

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Environment and Infrastructure Committee

28 October 2020

NORTH INCH GOLF COURSE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

Report by Head of Environmental and Consumer Services (Report No. 20/200)

This report brings forward the North Inch Golf Course Annual Report 2019/20, based on the previously approved Business Plan.

1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 In March 2016, the Environment Committee approved the North Inch Golf Course – Business Plan (Report No.16/141 refers). The Business Plan was developed in order to deliver an improving service that reflects the demands of its users while providing Best Value.
- 1.2 The Business Plan focuses on ensuring that the golf course remains both affordable, accessible and enjoyable to play, while adding further value through season tickets. It also emphasises the need to gain new customers and sets out an action plan for both promoting and developing the course, reducing the operating deficit and aspiring to achieve full cost recovery based on the following core areas:
 - golf course maintenance
 - attracting and retaining season ticket holders
 - visitor golfers
 - partnerships and outreach
 - creating new golfers – ladies, gents & juniors
- 1.3 For each of these core areas, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were developed to determine whether the objectives are on track. These are reported on and highlighted within Appendix 1.
- 1.4 Dundee City Council closed Camperdown Golf Course from 1 April 2020 due to reduced usage and increased subsidy. This has left Dundee with a single public golf course at Caird Park. The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews (R&A), golf's worldwide governing body, sees municipal golf as key to their strategy of growing the game. The R&A is about to conclude a deal to purchase Lethamhill Golf Course from Glasgow City Council, which had been earmarked for potential closure. They plan to transform the course into a community golf centre and create a blueprint for how golf can be offered in many appealing ways, to be enjoyed by men, women, young people and families of all ages and backgrounds. This mirrors the ethos already developed through our business plan for the North Inch Golf Course with affordability and inclusivity at its core. We have doubled our membership numbers, are close to trebling our visitor numbers and have increased our

junior golfers more than 10 fold. This has all been achieved whilst continuing year on year to reduce the level of subsidy required to run the course. The business plan has been delivered in a highly efficient manner - the condition of the course is vastly improved, player satisfaction is high and objectives continue to be achieved. With the Perth and Kinross Offer very much reflecting our approach, our regular volunteer sessions to undertake maintenance tasks around the course have been well received and we are working with our User Group to fundraise for investment in the course.

1.5 Scottish Golf have developed a new Scottish Golf Strategy for 2019-2022 and modernisation programme. This includes significant growth in revenue generating investment to deliver in five key areas by 2022. The following paragraphs outline the work undertaken by the Council to address these areas.

1.6 The Scottish Golf Mission is intended to deliver:

- **Stronger clubs at the heart of their community.**
 - Upgrading the golf starters box at North Inch has been considered for some time, but due to budget constraints this has not been possible to date. An alternative starter's facility option of operating the golf course from Perth Artisan Clubhouse during April/May 2019 was trialled, but following consultation with stakeholders and local elected members, it was agreed not to pursue this.
 - At the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee held on 27 November 2019 (Report No. 19/340 refers), it was agreed that £117,000 of the VAT refund from historic golf fees be earmarked in reserves for future investment in the North Inch Golf Course. This investment will be made in the provision of a brand new starter's facility on the footprint of the existing starter's box.
 - Investment is being made in a modern timber clad metal modular building that also offers space for golfers to meet before and after play, when current physical restrictions allow. Many golf sessions are run each year for everyone from young children and their families to the older golfer and having a new, larger building will provide accessible toilet facilities and social space for members and visiting players.
 - The proposal of siting the new building on North Inch was approved by the Perth Common Good Committee in December 2019 (Report No. 19/371)
- **Growth in participation leading to a growth in membership.**
 - North Inch Golf Course has grown its junior season ticket holders from only 5, to 72 and now boasts one of Perthshire's largest junior sections. Weekly coaching sessions are held for young golfers, along with Easter and Summer golf camps. Multiple categories of season tickets have been introduced to attract the under-represented 19 to 29 year-old players, helping transition them from junior golfers to full season ticket holders. Over a 5 year period, our overall season ticket holder numbers have increased from 175 to 355 (203%).

- **To develop winning golfers at all levels of the game.**
 - Introductory golf lessons continued as part of a 'Get into Golf' season ticket. These sessions are open to both gents and ladies to encourage the entire family to participate in golf.

 - **To lead and influence positive change within the game.**
 - For the past 4½ years, the North Inch Golf Course has been involved in running the 'Golf Memories' group', along with the Council's equalities team and in conjunction with Alzheimer Scotland. These sessions continued to run for 44 weeks of the year.

 - **Scotland playing a leading role in the development of golf**
 - North Inch Golf Course continues to be a member of 'Golf Perthshire' joint marketing group of Perthshire Golf Clubs, accommodation providers and visitor attractions. It markets Perthshire as the world's most 'family friendly' golf destination offering free green fee tickets to any junior golfers playing with a paying adult. The North Inch also offers free golf club hire to both adults and juniors.
 - As part of the Solheim Cup, which was played at Gleneagles in September 2019, North Inch Golf Course ran a series of women, girls and family golf taster sessions. These were extremely well received with every session being fully booked. This resulted in over 300 people taking part in golf coaching activities at North Inch. Many of the participants have continued to play golf and have become regular players and members at North Inch and other Perth and Kinross clubs.
- 1.7 The 'in house' maintenance operation introduced has increased capacity allowing for a wider scope of works to be carried out. Remedial and improvement works are now able to be undertaken 'in house' along with opportunities to share resources, such as specialised maintenance equipment, with other local golf clubs.
- 1.8 The busy summer months of 2019 were far wetter than those of 2018. Despite the poor weather, the number of visitor rounds played, closely matched 2018/19 (3652 in 2019/20 vs 3748 in 2018/19), and overall revenue grew from £113,995 to £120,474. This was down to the continued improvement of the golf course condition, which has boosted the reputation of the course, both locally and further afield.
- 1.9 The significant reduction in the annual subsidy required by the golf course has continued with the level of £167,518 in 2014/15 reducing to £73,358 in 2019/20. This is ahead of the business plan projected subsidy of £80,000 and enabled further investment in some maintenance equipment for the golf course.
- 1.10 In setting the Revenue Budget in February 2018 (Report No.18/47 refers), the Council agreed to remove the North Inch Golf Course subsidy in financial year 2020/21, moving to full cost recovery. Given the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on income, this may be required to be re-examined as part of the budget process for 21/22.

- 1.11 In late March 2020, when the UK went into lockdown due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the golf course was required to shut abruptly on 23 March. The impact of this and measures taken to mitigate them will be reported in the 2020/21 North Inch Golf Course Report, in November 2021.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 This annual report for 2019/20 highlights a favourable performance against the Key Performance Indicators in the business plan, including season ticket holder levels, visitor rounds and actual income against the financial projections. It is, therefore, proposed that the current management arrangements for the golf course are fully supported and endorsed to ensure this excellent performance is maintained. As this has been guided for four years by the current business plan, it is proposed to update and extend this for a further 5 years, to reflect the current performance, provide clear direction and targets and maximise the opportunities through the Perth & Kinross Offer.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The implementation of the 6 year North Inch Golf Course Business Plan has seen increased levels of income, activities and positive reviews of the North Inch Golf Course. This is in line with projections within the Business Plan at this stage.
- 3.2 It is recommended that the Committee:
- (i) notes the North Inch Golf Course Annual Report 2019/20.
 - (ii) requests that the Executive Director (Housing and Environment) brings the realigned and extended business plan and performance report to the Environment and Infrastructure Committee in November 2021.

Authors

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	None
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	Yes
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	Yes
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	Yes

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 This section sets out how the proposals relate to the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement in terms of the following priorities:
- (i) Giving every child the best start in life
 - (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens
 - (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy
 - (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives
 - (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations
- 1.2 This report relates to (i) to (v) above by providing a well maintained, accessible and affordable golf facility. Promoting a family centred, healthy lifestyle in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

Corporate Plan

- 1.3 This section sets out how the proposals relate to the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities:
- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
 - (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
 - (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
 - (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
 - (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

- 1.4 This report relates to (i) to (v) above by providing a well maintained, accessible and affordable golf facility. Promoting a family centred, healthy lifestyle in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

2. Resource Implications

Financial

- 2.1 There are no resource implications arising from the report outwith the existing budget for the North Inch Golf Course.

Workforce

- 2.2 There are no workforce implications arising from the report.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 Upgrade of the starters facility on the North Inch will provide an efficient and cost effective replacement to the existing inadequate and obsolete facility.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups.
- 3.2 Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allow the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.
- 3.3 The function, policy, procedure or strategy presented in the North Inch Golf Course Annual Report 2018/19 was considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:
- Assessed as relevant for the purposes of EqIA, with a positive impact, that retention of the North Inch Golf Course supports less mobile golfers, due to the Course's relatively short distance and flat topography.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.4 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals. The matters presented in this report were considered under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Sustainability

- 3.5 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. In terms of the Climate Change Act, the Council has a general duty to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and the community, environmental and economic impacts of its actions.
- 3.6 The proposals have been assessed in terms of the requirements to manage the Council's Greenspace assets in a sustainable long-term way.

Legal and Governance

- 3.7 The Head of Legal and Governance has been consulted on the content of this report.

Risk

- 3.8 The business plan will be subject to influences from the wider golf market.

4. CONSULTATION

Internal

- 4.1 The Head of Legal and Governance and the Head of Finance have been consulted on the content of this report.

External

- 4.2 The North Inch Golf Course User group have been consulted through regular meetings where updates are provided on usage numbers, income figures, course condition, volunteer activities and new starter's facility. They are supportive of the management and development arrangements for the golf course.

5. COMMUNICATION

- 5.1 The Annual Report will be communicated to the North Inch Golf Clubs and Users.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 2.1 The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (and not containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above Report; (list papers concerned).

- Report to the Environment Committee in March 2016 entitled North Inch Golf Course – Business Plan (Report Number 16/141)

- Report to the Environment, Enterprise and Infrastructure Committee in November 2017 entitled North Inch Golf Course Annual Report 2016-17 (Report Number 17/368)
- Report to the Environment and Infrastructure Committee in November 2018 entitled North Inch Golf Course Annual Report 2017-18 (Report Number 18/369)

3. APPENDICES

- 3.1 Appendix 1: North Inch Golf Course Performance Summary Report 2019/20.