



## **MINUTES OF THE 55<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF REAY GOLF CLUB HELD IN THE CLUBHOUSE ON WEDNESDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> MARCH 2016**

### **Present:**

G Coghill, J Eunson, T Hawes, Miss M Mackay, C Munro, F Groves, J Disbury, I Ritchie, G A Dunnett, E Sutherland, Mrs S Hawes, S Chisholm, A Gunn, R Earnshaw, A Farmer, G Gunn, A Bain, I Sutherland, Mrs C Cameron, S Harper

### **Approval to Convene**

The Captain, G Coghill, welcomed members to the 55<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of Reay Golf Club, before seeking permission for the meeting to convene. This was duly accepted, proposed by Miss M Mackay and seconded by Mr R Earnshaw.

### **Apologies for Absence**

I Mowat, C Ross, Mrs A Ross, L Malcolm.

### **Approval of Minutes**

The Minutes of the 54<sup>th</sup> AGM were adopted on the proposal of Mr J Eunson and seconded by Mr J Disbury.

### **Matters Arising**

G Coghill provided an update on two of the issues raised at the 2015 AGM:

1. Suggested landscaping of the area in front of the first tee – it was confirmed that other priorities had taken precedence over this during the past year, but that the option to landscape the area was still under consideration by the Council.
2. Issue of poor drainage on the first fairway – it was noted that Mr A Farmer has carried out some excavation work and the drainage issue has been resolved. G Coghill also noted that he has been liaising with Highland Council regarding the issue of water from the neighbouring A836 draining on to the course, and that Highland Council have added this to their programme of remedial work for the roads in the area.

It was confirmed that the Club is in ongoing talks with the owners of Sandside Estates, Reay Farms Ltd, regarding the potential purchase of the land associated with the course. Further discussions relating to the current situation between the Club and the landowners are noted below.

### **Reports:**

#### **Captain's Report**

Well the first year of my Captaincy has passed in a blink. My report will cover a number of topics but it is only right that I first of all pay tribute to the Council members. The golf club is run entirely by volunteers except for our green keeper and bar staff. So without their help it would be impossible to run the club and I have been very lucky to have a strong team, many of whom have been doing the job for a number of years and need little help or support which takes a big load of me. I would also like to thank other members of the club who have also pitched in to help with various tasks such as work parties, junior coaching etc. And finally, a special thank you to Evan Sutherland who has been a great help and support to me over the year.

Looking at specific areas and topics:

### ***Course Purchase Project***

This has, and continues to, dominate my time. We have agreed a price with the sellers, Reay Farms Limited, and now the focus is on raising the necessary funds to secure the purchase. Applications went into Sportscotland and Baillie Wind Farm Community fund in January and then an application to SSE Strathy North Joint Community Fund on 26 February. Our last two applications will be to the Caithness and North Sutherland Fund and the Council Ward Discretionary Fund – Landward, both at the end of March.

We should hear the results of all our applications around the end of April into May and if successful, the project will then be handed over to the respective solicitors to conclude the transfer.

The club has had tremendous support from Willie Mackay, the Scottish Golf Development Officer for the north, Roy Kirk from HIE and Anna MacConnell from the NDA.

When concluded the golf club will then own all the land we occupy at present and ownership will free us up from ever paying rent and overcome the problems of getting funding without a lease. Success will be a defining point in the history of the golf club and hopefully secure the club for generations to come.

### ***The Course***

The summer of 2015 weather-wise will be remembered most for being very poor. Whilst this brought problems with massive growth, especially in the rough, and fairways that did not play like links, it also meant the greens really improved with strong growth.

The top dressing regime is starting to provide benefits with smoother greens and the overseeding is also helping to improve the sward.

We have enjoyed many favourable comments from visitors and a particularly good write up by Kevin Markham on the North Coast 500 website.

Jimmy Macadie, our greenkeeper, is a huge asset and works tirelessly in all weathers to present us with the best golfing experience possible given our limited resources and I am very grateful for all his help. His skill with machinery maintenance also saves the club a lot of money over the year. Again, members have supported with many tasks including repairs to machinery sheds, new drains, repairs to tees and bunkers and cutting fairways, greens etc.

### ***Machinery and other assets***

We managed to secure grant aid that allowed us to purchase a new ISO Office container – the blue one next to the clubhouse – and a new top dressing spreader and Kubota rough cutting mower. The old portacabin has been relocated down at the machinery sheds and used to store small items of equipment. Kenny Farmer has also done a great job keeping the fabric and other parts maintained and fixed as necessary.

### ***Match and Handicap***

They do a fantastic job on our behalf – arranging fixtures, organising all the entry paperwork, sorting out scores, updating handicaps, publishing results and press reports, sorting out sweep money and then collecting in all the trophies, getting them engraved and finally presenting at our annual prize giving. Whilst it does get a bit quieter over the winter, there is no let-up in the work that goes on behind the scenes and now they are well on top of getting ready for another season. I really appreciate your support.

### ***Membership and Marketing***

The membership has held up pretty well but I have been attending meetings with Golf Highland and the message is totally consistent – all 42 clubs in the Highland area are suffering from falling membership and also the age demographic is moving to the right. Hunger for 36 hole competitions and competitive

golf is waning and time pressures on everyone's lives means that there may be a demand for 9 hole competitions. We will continue to look at ways to spice up the fixture list with more fun events.

Get into Golf and come and try will again be tried to find new members as well as the continued use of discounted beginners subscriptions.

Marketing will become much more important as the only area we can realistically expect to grow is visitor numbers. Collaborative working with the other Caithness clubs and exploiting North Coast 500 and perhaps stay and play packages with local hotels might be the answer. Hence the change of title of the Membership Secretary to Membership and Marketing. Dornoch gets over £1M in visitor income, Brora gets over £100k. We get about £9k. Even a 20% rise would help us.

It is also worth mentioning the significant work done by Fred to get sponsorship and donations which will be covered by the Treasurer.

### ***Bar***

The bar is a very important part of the club – it provides a social aspect which allows members and visitors to meet and share stories and experiences and a good example is on Friday nights when the juniors are out in force.

But with the new drink driving rules, sales of alcoholic beverages have fallen dramatically. However, with careful management and the use of volunteer bar cover over the winter months when the takings are only a fraction of the costs of paying staff, we are managing to make ends meet.

Our bar staff provide a great service and Davie Mowat also does all the ordering and banking which helps greatly.

### ***Ladies***

The ladies section although few in numbers at a competitive level have supported all the local open competitions, featuring in the prize winners too. They have an equal number of non-competitive lady members who play regularly during the summer months. The Ladies Open was again sponsored by Bighouse Partnership and was well supported by both local clubs and returning visitors from over the Ord. Financial input to the club was boosted from sponsorship and entry fees but also from raffles held at the ladies and mixed open events. The ladies will be joined by the older junior girls holding senior handicaps and we look forward to seeing the younger members progress throughout the coming years.

### ***Juniors***

The Junior Section remains strong and you just need to look at the success of our juniors, both here and in National Competitions. We are very well thought of by Scottish Golf and the schemes that run below it such as Active Schools Firstclubgolf Programme in primary schools and ClubGolf which has been running since 2004 to see why.

The club is indebted to Evan and all the coaches for their huge commitment to this programme.

As an aside, having such a good story to tell has been a great benefit when filling in all the funding applications where we have majored on the success of the Juniors.

### ***Treasurer***

You will hear shortly that we have had another good year although it is a continuing battle. Love them or loathe them, it is a fact that our best chance of moving the club forward on infrastructure improvements lies with wind farm funding. I will leave the details to Jock to explain.

### ***Club Successes***

It is right that we acknowledge the club's success in winning the Wilson Cup up in Shetland which means we will be defending it when the competition is held here in July. What makes this even more special is the fact that at 9am on the Friday of the Competition weekend we were one member short! A special thank you to Raymond Taylor who went out of his way to attend and some quick thinking using taxis etc to get Raymond to the ferry and the rest is history.

Also a thank you to the teams that made it through to the final of the Ulbster cup.

Well done to you all.

### **Summary**

We have much to look forward to. We have developed a business plan that will hopefully move the club forward in lots of areas.

The course purchase, when concluded, means we can stop living under a cloud of uncertainty.

The nominations for positions on Council means we again have a really strong team and some new blood.

The Wilson Cup, coming straight after our own Open will showcase the club to a wider audience.

Our participation in Golf Highland will yield benefits, even if only in allowing networking with other clubs to share and benefit from best practice.

I won't say that being your Captain has been easy – just ask Rachel! – but the rewards make up for everything and I look forward to another year of success at Reay.

We have a great little club, close to all our hearts, and with your continued support we can make it even better.

Final comment is to thank Tim Hawes for being my Vice Captain during the last year – he is standing down due to work and other commitments but staying on Council and his support, especially during meetings on the course purchase, has been much appreciated.

### **Discussion**

The following issues were raised and discussed by the AGM attendees following the delivery of the Captain's report:

1. Course valuation – those present were keen to know how much the course would cost to purchase. G Coghill noted that as a condition of the sale he was not at liberty to disclose that information to members at this stage, however, he did inform those present that the course had been independently valued at £100k. He went on to say that the sellers have given the club an asking price and that the funding applications currently in process, if successful, would come close to meeting this price.
2. Club funds to be put towards course purchase – G Coghill stated that the club would put approximately £35-£40k of club funds towards the purchase. This would leave the club with approximately £50k in its account. It was acknowledged that there would need to be further discussions with members if there was a shortfall of money for the purchase once the outcome of all funding applications was known.
3. Area to be purchased – G Coghill clarified that the sale would cover an area of 104 acres. With a couple of exceptions, the area to be purchased is defined by the rabbit fence surrounding the course.

Following discussions on the course purchase, it was proposed that the members vote on whether or not they were happy for the Council to continue to pursue with negotiations to purchase the course on their behalf. Those present unanimously voted that the Council should be allowed to proceed with the course purchase project.

### **Treasurer's Report**

It is pleasing to report a surplus for the fourth year in a row, although boosted significantly by a review of the asset register and other areas of the accounts, which will be addressed later.

### **Income**

Income for the year was about the same as last year but was helped by late billing and payment for Maclean Electrical's 2014 corporate day (£1683), grant for machinery purchase from the Baillie Wind Farm Fund (£4659), coaching grant for Euan Munro (£450), Evan Sutherland's sponsorship for a Level 3

Coaching course (£700) and £500 for his “Coach of the Year” award. Fred Groves has to be thanked again for his sterling work in bring in over £6000 of sponsorship and donations from companies with interests in the area. It was also encouraging to see increased income from competitions, thanks in part to Andy Bain’s careful management of prizes and trophy purchases. On the negative side, a fall in membership subscription income and visitor green fees is a concern. The bar returned to profit after last year’s loss. However, the late payment of Maclean’s bill and the accountants putting the income from catering through the bar boosted this by £1346. The review of bar prices, to bring them into line with local hostelries, may not have been popular with all members but it was necessary if this service is to be retained. Had the bar and cleaning duties not been covered by volunteers over the winter season, and on Thursdays, it would be running at a loss.

### ***Expenditure***

Expenditure for the year has again been carefully managed to keep it more-or-less at the level of last year. The main contributor to this was, again, not employing a second greenkeeper for the summer months and relying on volunteers to pick up this workload. It is estimated that it has saved about £8,000. Capital purchases for the year were: ISO office cabin, finishing mower, sand spreader, pallet handler, display fridge for the bar and a new till. The cost of this was offset in part by the grant from the Baillie Wind Farm Fund. The Wilson Cup was held in Shetland last year which was a considerable expense for the club but it was rewarded by our team’s excellent performance in winning this prestigious trophy. Reay hosts the Wilson Cup tournament this year, which will incur some expenditure for the club. It is worth noting the increasing cost of maintaining our ageing course machinery. Provision of £2000 has been made in the accounts to cover the cost of getting the course valued in our pursuit of purchasing it.

### ***VAT***

In 2014 there was a ruling against HMRC which did away with charging VAT on visitor green fees, which was to the club’s advantage. However, this had a knock on effect on our ability to partially recover any VAT on course expenditure and, having consulted our VAT advisor, it was agreed that there was nothing to be gained by being VAT registered. On that basis, the club de-registered from VAT on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015. Deregistering from VAT part way through the financial year has caused some confusion in the accounts but that will be cleared up in the coming years.

### ***Accounting***

The asset register has been given a thorough review and shows an increase of £5,310, which is reflected in the surplus for the year. As a result of this review, it has been agreed with the accountants that fixtures and fittings will no longer be classed as assets and only capital purchases of over £250 will be included in the register. The accountants have asked us to review our policy on dealing with unrepresented cheques and unredeemed prize voucher which, in the past, is assigned in the accounts as “creditors”. It has therefore been agreed that unrepresented cheques and voucher >1 year old will be written off each year. (N.B. Bank cheques are only valid for 6 months and voucher should be redeemed in <3 months.) The outcome of this is that the accounts show our liability is reduced by £1,440 this year.

### ***Summary***

When the asset register adjustments, Maclean’s bill, Evan Sutherland’s “Coach Of The Year” award, volunteer effort for bar, cleaning and course work, writing off cheques and vouchers are taken into consideration it is obvious that the club’s financial position is fragile and heavily dependent on sponsor and grant income to survive. It is therefore essential that every effort is made to boost membership and marketing ourselves to attract visitors.

### ***Discussion***

The following issues were raised and discussed by the AGM attendees following the delivery of the Treasurer’s report:

1. Golf vouchers – it was acknowledged that the period of validity of prize vouchers would need to be highlighted at the time of issue to winners.

## **Approvals**

The approval of the accounts was proposed by G A Dunnett, seconded by A Farmer. A motion to use Victor Fraser to audit the club accounts again next year was proposed by E Sutherland, seconded by R Earnshaw.

## **Changes to the Constitution**

G Coghill ran through a number of proposed minor changes to the Club Constitution. These changes relate to the amalgamation of the SGU and SLGU to form Scottish Golf Ltd, and also took on board suggestions made by Scottish Golf Ltd and Sportscotland during discussions relating to the course purchase project.

There was some discussion relating to clause 10.2 of the Constitution which relates to the disposal of assets should the club be wound-up at any point in the future. The proposed wording of clause 10.2 would ensure that if the event of the club being wound up and the land being gifted to another organisation (such as the local community council), they would be required to look after the land in such a way so that if a new club wished to re-establish the golf course in the future it would be possible for them to do so.

A motion to make the discussed changes to the Constitution was proposed by A Farmer and seconded by G A Dunnett.

## **Election of Office Bearers and Council Members**

The captain, Mr G Coghill, requested Mr Fred Groves, President of the club take the chair. Mr Groves congratulated Mr Coghill and his committee for the work done during 2015. Mr Groves commented that the club owe Mr Coghill an enormous vote of thanks for his efforts to date in relation to the course purchase project. Mr Groves noted that if successful the course purchase would provide a solid basis for the clubs future.

Mr Groves reiterated the call for volunteers to help with work associated with taking the Club forward.

One nomination had been received for Captain, Mr G Coghill. Mr Groves asked for any other nominations from the floor, there being no other nominations Mr G Coghill was elected to serve as Captain of Reay Golf Club for a second year.

The election of Office Bearers continued and there being no other nominations the following were elected to the Council of Management:

Captain	Grant Coghill	Jock Eunson	Colin Munro
Vice-Captain	Morag Mackay	Grant Coghill	Lee Malcolm
Treasurer	Jock Eunson	Colin Munro	Grant Coghill
Secretary	Colin Munro	Alison Ross	Lee Malcolm
Greens Convenor	Graeme Dunnett	Lee Malcolm	Morag Mackay
Gents Match Secretary	Andy Bain	Alison Ross	Lee Malcolm
Ladies Representative	Su Hawes	Morag Mackay	Carol Cameron
Bar Convenor	Morag Mackay	Kenny Farmer	Tim Hawes
House Convenor	Kenny Farmer	Colin Munro	Alison Ross
Membership and Marketing Secretary	Fred Groves	Graeme Dunnett	Lee Malcolm
Junior Convenor	Alison Ross	Grant Coghill	Lee Malcolm
Handicap Secretary	Lee Malcolm	Colin Munro	Morag Mackay
Ordinary Member	Simon Harper	Kenny Farmer	Sandy Chisholm
Ordinary Member	Tim Hawes	Lee Malcolm	Colin Munro

G Coghill thanked Mr C Paterson for his efforts as Greens Convenor over the past year, and T Hawes for his work as Vice-Captain during the same period.

## Subscriptions

### PROPOSAL

The following subscription rates were put forward by the Council for the 2016 golf year:

<b>ORDINARY MEMBERS</b>	Male/Female	<b>£360</b>
	Senior (eligible for Nat Retirement Pension)	<b>£290</b>
	Beginner	<b>£150</b>
	Young Adult 1 (18-21 yrs)	<b>£150</b>
	Young Adult 2 (22-25 yrs)	<b>£210</b>
	Young Adult 3 (26-29 yrs)	<b>£280</b>
<b>COUNTRY MEMBERS</b>		<b>£280</b>
<b>JUNIOR MEMBERS</b>	Under 9	<b>£10</b>
	Under 12	<b>£30</b>
	Under 18 in Full Time Education	<b>£45</b>
	Under 18 not in Full Time Education	<b>£85</b>
<b>ASSOCIATE MEMBERS</b>		<b>£1</b>

Acceptance of the subscription fees was proposed by T Hawes, seconded by I Ritchie.

### Any Other Competent Business

#### ***Wilson Cup***

Reay will host the 2016 Wilson Cup. G A Dunnett will co-ordinate actions relating to the organisation of the event. An update will be provided to all competing clubs relating to the arrangements made to date during the next week.

There being no other business the meeting was closed at 20:30 hrs

Colin Munro  
Secretary  
Reay Golf Club

March 2016