

## South Ayrshire Council – 6 March 2025

### Formal Questions

<b>Received from:</b>	<b>Councillor Philip Saxton</b>
<b>Response to be provided by:</b>	<b>Councillor Brian Connolly, Portfolio Holder for Sport and Leisure</b> <b>Jane Bradley, Director of Communities and Transformation</b>

	<b><i>Question</i></b>	<b><i>Response</i></b>
1.	The decision for a golf strategy was taken by the full council on the 19 <sup>th</sup> August 2024, the councillors raised a number of issues relating to the Belleisle practice area and the golf development centre, why then did the golf strategy paper presented to the Cabinet on the 18 <sup>th</sup> February not come to the full council as before.	The Golf Strategy was approved by Leadership Panel in December 2021 with updates provided to Cabinet on 1 March 2023, 7 December 2023 and 18 February 2025. At that meeting it was agreed that future reporting on the Strategy would be through Service and Partnership Performance Panel. The report on 19 August was to update on progress on the development of design proposals and estimated costs for a Golf Development Centre, approving officers to progress with designs and submit a planning application, and notes and supports the approaches and activities set out in the report.
2.	It was mentioned that only one hole the 1 <sup>st</sup> Tee would be affected by the development of a practice area, can you confirm that this is the case in regards to how many holes would be affected and whether the par of any holes in the course will be reduced or be increased, also will the view of the first hole be compromised as it was a James Braid Course formed and opened in 1927 by the well-known architect.	The development of a new practice facility will affect the 1st hole as this is the proposed location. This will locate the practice area closer to the clubhouse. The current 13th hole would become the new 1st.  Putting the new enhanced practice facility on the 1st does require alterations to the current course configuration, however, the 1st is only hole affected. A brand new high quality par 3 would be positioned on the existing practice facility which sits out on the course between the existing 1st and the 12th, this area would not be suitable for a covered bays and is not good for long game practice.

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Response</b>
		<p>Belleisle Golf Course was routed and designed by James Braid and the current course has changed over time and a different routing is played today than that originally designed. The Consultant Golf Architect has sourced historical photos where we see a unique bunker style which we intend to reinstate as per James Braid's original style.</p> <p>The course will become a par 70, currently a par 71.</p>
3.	Why have we not seen a business plan for both the Practice facility and the proposed golf development centre.	An outline business plan has been developed. This is now being comprehensively reviewed and extended to consider various options for potential delivery to maximise future income.
4.	Why has there not been a option appraisal for both the proposed practice facility and the golf development centre.	This is being undertaken as part of the exercise outlined above.
5.	In the report to the Cabinet on the 18 <sup>th</sup> February there were 244 comments received through the public engagement sessions and via online comments, are the online comments included in the 244 mentioned or in addition.	Yes
6.	Will the results of the public engagement be presented to the full council or cabinet.	Feedback from the initial public engagement exercise is being reviewed by the Golf Course Architects to identify any areas where adjustments could be made to incorporate the feedback received.

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Response</b>
7.	Members received information from constituents that a petition was being presented to the Council, in regard to the Practice facility, has the council received a petition and if so what action is being taken.	The Sport, Leisure & Golf Service have not been provided with a petition
8.	In regards to the reasons for the proposed golf development centre and the golf practice area, this would enhance the future of our courses and be fully inclusive, I am of the opinion we are fully inclusive, a number of clubs have junior members and are women and men, we also have female club or clubs, and senior clubs and most clubs are family friendly, the number of season ticket holders 5100 for 2024-2025, season ticket sales were suspended in August 2024 as we had too many applications, we also had 22000 visitors for 2024-25, are we not in danger of over provision by trying to enhance our golf estate and therefore members might leave.	<p>The proposed Golf Development Centre represents a strategic initiative designed to enhance the existing Golf Course by providing additional learning opportunities and facilities for skill development. The Centre is envisaged to operate year-round, extending access beyond the traditional playing times, and thereby offering greater flexibility for golfers.</p> <p><b>Golf Club Membership Demographics at Belleisle Park (as of January 2025):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Club Composition:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Six clubs</b> maintain exclusively adult (over 18) male memberships with no junior members.</li> <li>○ <b>Two clubs</b> have exclusively adult female memberships with no junior members.</li> <li>○ <b>One club</b> includes an exclusively adult male membership and a junior membership comprising two under 18 girls.</li> <li>○ There are no clubs designated as “Senior Only,” although several clubs include senior sections.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Overall Membership:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Total club membership across these nine clubs stands at just over 900. It is important to note that not all these members are ‘playing’ members or Season Ticket Holders, and some individuals hold memberships in more than one club.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>National Comparison &amp; Concerns:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ According to Scottish Golf's Annual Report 2023, the national average age of golf club members is 54 years. Given that only one of the nine clubs includes junior members, it is reasonable to assume that the average age in South Ayrshire is higher.</li> <li>○ A survey by Hillier Hopkins (2021) revealed that almost three quarters of club members are aged over 50, with 33% aged over 61. Clubs are actively working to attract younger and greater numbers of female members.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Season Ticket Holder Demographics for Golf South Ayrshire (Total: 5,104):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Gender Distribution:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 93% Male</li> <li>○ 7% Female (compared to 12% nationally)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Age Distribution:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 10% are under 18 (comparable to the 11% national figure)</li> <li>○ The overall average age is 50.7 years (national average is 54 years).</li> <li>○ <b>Adult Male:</b> Average age is 54.5 years, with 30% aged 65 or older and only 10% (492 individuals) aged between 18 and 30.</li> <li>○ <b>Adult Female:</b> Average age is 64.9 years, with 53% aged 65 or older and only 2% (8 individuals) between 18 and 30.</li> <li>○ <b>Under 18:</b> Out of 530 season ticket holders, 93% are boys and 7% are girls.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>