



MINUTES OF THE 56th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF REAY GOLF CLUB HELD IN THE CLUBHOUSE ON WEDNESDAY 1st MARCH 2017

Present:

G Coghill, J Eunson, Miss M Mackay, C Munro, F Groves, J Disbury, I Ritchie, S Chisholm, A Gunn, R Earnshaw, A Farmer, G Gunn, Mrs C Paterson, C Paterson, S Harper, Mrs A Ross, L Malcolm.

Approval to Convene

The Captain, G Coghill, welcomed members to the 56th Annual General Meeting of Reay Golf Club, before seeking permission for the meeting to convene. This was duly accepted, proposed by Mr S Harper and seconded by Mr C Paterson.

Apologies for Absence

I Mowat, C Ross, G A Dunnett, E Sutherland, G Sutherland, I Ross, A Bain.

Approval of Minutes

Mr J Disbury noted a discrepancy in the minutes of the 55th AGM. On page 2 of the minutes it was stated that a price had been 'agreed' with the current land-owners in relation to the purchase of the course, while on page 4 it stated that an 'indicative price' had been agreed with the sellers. Mr G Coghill clarified that the minutes should be read that a price had been 'agreed' with the sellers.

Post meeting note – the minutes of the 55th AGM have been updated to reflect the fact that a price had been agreed with the sellers

Subject to making the required corrections noted by Mr J Disbury and Mr G Coghill, the Minutes of the 55th AGM were adopted on the proposal of Mr J Eunson and seconded by Mr F Groves.

Matters Arising

G Coghill provided an update on one issue raised at the 2016 AGM:

1. Highland Council had been approached to undertake repairs on the approach road to the course – this work has subsequently been completed.

Reports:

Captain's Report

This is now my second report as Captain and as last year, time has flown by and much has happened. The course purchase project has dominated my workload but there is much more to the club than this so I will leave this to the last item in my report.

Looking at specific areas:

Club Successes

2016 was a special year for the club. The Wilson Cup, played annually between the four Caithness clubs and two each from Orkney and Shetland, was held at Reay in July. Reay had won the Wilson Cup the previous year in Dale, Shetland and we were hoping to retain it on home soil.

Our team of Raymond Taylor, Gavin Sutherland, Gregor Munro and Lee Parnell won two of their three matches in what was the harder side of the draw and lost out by a putt on the 18th green to an on-form Thurso side who then went on to beat Kirkwall in the final. Well done guys, you did us proud.

Turning now to the Ladies. The Sandra Proudler Trophy is presented each year to the Club who returns the lowest nett score total achieved from competing in the Wick, Thurso and Reay Ladies Open, the total being calculated on the lowest 4 nett returns from each Open which are subsequently added together to give a final figure.

This year the Reay Ladies won the trophy for the first time in 16 years.

What makes this such a great achievement for us at Reay is that generally we are struggling to have enough competitors in all these Opens due to our limited numbers in the first instance, and then obviously, the expectation that everyone needs to return a good score.

Not only did the Ladies have great scores at all the Opens this year, but also had a higher entry for each one as well.

Reay have only had their name on this trophy once before ...so that shows how well they have done.

The last big team competition was the Ulbster Cup, played this year at Wick between all the Caithness Teams. Our teams did really well with the A Team of Gregor and Euan Munro, Tom Ross and Lee Parnell beating Wick in the final to take Ulbster Cup back to Reay. Well done gentlemen. We will defend the Ulbster Cup at Reay in September.

The Course

We had another year of mixed weather – a poor middle part of the year with much rain made the grass grow well but also the rough which was difficult to maintain. The course did not really play as a true links should but on a positive note the growth also helped the greens. We did enjoy a fantastic autumn of weather and so far, the winter has been very kind with only two lost weekends due to snow and frost.

A huge effort, especially by our green keeper and club volunteers, allowed the course to be presented in fabulous condition for our showcase event, the Wilson Cup, at the beginning of July. I am biased but I have never seen it look better and it attracted many favourable comments from all the players. It was great having Graeme Dunnnett at the helm during such an important year.

I must pay tribute to Jimmy Macadie for all he does for us – we continue to operate with ageing machinery which his skill keeps running smoothly and reliably.

Once we get the course purchase out of the way we will look into the procurement of a machine for grooming the rough and also a new machinery shed – more about that later.

Volunteer effort is really appreciated but also essential – you will see later in the Treasurer's report that we can't actually afford to run with an extra green keeper!

Membership

Like many clubs in the local area, our membership is slowly falling and ageing. The same is happening in all the 42 clubs that make up the Highland area. There is not a magic solution to this problem – all we can do is market our club at every opportunity, target businesses or individuals that move into the area and continue to present the course in the best condition possible commensurate with our resources. Every member can help with this – if even 50% were able to introduce a new member then it would turn things around.

This year we will change the format of many of the competitions to make them more attractive to golfers of all abilities and especially those with higher handicaps.

Marketing

There are really only three large income streams for our club – memberships, visitors and sponsorship. Fred does a fantastic job on the sponsorship front but it is inevitable that this area is seeing a reduction due to the economic squeeze in the business sector. He has sent out many letters to lots of companies with limited success. However, I must not forget to thank a number of businesses that continue to support us, year on year. This support is crucial.

We have decided to do much greater marketing this year to see if we can get the visitor income up – even a £5k increase would really help the club. Some examples are:

1. Continued distribution of discount leaflets in local hotels etc
2. We have joined North Coast 500 as business members which will allow us to promote our club on their website and offer prizes in draws etc
3. Joined Golf Highland. 31 of the 42 clubs have now joined allowing the organisation to move forward with a new website to allow inter club support and promotion of golf in the highlands.
4. Subscribed to Scottish Provincial Press golf promotion which runs between March 7th and April 8th. Our advert will appear in 15 newspapers, over 69000 copies reaching an audience of 187000 readers. These are the vouchers giving half price green fee.
5. Joined a web site promoting the seven James Braid courses in the Highlands from Boat of Garten north.
6. Purchasing a new sign for the entrance to the golf course.

Match and Handicap

Once again I have to thank the match and handicap committees – they are the unsung heroes of the club. The fact that all the competitions happen, paperwork is sorted, prizes organised and presented is testament to what they do.

On the gents front you will see some exciting changes being proposed for this year to try and make the competitions more attractive to members – things like stableford scores to allow players to recover from a bad hole or two and our two-day Open taking place over Friday and Saturday.

I would also like to thank them for the extra effort they put in at the time of the Wilson Cup.

Bar

The bar has managed to make a profit this year, helped mainly by three big events: the Wilson Cup weekend, the Safari and finally a very successful dinner dance in November.

But this has come at a cost for many people who have given their time to man the bar. Takings have plummeted in part due to the drink driving laws and we, like many other clubs, are suffering from ‘car park members’ – those who for whatever reason just change their shoes and leave.

Without a vibrant bar, we are just a golf course instead of being a golf club.

This coming year Fred has arranged a local lady to open up some lunchtimes and offer snacks/teas etc. for visitors and tourists. Hopefully this will bring much needed trade into the clubhouse and it would be helpful if the members could support this too when possible.

Ladies Section

I have already touched on their success in the Sandra Proudler competition but I also recognise the very successful Ladies Open sponsored by the Bighouse Partnership.

The ladies have also generously taken the promising juniors with senior handicaps under their wing and included them in their competitions.

Junior Section

Once again I acknowledge the tremendous support given to the club juniors by Alison, Evan and all the coaches. The quality and numbers of our juniors is testament to the coaching programmes and their regular appearance in the prize lists shows where the future winners are going to come from.

House

I realise I omitted to mention House last year so here is a double thank you to Kenny Farmer. House is an area where jobs such as fixing roofs on sheds, sorting fencing, building stiles, painting ranch fencing, clearing drains etc. just happens and it largely goes unnoticed – well it would be if it didn't get done! So, thank you Kenny for your ongoing support.

Treasurer

I will leave it to Jock to take you through the detail in his report. We have adopted a very cautious approach to date and with the uncertainty over the course purchase have put many projects on hold. However, once we get past this I hope to apply for funding for a new machinery shed which will also include indoor space for all Evan's coaching equipment and practice nets. A second hand rough cutting mower is also a priority if we can find and fund one.

Course Purchase Project

At last year's AGM the situation was that we had agreed a price with Reay Farms Limited and funding applications were being made to various bodies.

The first set back was when one of funders declined to fund this project but they have funded us previously and pledged their support for other applications, just not for land purchase. All the other funders, Sportscotland, Caithness and North Sutherland Fund, SSE Strathy North Joint Community Fund and the Council Ward Discretionary all came on board.

With a shortfall of £20k we went back to the sellers and they agreed to accept a lesser sum. So, in late August the project was handed over to the respective solicitors to conclude things.

Despite a number of meetings with our solicitor attended by myself and Jock Eunson, we had no option but to terminate our contract with him due to the lack of any meaningful progress and in early January we appointed Nigel Jones from Mackenzie and Cormack in Tain to act on our behalf. Since then things have really moved and I am hopeful that everything will be concluded very soon. I am indebted to the Sellers and Sportscotland for their patience during this hiatus. Bear in mind that we have not been charged any rent whilst all this has been going on.

I had hoped to have had this all concluded last October so that we could come into 2017 with a strong vision and lots happening but have effectively lost 5 months. However, I'm sure you will all agree, the result will be worth it in the long run.

Summary

We have had a successful year from so many angles.

Our club is in a sound financial position but we must all help with tasks such as work parties, finding and introducing new members, supporting competitions and making use of the bar to continue to keep it that way.

It was very heartening and gratifying to see how we pulled together as a club to make the Wilson Cup the success it was – the fact that we are now apparently seen as the model to be followed of how to organise a Wilson Cup is proof itself. Thanks to Graeme Dunnett for his input and invaluable organisation skills with this.

The Council Members have been absolutely fantastic – things just happen and this makes for smooth operation of the club – remember, we are all volunteers! Without their help, well, we would be in trouble!

Concluding the course purchase will, apart from the fact that the club now controls its destiny, allow us to take a proactive approach to the future instead of treading water.

The Captain's role has many demands – some that are challenging to say the least but, overall I am both proud of this club, and proud to be your Captain and I thank you all for your continued support.

Discussion

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

1. Course valuation – Mr J Disbury asked how much the club would be paying to purchase the course. Mr G Coghill stated that the course had been valued at £100k, and that the sellers had an original asking price of £180k. Following negotiations and discussions with funding bodies, the Club believed it could raise £150k, and set about gathering these monies. Following the withdrawal of one funding body, the club went back to the sellers stating they could raise £130k – this sum was agreed with the sellers for the purchase of the club. Mr G Coghill noted that the £130k would be made up of £100k from funding bodies, with £30k from club funds. Mr G Coghill stated that he would prefer for this information to remain out with the public domain until the purchase had been concluded.
2. Course purchase – Mr R Earnshaw noted that it had been a dream of the Club to purchase the course for many years, and that members should be pleased that this dream is close to becoming a reality.

Treasurer's Report

It is pleasing to report a surplus for the year of £12,778. This is the fifth year in a row we have returned a surplus.

Income

As Grant has alluded to, income is down again this year. We held membership subscriptions last year in the hope we would be able keep our numbers up but this didn't happen and ended the year £1,520 down. Sponsorship/donations are down £1,200, which is a reflection on the economics of the area. The lower numbers of members playing competitive golf is reflected in the surplus on competitions being down by £1,336.

On the positive side, green fee income is up by £1,664 (last year's figure was inflated by £600 due to late billing for Maclean Electrical's corporate day). Bar income is up £1,724 on last year (late billing of Maclean's boosted last year's figures by £1,346) and further helped by the volunteers doing bar/cleaning duties, resulting a nice surplus of £2,962.

You will see in the accounts that we have £62,253 more in the bank at the end of the year than last but £50,000 of this is grant funding which is set aside for course purchase.

Expenditure

We have kept a tight rein on expenditure throughout the year although we have had some unusual items:

The club's insurers required us to have the electrics certified, which cost us £620, and there is approximately £500 of remedial work still to be done.

We had an insurance claim for the broken window, which left us liable for the £350 excess.

As expected, there was costs associated with hosting the Wilson Cup, which came to £787, and with this year's competition in Kirkwall, we can expect costs to be slightly higher.

The increase of £1,656 for machinery upkeep is a reflection on the age of our course machinery – the tractor needed new tyres and an exhaust system, which cost £1,130. The reason for higher expenditure on course hardware was because we had to replace the cups and flag pins.

Lower prices and careful purchasing reduced the cost of fertilisers and chemicals. Fuel costs were also down, in part due to lower prices.

Reduced bar opening hours and careful management of the heating system has almost halved the electricity costs. The council decided that we should invest in some marketing and advertising which is hoped will be reflected in this year's green fee income. The only significant items bought this year were the trolleys (£331) and a new strimmer (£358).

We did not employ a second greenkeeper for the summer months just relying on volunteers to pick up this workload, which is estimated to have saved the club about £8,000.

VAT

We are no longer registered for VAT.

Accounting

The accountants had asked us last year to review our policy on dealing with unpresented cheques and unredeemed prize voucher which, in the past, was assigned in the accounts as "creditors". It was therefore agreed that unpresented cheques and voucher >1 year old will be written off each year. The outcome of this is that the accounts show our liability is reduced by £393 this year.

Looking Forward

Hopefully the course purchase will be concluded in the near future which brings the club into a new era. However, we are committed to spending approximately £32,000 of our reserves to fill the funding gap for the purchase.

Summary

It is obvious that the club's financial position is fragile and heavily dependent on sponsor and grant income to survive. Furthermore, without the significant input from volunteers carrying out bar/cleaning duties and course work, we would not be returning a surplus to invest in the club's development. It is therefore essential that every effort is made to boost membership and marketing ourselves to attract visitors.

Discussion

There were no issues raised by the AGM attendees following the delivery of the Treasurer's report.

Approvals

The approval of the accounts was proposed by A Farmer, seconded by S Harper A motion to use Victor Fraser to audit the club accounts again next year was proposed by J Eunson, seconded by F Groves.

Changes to the Constitution

Mr G Coghill stated that there were no proposed changes to the Constitution at present, but that there would be some alterations required once the Course Purchase Project has been completed.

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 2016. 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 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 third year.

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

Position	Name	Proposer	Seconder
Captain	Grant Coghill	Evan Sutherland	Kenny Farmer
Vice Captain	Morag Mackay	Grant Coghill	Lee Malcolm
Treasurer	Jock Eunson	Evan Sutherland	Kenny Farmer
Secretary	Colin Munro	Jock Eunson	Simon Harper
Greens Convenor	Simon Harper	Andy Bain	Alison Ross
Gents Match Secretary	Andy Bain	Jock Eunson	Lee Malcolm
Ladies Match Secretary	Carol Paterson	Alison Ross	Colin Munro
Bar Convenor	Morag Mackay*	Jock Eunson	Simon Harper
House Convenor	Kenny Farmer	Colin Munro	Simon Harper
Membership and Marketing Secretary	Fred Groves	Grant Coghill	Andy Bain
Junior Convenor	Alison Ross	Evan Sutherland	Kenny Farmer
Handicap Secretary	Lee Malcolm	Andy Bain	Colin Munro
Ordinary Member	Gavin Gunn	Colin Munro	Jock Eunson
Ordinary Member	Sandy Chisholm	Colin Munro	Jock Eunson

*To be confirmed following meeting

G Coghill thanked Mr GA Dunnett for his efforts as Greens Convenor over the past year, and welcomed the new members to the Council.

Subscriptions

PROPOSAL

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

ORDINARY MEMBERS	Male/Female	£370
	Senior (eligible for Nat Retirement Pension)	£295
	Beginner	£150
	Young Adult 1 (18-21 yrs)	£150
	Young Adult 2 (22-25 yrs)	£215
	Young Adult 3 (26-29 yrs)	£285
COUNTRY MEMBERS		£290
JUNIOR MEMBERS	Under 9	£10
	Under 12	£30
	Under 18 in Full Time Education	£45
	Under 18 not in Full Time Education	£85
ASSOCIATE MEMBERS		£1

Mr J Disbury asked if the annual fees for Seniors should be increased to be more in line with the fees paid by full ordinary members. Following discussions, the consensus was to make only a small increase in fees for Seniors.

Mr J Disbury then proposed that the annual fees for Seniors be set at a rate of £100 less than the fees paid by Ordinary Members. There were no seconders for this proposal.

Mr F Groves proposed that daily green fees for Visitors be increased from £25 to £30 – this proposal was unanimously accepted by the floor.

Acceptance of the subscription fees was proposed by M Mackay, seconded by F Groves.

Any Other Competent Business

'Twos sweep'

G Sutherland submitted a written proposal for a 'two's sweep' – this would involve players paying in to a kitty, and those who recorded a '2' or 'two 2s' on their scorecard during competition play being rewarded with sweep money. The proposal has been passed on to the Match Committee for consideration.

Rough cutting policy

E Sutherland submitted a letter to the Council outlining issues associated the areas of the course being subject to mass rough cutting. All agreed that the letter raised a number of valid issues, these will be looked at by the Greens Committee, with a view to producing a rough cutting strategy for each hole on the course.

Mr G Coghill also noted that the club were currently looking in to buying a new rough cutting mower, which should help alleviate some of the issues raised.

Policy Documents

Mr G Coghill noted that Mr GA Dunnett is assisting with the update of a number of the club Policy Documents. One change is the requirement to name a Health and Safety Officer for the club – Mr G Dunnett will fulfil this role, with Mr G Coghill acting as deputy.

There being no other business the meeting was closed at 20:50 hrs

Colin Munro
Secretary
Reay Golf Club

March 2017