

Golf Strategy Implementation Update

December 2023

Our Strategic Objectives

The following strategic objectives have been identified to deliver the Golf Strategy in South Ayrshire 2022-2032:

1. Achieve Golfing Excellence

- Provide golf courses with a year-round playing experience that is equal to, or better than, any comparable course in the region.
- Establish a high-quality development programme and practice facilities which support all standards of golfers and to increase participation, particularly by female golfers, families, and young people.
- Invest in golf courses to ensure they are compliant with modern safety standards, reflect advances in technology and meet the needs of members, visitors, and other users.

2. Evaluate and Remove Obstacles

- Establish a membership fee structure which supports inclusive golf.
- Establish a comprehensive and professional internal and external communications programme to raise the profile and reputation of Golf in South Ayrshire.

3. Create the Environment

- Ensure a warm, friendly, and welcoming environment for all members and visitors.
- Continue to invest in non-course assets to ensure that they are secure, maintained and developed to a high standard.
- Provide a consistent, high quality and cost-effective bar and catering service which supports both golfing and non-golfing activities.

4. Health and Wellbeing

- Establish a comprehensive programme to maximise the benefits of golf for all.
- Provide ease of access, year-round, for all.

5. Environmental Sustainability

- Ensure best greenkeeping practices and the latest techniques are used to maintain the courses.
- Achieve recognised environmental accreditation.
- Identify potential sources of green energy and income generation.
- Protect the courses from the effects of climate change.
- Ensure all working practices and facilities are compliant with current regulations.

- Meet or exceed reductions in annual carbon budgets to support the achievement of the Council's Net Zero ambitions by 2030.

6. Management Control

- Establish a sustainable and business aware management operation that guides the long-term ambitions of golf in South Ayrshire.
- Ensure that best practice governance sits at the core of decision making.
- Improve financial performance and planning through cost control, implementation of efficiency savings, and maximise opportunities to increase income generation.

These strategic objectives will be delivered across nine functional areas as follows:

1. THE COURSES

In August 2022, Golf Course Architects, KimberGlen, were appointed through a procurement exercise, to undertake a comprehensive appraisal of six Golf South Ayrshire courses. Belleisle and Darley Golf Courses were previously appraised in 2018 and 2020 respectively also by KimberGlen.

The appraisals considered all aspects of the golf courses including:

- Course layout
- Enhance playability and reputation
- Health and Safety
- Resilience to climate change
- Reduce long-term operational/maintenance costs

Options for the redevelopment of courses were also included, which would enable South Ayrshire Council to achieve the agreed Strategic Outcomes and increase income from visitor and members.

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Based on the recommendations made by KimberGlen, it was proposed and agreed that the two priority courses receiving investment would be Darley and Belleisle. Options for the redevelopment of the remaining courses should be considered when further investment becomes available.

Investment is required to ensure that the condition of our courses does not deteriorate and significantly impact year-round playability, and visitor and member income.

An appraisal has not been carried out for the Maybole Golf Club; KimberGlen visited the site and reported that the upgrade required for the course would not warrant the investment.

Golf South Ayrshire is continuing to engage with Agronomists to undertake an agronomical assessment of all eight courses. The reviews will provide an insight into current turf and environmental conditions as well as current maintenance practices to assist the service to create five year maintenance plans.

Key Progress since March 2023

- ✓ Initial funding of £500,000 from uncommitted reserves was granted in December 2021 to improve course condition, address health and safety issues

and drainage on the golf courses. This money, following a successful procurement process, has been allocated to three on-course projects:

- 1) Darley Safer Walking Routes (supported by an additional grant of £100,000 from the Place Based Investment Fund)
 - 2) Belleisle & Seafield Drainage Improvement (supported by an additional grant of £140,000 was allocated from NatureScot)
 - 3) Lochgreen 2nd & 3rd (including Fullarton 8th, 14th and 15th holes) Drainage Improvement
- ✓ Projects 1 & 2 were completed in July 2023 with Project 3 anticipated to be completed by January 2024.
 - ✓ Capital funding (£5M) to redevelop Belleisle and Darley Golf Courses was approved by Council in March 2023. Preliminary Ecological Assessments have been undertaken at both sites in September 2023, and will be used to inform the service of any additional wildlife / habitat surveys required as part of the planning process.
 - ✓ Pre-application engagement sessions will be undertaken early in 2024, ahead of submitting a planning application. If approved and following the statutory procurement process led by Professional Design Services, it is anticipated that construction works will commence in Autumn/Winter 2024 with a planned completion date in 2025.
 - ✓ Golf South Ayrshire has registered to 'On Course', an online portal for recording and tracking data pertaining to Golf Course Operations. Once sufficient data in 3 key areas of operation: Nature, Resources and Community, have been provided it will then be possible to apply to be assessed and if successful, be awarded GEO Certified Status.
 - ✓ Golf Course Maintenance documents for all courses are being finalised and will clearly set out the services ambitions to refine day to day activities on the courses, improve turf quality and support the service's application for GEO Certification.
 - ✓ A new fleet of golf course maintenance equipment has been purchased for Troon Links, Belleisle Park and Northfield Bowling Centre including new hybrid and electric machinery which will assist the service in achieving its Carbon Budget responsibilities as well as providing the service with additional efficiency savings and improved course presentation.

Completing these actions will ensure Golf South Ayrshire fulfils the following objectives:

- **ACHIEVE GOLFING EXCELLENCE**
- **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**
- **MANAGEMENT CONTROL**

2. MEMBERSHIPS

Following a significant upturn in popularity of the game during and post COVID, Membership sales have remained strong in 2023/24. Demand for tee times at both Troon Links and Belleisle Park courses have continued to be very high.

As part of the 23/24 budget setting process a savings target was introduced aligned to a review of the Access to Leisure Scheme.

Key Progress since March 2023

- ✓ A new Golf Concession Scheme was introduced as part of the 23/24 Season Ticket renewal period with new discounts and new categories, simplifying eligibility and qualifying criteria.
- ✓ The impact of the revised membership scheme has been positive for the service, and it is currently projecting to achieve the saving target by the end of the financial year.
- ✓ Golf South Ayrshire has been in discussions with the National Governing body, Scottish Golf and local area and county representatives regarding the current relationship between the service and Golf Clubs with playing rights to play on the public courses. Discussions have been positive with an understanding and agreement that Inclusion, Equality and encouraging Participation from under represented demographics should be central to any future agreements.

- ✓ Work is ongoing in relation to affiliated golf clubs who have permission to play on the courses. Consultation is planned with the aspiration to implement any changes in season 2024-25.

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- **EVALUATE AND REMOVE OBSTACLES**
- **HEALTH AND WELLBEING**
- **MANAGEMENT CONTROL**

3. MARKETING

Further work on a fully costed marketing plan is being developed with a renewed focus and recognition that Golf is a main tourism driver for the region. Specific campaigns will be launched in partnership with the Destination South Ayrshire team to increase awareness of South Ayrshire Council golf courses and other related businesses and organisations.

The current Golf South Ayrshire website is over 6 years old. It is the intention of the service to replace the current website to improve its internet presence using several techniques including professionally created video footage of the courses and improved photography to increase the number of visitors to the region. The cost of this project will be met within existing revenue budgets.

Key Progress since March 2023

- ✓ Due to the various projects undertaken on the golf courses, it was decided not to relaunch the Tour Operators and Hoteliers Scheme in 2023, instead, now that

the courses are recovering from the works, the scheme will be launched in 2024 to coincide with the return of The Open to Troon in July.

- ✓ The service engaged with an award-winning photographer who specializes in Golf Course imagery who completed several visits to the courses unaffected by the construction works. These images will be used in all new marketing campaigns and refreshed website.

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4. DEVELOPMENT

A comprehensive 5-year development plan to actively increase the opportunity for young people and new golfers in South Ayrshire has been created and the service will be looking to obtain several internal and external partners, such as the Children's Golf Trust, Professional Golfers Association and Scottish Golf, to assist its delivery. The development plan sets out to increase the number of golfers in key areas including Young People, Females, and other under-represented demographics.

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Key events such as 'The Open', Royal Troon and the 'Scottish Ladies Open', Dundonald and others not yet announced, should be used to increase participation and opportunity for the key demographics previously identified. A 15-month roadmap will be set out working with key partners, such as the Children's Golf Trust, Professional Golfers' Association and Scottish Golf, and will be completed by March 2023.

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5. CLUBHOUSES

Key Progress since March 2023

- ✓ The Troon Links and Belleisle Park Clubhouses and The Stables Café have been refurbished, with new furniture throughout and the introduction of new lighting and additional décor. The venues are more welcoming and less clinical than before, coupled with an improved menu has increased turnover and popularity.

- ✓ Staffing and recruitment of skilled employees remains to be a challenge and is anticipated to be so, until the Service review is completed in 2024.
- ✓ A new, integrated ePOS system was introduced in May which will allow the service to make the necessary steps to becoming cashless venues and with improved management reporting permit senior officers to make better informed decisions regarding stock control, profit maximisation and improved customer service.
- ✓ The service has recently completed a pilot project working alongside Procurement and the Community Wealth building team, to engage with local suppliers and food producers to showcase some of Ayrshires finest produce. It is anticipated that this will commence fully in 2024 and assist the council in supporting local Ayrshire Businesses.

Completing these actions will ensure Golf South Ayrshire fulfils the following objectives:

- **MANAGEMENT CONTROL**
- **ACHIEVE GOLFING EXCELLENCE**
- **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

6. ANCILLARY BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Replacement of maintenance and staff welfare facilities at Troon Links and Health and Safety (H&S) issues are progressing. Procurement and Professional Design Services, (P.D.S.), have engaged KimberGlen to progress the H&S work and P.D.S. are going through the design and build options at present.

The Nature Restoration and Environmental Project on Belleisle Golf Course has now been completed.

The Place Based Investment Programme to create a network of paths to create a safe walking route through and around the perimeter of Darley Golf Course, Troon, has now been completed.

The service has also recently engaged with Ayrshire Roads Alliance and SWECO to discuss the potential impact to Lochgreen and Darley Golf Courses with the planned upgrading of the National Cycle Network. A number of course alterations are required to ensure the safety of Pedestrians and Cyclists using the upgraded route.

Following the successful progression of the outstanding P.D.S. Projects, the Service will further engage with P.D.S. to assist in the creation of a costed 10-year Capital Investment Programme based on the requirements of the Service to further enhance the Courses and Staff Welfare facilities at each location. This would be in addition to the proposed investment for upgrading Darley and Belleisle Golf Courses and would run from years 5-10 of the investment.

Key Progress since March 2023

- ✓ A full assessment and safety analysis of the proposed Active Travel route from Ayr to Barassie adjacent to Lochgreen and Darley Golf Courses has been completed along with a final design and Bill of Quantities submitted to Ayrshire Roads Alliance / SWECO. The service remains in discussion with these organisations to protect the integrity of the golf courses and minimise disruption to all course users.

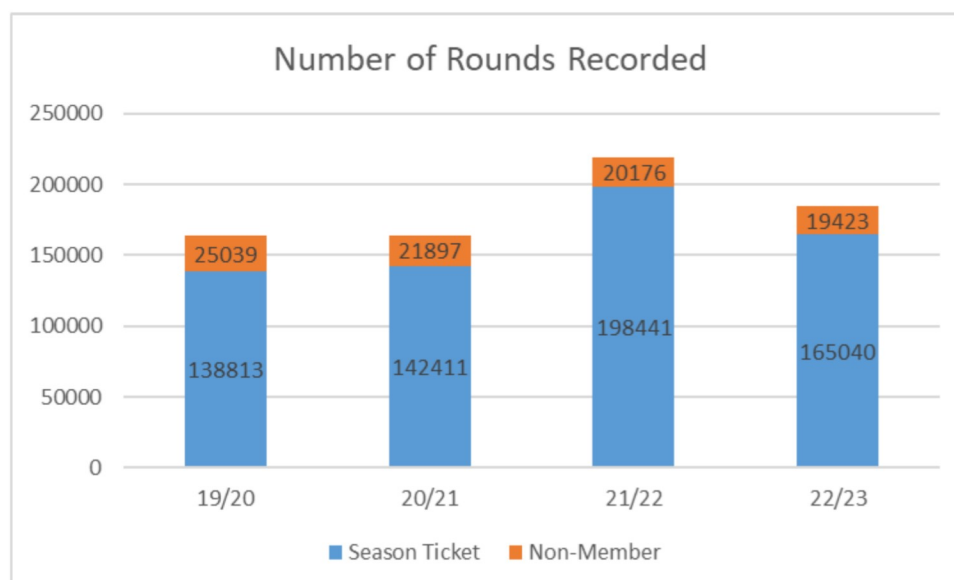
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7. SALES AND ADMINISTRATION

Key Progress since March 2023

- ✓ 2022/23 playing statistics are now available, whilst rounds played by Season Ticket holders has fallen from the year previously, the sale of season tickets remains considerably higher than Pre-Pandemic levels.
- ✓ Non-Member rounds remain relatively stable but still lower than they were pre-pandemic.



- ✓ Year to Date figures for 23/24 (1st April – 31st October) are encouraging with Season Ticket sales remaining comparable to 22/23.
- ✓ The footfall on the courses has increased significantly with over 7,500 more rounds of golf played by Season Ticket Holders.
- ✓ Nearly 1,500 more rounds have been played by Non-Members compared to the previous year, despite the disruption on Darley, Belleisle and Seafield Courses experienced over the summer months.
- ✓ The Ayr Golf Week and competitions were evaluated and reviewed this summer, with the decision taken to deliver fewer competitions played over fewer days. Competition Entries were not adversely affected and feedback from the competitors was generally positive regarding the new format.
- ✓ The Troon Junior Open (Tom Lehman) was moved from its normal Tuesday date in August to be incorporated within the Troon Weekender Competition and entries increased by over 50% which far exceeded all expectations.

8. FINANCIAL

FUNCTIONAL AREA	ACTION	COMPLETION DATE	ASSIGNED TO
Financial	Complete profiled projections for each key area of the service to achieve relevant KPI's as agreed	MARCH 2024	GSA
Financial	Review current budget monitoring process and create Income and Expenditure budgets based on actual costs and projected income	MARCH 2024	GSA / Finance
Financial	Complete a Commercialisation Review of the Service exploring opportunities for new revenue streams and sources of income	MARCH 2024	GSA / Commercialisation Team

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9. GOVERNANCE

Key Progress since March 2023

- ✓ Internal Audit previously highlighted some areas of weakness within the current management of cash transactions in the Golf Clubhouses. An action plan was agreed and employees have now been provided with updated management procedures and training to address any gaps.
- ✓ Progress is being made to upgrade the customer service with a move to cashless catering and membership benefit offering.

Further/

Further actions in this functional area are due for completion by March 2024. These are:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	ACTION	COMPLETION DATE	ASSIGNED TO
Governance	Review and propose a revised Structure for Golf based on achieving outcomes agreed within Strategy and new Council objectives.	MAR 2024	GSA
Governance	Review and Update where necessary all Terms and Conditions and Operational Policies	MAR 2024	GSA/Trading Standards / Legal

Golf Course Infrastructure Improvements

Troon Links

Project Title	Strategic Objective/s	Progress to date	Project Outcomes
Darley Paths *See image below	Achieve Golfing Excellence / Environmental Sustainability	Works now complete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Create a safe path network across the Golf Course ✓ Compliant with modern H&S standards ✓ Increase environmental credentials ✓ Habitat creation
Lochgreen Drainage	Achieve Golfing Excellence / Environmental Sustainability	Works are progressing well on site with an anticipated completion date of mid-December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reduce course flooding and allow the course to remain playable for longer
Cycle Route @ Darley Golf Course	Environmental Sustainability	Kimber & Glen (Golf Course Architects) are currently preparing designs which will then be passed to Ayrshire Roads Alliance who will then fund and manage the works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Create a safe path network across the Golf Course
Lochgreen Storage and Welfare Building	Environmental Sustainability / Create the Environment	Portakabin have been invited to provide a design and cost for the provision of modular accommodation including: office, welfare facilities including locker room with drying facilities, mess area, storage, showers and WC's. A quotation has been provided for Ground Investigation works which will be progressed in early 2024. Quotations are also being progressed for utility connections including power, water and drainage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Compliant with modern H&S standards ✓ Provide modern staff welfare facilities that are safe and welcoming

Darley Shed Roof	Environmental Sustainability	Funding awarded for the replacement of the asbestos roof, Asset Management Compliance Team will progress these works.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Compliant with modern standards ✓ Provide secure, safe storage solutions
Darley Golf Course Enhancements	Achieve Golfing Excellence / Environmental Sustainability	<p>Works are at an initial 'briefing stage' with Planning Consent now required.</p> <p>Ecological assessments and irrigation surveys are currently being progressed with a target date of 2025 for completion of all works.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Remodel golf course to fit modern playing trends ✓ Increase environmental credentials ✓ Habitat creation

Darley Path Safe Route



Belleisle & Seafeld Golf Course

Project Title	Strategic Objective/s	Progress to date	Project Outcomes
Nature Restoration *See images below	Environmental Sustainability	Works now complete	✓ Increase environmental credentials through habitat creation
Belleisle Golf Course Enhancements	Achieve Golfing Excellence / Environmental Sustainability	Works are at an initial 'briefing stage' with Planning Consent now required. Ecological assessments and irrigation surveys are currently being progressed with a target date of 2025 for completion of all works.	✓ Remodel golf course to fit modern playing trends ✓ Increase environmental credentials ✓ Habitat creation

Seafeld Nature Restoration Pond



Belleisle Nature Restoration Pond



Belleisle Park

- ✓ 2 x 18-hole Parkland courses - Belleisle and Seafield, designed by James Braid
- ✓ New clubhouse opened in 2016
- ✓ Professional Services – provided by 3rd party
- ✓ Licensed café – operated by the Council
- ✓ Starter service – operated by the Council
- ✓ Indoor golf simulator
- ✓ 6-hole practice course / Short practice range
- ✓ Short game area
- ✓ Putting green
- ✓ Practice net
- ✓ 4 x buggies for hire – operated by the Council
- ✓ Club hire & trolley hire – operated by 3rd party

Troon Links

- ✓ 3 x 18-hole Links Courses; Darley, Lochgreen and Fullarton
- ✓ Refurbished clubhouse opened in 2017
- ✓ Professional services – provided by 3rd party
- ✓ Licensed café – operated by the Council
- ✓ Starter Service – operated by the Council
- ✓ 2 short practice ranges • Putting green
- ✓ 6 x buggies for hire (2 of 3 courses) – operated by the Council
- ✓ Club hire & trolley hire – operated by 3rd party

Dalmilling

- ✓ 1 x 18-hole Parkland course
- ✓ 1 x 18-hole FootGolf course
- ✓ Clubhouse requires extensive modernisation
- ✓ Licensed café – operated by 3rd party
- ✓ Starter service – operated by 3rd party on behalf of the Council
- ✓ Short practice range
- ✓ Short game area
- ✓ Putting green
- ✓ Practice net

Girvan

- ✓ 1 x 18-hole Links/Parkland Course; designed by James Braid
- ✓ Refurbished clubhouse opened in 2016
- ✓ Licensed café – operated by 3rd party
- ✓ Starter service – operated by the Council
- ✓ Putting green
- ✓ Practice net
- ✓ Trolley hire – operated by 3rd party

Maybole

- ✓ 1 x 9-hole Parkland Course
- ✓ 1 x 18-hole FootGolf Course
- ✓ Clubhouse minimal usage
- ✓ Starter service – none – payment taken at Swimming Pool
- ✓ Putting green
- ✓ Practice net