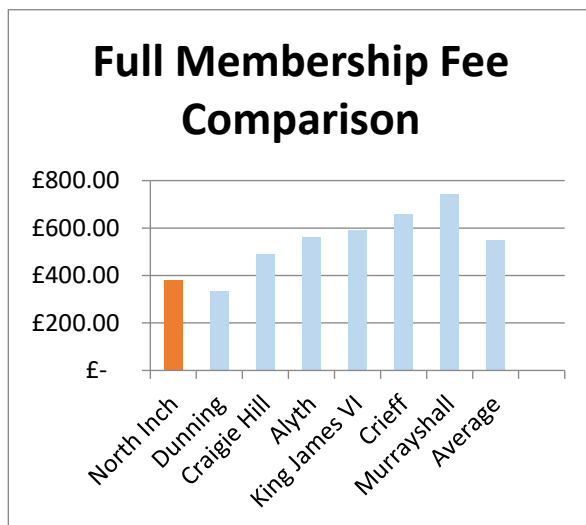
<b>More Of</b>	<b>Less Of</b>
1. Season ticket holder retention	1. Turnover of season ticket holders
2. Season ticket income	2. Concern regarding accessibility at golf course entrance and lack of facilities
3. Visitor income	3. Non-paying golfers (unauthorised play)
4. Promotion of golf as a positive influence on physical and mental health.	
5. Interaction between our affiliated clubs.	
7. Growth in off course revenues	

## Market Analysis

<b>Golf Club Business Planning : Pricing Analysis</b>		
<i>Club</i>	<i>Full Membership Fee</i>	<i>Mid-Week Green Fee</i>
<b>North Inch</b>	£ 379.00	£ 20.00
<b>Dunning*</b>	£ 335.00	£ 18.00
<b>Craigie Hill**</b>	£ 490.00	£ 25.00
<b>Alyth</b>	£ 560.00	£ 50.00
<b>King James VI</b>	£ 593.00	£ 25.00
<b>Crieff</b>	£ 660.00	£ 45.00
<b>Murrayshall</b>	£ 745.00	£ 70.00
<b>Average Fee</b>	£ 537.42	£ 36.14

\*Dunning is a 9-hole golf course

\*\*Craigie Hill price is for 10 months only in 2021. Equivalent 12-month price would be £588.



\*Dunning is a 9-hole golf course.

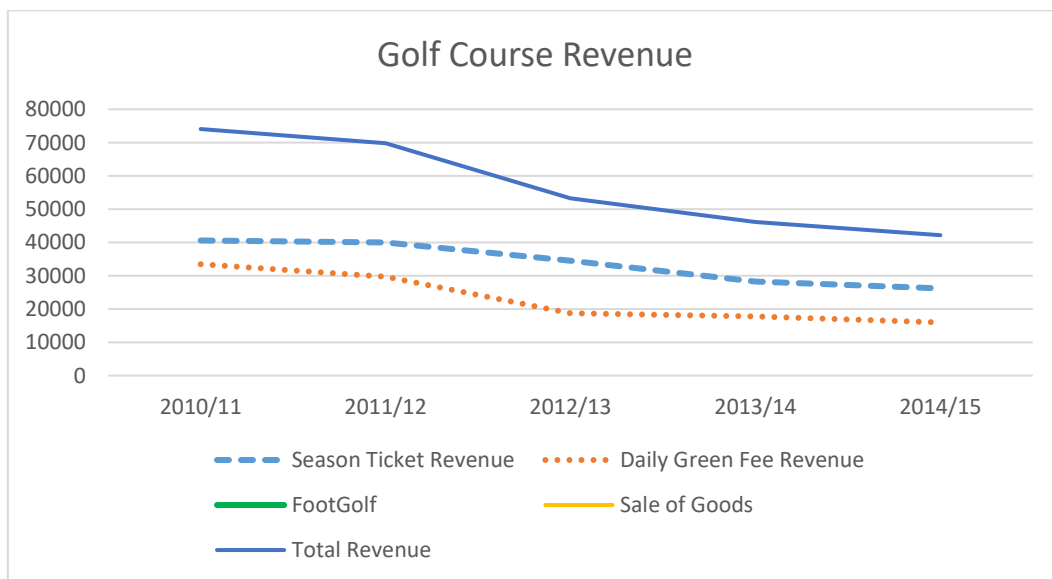


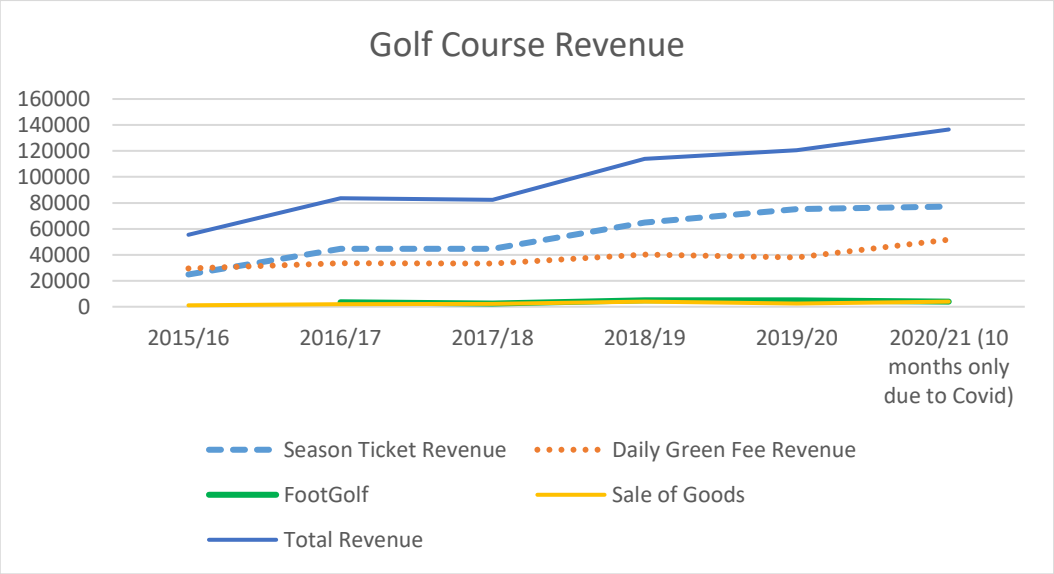
## Financial Analysis

A number of noteworthy recent financial trends have been identified:

Historic Financial Trends		Previous Business Plan Financial Outcomes
1.	Season ticket revenue had decreased from £40.5k in 2010/11 to £26.2k in 2014/15	Season Ticket revenue reached £77k in 2020/21 (reduced due to covid lockdown) and is on track to reach £106.5k in 2021/22
2.	Daily Green Fee revenue had decreased from £33.4k in 2010/11 to £15.9k in 2014/15	Daily Green Fee revenue reached £51.5k in 2020/21
3.	Required subsidy had increased to £167.5k in 2014/15	Required subsidy reduced to £60,592 in 2020/21 and projected as £47k in 2021/22

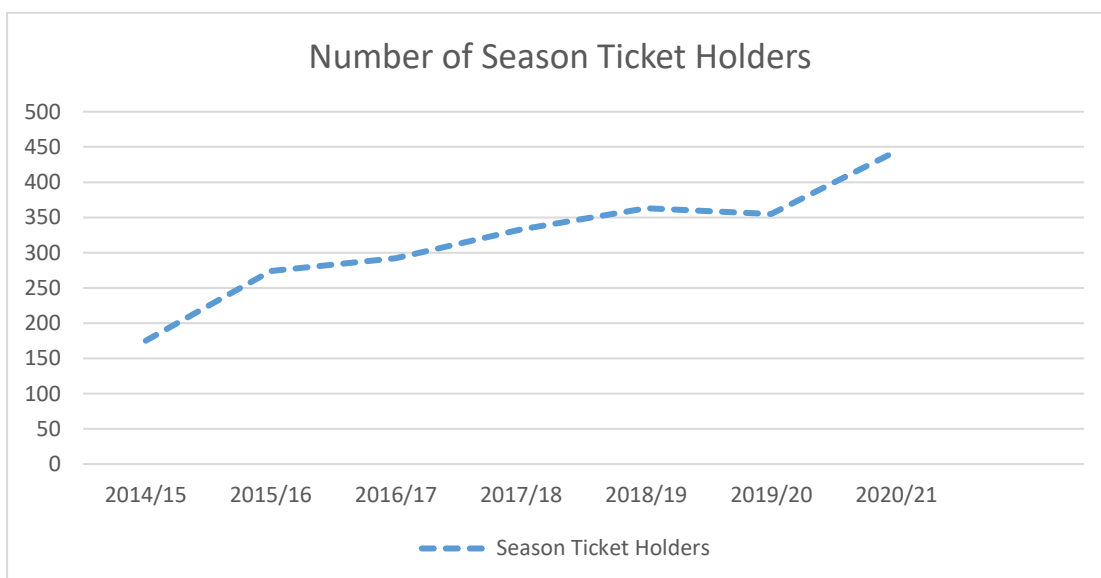
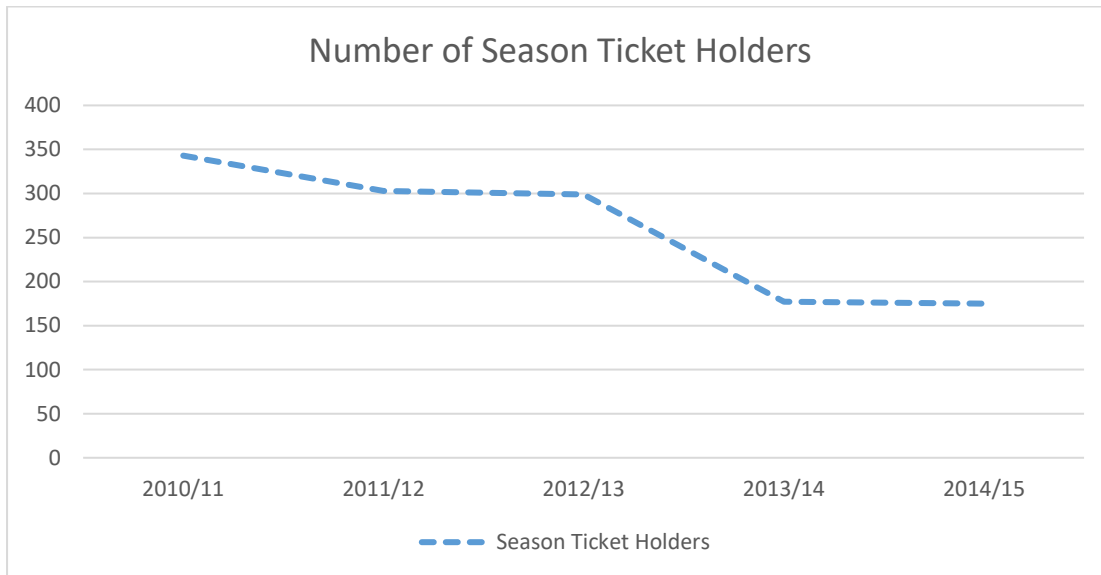
Over the 6-year period of the previous business plan, North Inch Golf Course revenue increased considerably. In 2014/15 total revenue was £42,206 and in 2020/21 reached £136,512.





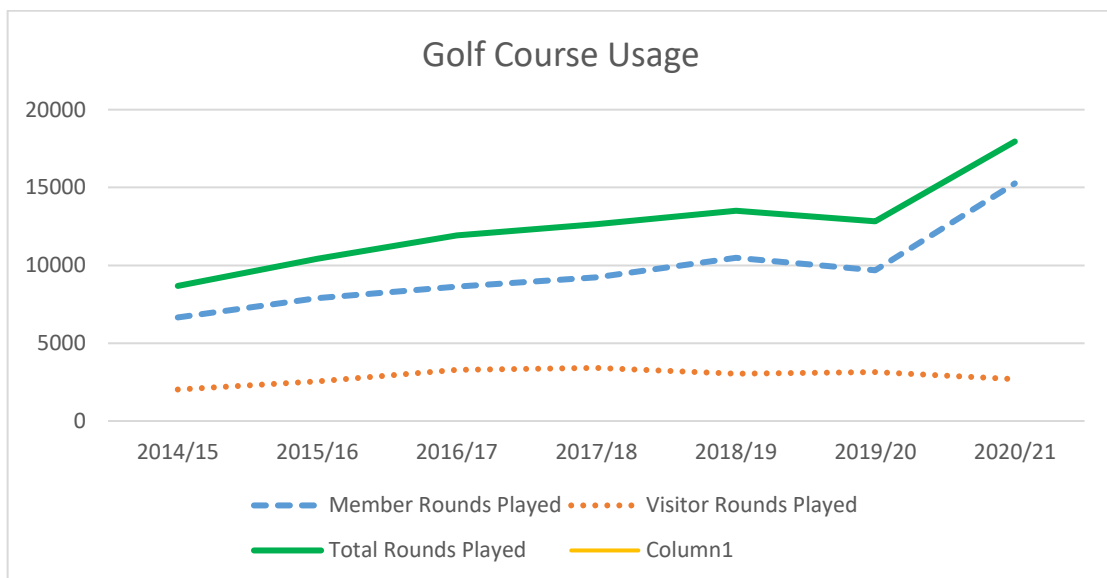
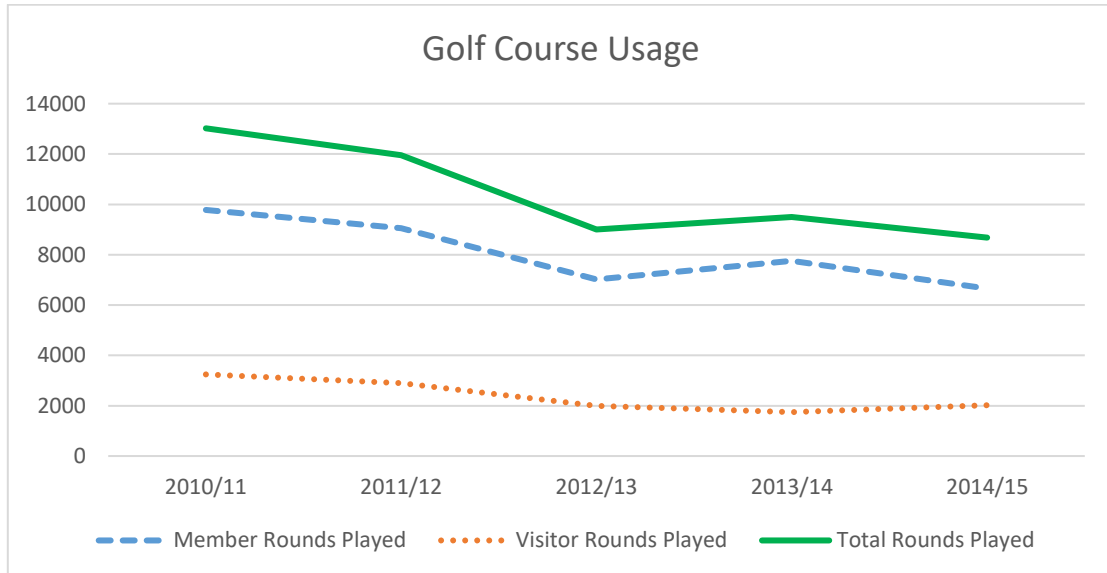
## Season Ticket Holder and Usage Analysis

Season Tickets numbers had dropped from 343 in 2010/11 to 175 in 2014/15. Over the 6-year period of the previous business plan we saw this grow to 444 in 2020/21 and a projected 490 in 2021/22.



## Golf Course Usage

Total rounds of golf played had dropped from 13021 in 2010/11 to 8679 in 2014/15. This grew to 17956 rounds played in 2020/21 and a projected 22,000 rounds in 2021/22.



## Section 2 : WHERE ARE WE GOING?

### *Our Purpose*

**“The North Inch Golf Course will provide a well maintained, accessible and affordable golf facility. Promoting a family centred, healthy lifestyle in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere”**

With our purpose at the centre of everything we do, we have identified the most important parts of our business – our Core Areas.

<b>Core Area of our business</b>
1. Golf Course Maintenance
2. Attracting and Retaining Season Ticket Holders
3. Visitor Golfers
4. Partnerships, Outreach & Creating New Golfers
5. Non-Golf Activities

### Section 3: HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE?

This section is how the North Inch Golf Course will achieve its Purpose:

**A Strategy Statement**; how this core area will contribute to our overall Purpose.

**SMART Objectives**; needs to be achieved in this Core Area.

**Initiatives**; the ideas that will help deliver success and achieve the SMART Objectives.

<b>Core Area - 1</b>	<b>Golf Course Maintenance</b>
<b>Strategy Statement</b>	
<p><b>We will aim to continue to deliver a golf course in the condition desired by our users, with focus on great greens. We have a long-established course that is enjoyed by season ticket holders and visitors alike thus our aim is to remain, primarily, a relaxing and enjoyable course layout. We will look to promote biodiversity within non-play areas and aim to keep chemical inputs to a minimum by increased horticultural practices.</b></p>	
<b>SMART Objectives</b>	
<b>SPECIFIC – MEASUREABLE – ACHIEVABLE – REALISTIC - TIMED</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Regular communication on course maintenance works with users. (2 x per calendar month).</i></li> <li>• <i>Promote user engagement in golf course management through volunteer days.</i></li> <li>• <i>We will maintain an 80% or higher user satisfaction level with the golf course overall during our annual survey.</i></li> <li>• <i>Prepare a new course maintenance/improvement programme by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, including schedule of horticultural works and reduced chemical inputs.</i></li> </ul>	
<b>Initiatives</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a 3-year bunker renovation programme, prioritising the most in need of work.</li> <li>• Continue with winter drainage programme, prioritising areas most susceptible to standing water following heavy rainfall or high tides.</li> <li>• Undertake annual user experience survey.</li> <li>• Engage volunteer group to help improve maintenance/presentation of course.</li> <li>• Regular aeration of greens and tees, plus verti-cutting to reduce disease.</li> </ul>	
<b>KPI and Responsibility</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>KPI</b> - User satisfaction to remain at 80% or higher.</li> <li>• <b>Responsibility</b> - Golf Course Officer, Head Greenkeeper and volunteers.</li> </ul>	

<b>Core Area - 2</b>	<i>Attracting &amp; Retaining Season Ticket Holders</i>
<b>Strategy Statements</b>	
<i>To create a friendly, accessible, and affordable facility for our Season Ticket Holders to enjoy.</i>	
<b>SMART Objectives</b>	
<b><i>SPECIFIC – MEASUREABLE – ACHIEVABLE – REALISTIC - TIMED</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Number of Season Ticket Holders to maintain a level of 400+ per annum</i></li> <li>• <i>Regular comparison of other local golf courses charges to ensure correct market positioning.</i></li> <li>• <i>A Season Ticket Holder satisfaction score of at least 80% annually will be achieved.</i></li> </ul>	
<b>Initiatives</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install new starters box facility complete with facilities and small seating area to allow socialising before and after play.</li> <li>• Install new entrance walkway joining North Inch perimeter pathway and golf starters box facility.</li> <li>• Continue with 'Get into Golf' initiative to help attract new and returning adult golfers.</li> <li>• Establish a 'North Inch Junior Golf Club', which will affiliate to national body Scottish Golf, creating a pathway for our young golfers to progress through the sport.</li> <li>• Review membership categories annually.</li> </ul>	
<b>KPI &amp; Responsibility</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>KPI</b> – Maintain annual season ticket numbers of 400+, revenue of £100k+ and season ticket holder satisfaction of 80%+</li> <li>• <b>Responsibility</b> - Golf Course Officer with support of Golf Course Operatives</li> </ul>	

<b>Core Area - 3</b>	<i>Visitor Golfers</i>
<b>Strategy Statements</b>	
<i>Visitor income is an important part of our financial model and we seek to maximise this revenue.</i>	
<b>SMART Objectives</b>	
<b><i>SPECIFIC – MEASUREABLE – ACHIEVABLE – REALISTIC - TIMED</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Continue to maintain visitor green-fee revenue of £45k+ per annum</i></li> <li>• <i>Grow the number of group/society bookings each year</i></li> <li>• <i>Achieve an overall visitor satisfaction score of 80% annually</i></li> </ul>	
<b>Initiatives</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local accommodation providers.</li> <li>• Invite local businesses to golf open day.</li> <li>• Social media advertising (Facebook/Instagram).</li> <li>• Regularly update golf course website with new content.</li> <li>• Establish price brackets - on &amp; off-peak times / group discount.</li> <li>• Move to new mobile responsive visitor tee time booking system.</li> <li>• Promote the free golf club hire to potential users.</li> <li>• Promote the physical and mental health benefits of playing golf.</li> </ul>	
<b>KPI and Responsibility</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>KPI</b> – Maintain annual visitor income of £45k + each year</li> <li>• <b>Responsibility</b> - Golf Course Officer, supported by Golf Course Operatives</li> </ul>	



<b>Core Area - 4</b>	<i>Partnerships, Outreach &amp; creating new golfers</i>
<b>Strategy Statement</b>	
<p><b>Partner with local community/volunteer groups and general public, to promote the health benefits of playing golf. Utilise the community asset at North Inch Golf Course, for the wellbeing of groups and individuals in Perth and Kinross. Encouraging a healthy family inclusive activity, open to all ages, that is both accessible and affordable.</b></p>	
<b>SMART Objectives</b>	
<b><i>SPECIFIC – MEASUREABLE – ACHIEVABLE – REALISTIC – TIMED</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a programme of regular volunteer sessions.</li> <li>• Grow the number of outreach groups we work with, promoting the physical and mental health benefits of playing golf.</li> <li>• Grow the number of new people taking up golf.</li> <li>• Encourage lapsed golfers back into the sport.</li> </ul>	
<b>Initiatives</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocate regular tasks to our volunteer group.</li> <li>• Plan specific project works for volunteer group to undertake.</li> <li>• 'Golf Memories' project in conjunction with Alzheimer Scotland.</li> <li>• Create a 'Buddy' system where regular players can help by taking new golfers out to play.</li> <li>• Reach out to potential groups who might be interested in golf as a way to combat various issues including, physical and mental health, social isolation, and loneliness.</li> <li>• Creation of new North Inch Junior Golf Club</li> <li>• Continue to develop our 'Get into Golf' adult beginner category</li> <li>• Free club hire for anyone playing golf at North Inch</li> </ul>	
<b>KPI and Responsibility</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>KPI</b> – Work with minimum 5 outreach groups per year, record 250+ volunteer hours and Introduce 50+ people to golf each year.</li> <li>• <b>Responsibility</b> - Golf Course Officer, supported by Golf Course Operatives, Head Greenkeeper and volunteer group.</li> </ul>	

Core Area - 5	Non-Golf activities
<b>Strategy Statement</b>	
<b>To generate 'Off Course' non golf income to help increase overall revenues and offset against required golf course subsidy level.</b>	
<b>SMART Objectives</b>	
<b><i>SPECIFIC – MEASUREABLE – ACHIEVABLE – REALISTIC – TIMED</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grow sales of retail goods through improved Starters Box.</li> <li>• Grow usage and income generated through use of FootGolf and Short Golf Course.</li> <li>• Develop sales of juice / confectionary and other simple food and beverage items.</li> </ul>	
<b>Initiatives</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install a new Golf Starters Box, complete with facilities and some social space for customer use before and after play.</li> <li>• Increase the range of products sold through Starters Box.</li> <li>• Hold stock of more North Inch branded goods for sale.</li> <li>• Install a coffee machine into new Starters Box facility.</li> <li>• Start a FootGolf league.</li> <li>• Hold FootGolf Open Competitions and events.</li> <li>• Market FootGolf children's birthday parties.</li> <li>• Create a Soft Ball Golf Course on area of FootGolf.</li> </ul>	
<b>KPI and Responsibility</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>KPI</b> – To increase non-golf revenues year on year, with target of reaching £10k+ pa</li> <li>• <b>Responsibility</b> - Golf Course Officer, supported by Golf Course Operatives.</li> </ul>	

## **Section 4: HOW WILL WE KNOW WE ARE THERE?**

To know if we are progressing the Business Plan, we need to keep score for each of our *Core Areas*. These are the business Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) - the things that will determine whether the *SMART Objectives* on track to being achieved:

<b>Core Area</b>	<b>Primary KPI</b>	<b>Annually</b>
Golf course maintenance	User rating	80%+
Attracting and retaining season ticket holders	No. of season ticket holders and revenue	400+ £100k+
Visitor golfers	Visitor Revenue	£45k+
Partnerships, outreach & creating new golfers	No. outreach groups No. of volunteer hours No. of new golfers	5+ 250+ 50+
Non-golf activities	Revenue	£10K+

## Section 5: FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS

Through the implementation of the business plan, the aim is to increase revenues and reduce the overall nett expenditure for the golf course. We aim to maintain a level where the operation of the golf course reduces the nett expenditure per annum to the Council to that which it would cost the Council to maintain the site as amenity grassland (calculated at £40,000 in 2016).

