



## **MINUTES OF THE 57<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF REAY GOLF CLUB HELD IN THE CLUBHOUSE ON WEDNESDAY 27<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2018**

### **Present:**

G Coghill, J Eunson, Miss M Mackay, C Munro, F Groves, J Disbury, S Chisholm, A Farmer, Lee Malcolm, Leslie Malcolm, C Ross, GA Dunnett, Mrs J Grieg, S Mackie, Mrs R Shallcross, E Sutherland (part meeting only).

### **Approval to Convene**

The Captain, Mr G Coghill, welcomed members to the 57<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of Reay Golf Club. Prior to the meeting commencing a presentation was made by Mr E Sutherland on behalf of the club to Mr C Ross in recognition of his contribution to the club as a Junior Coach during the past 10 years.

Mr G Coghill then sought permission for the meeting to convene. This was duly accepted, proposed by Mr J Eunson and seconded by Miss M Mackay.

### **Apologies for Absence**

I Mowat, C Paterson, Mrs C Paterson, Mrs A Ross, A Bain, JB Ross.

### **Approval of Minutes**

The Minutes of the 56<sup>th</sup> AGM were adopted on the proposal of Mr J Eunson and seconded by Mr F Groves.

### **Matters Arising**

G Coghill provided an update on two issues raised at the 2017 AGM:

1. A rough cutting mower was purchased in March 2018, it was noted that this has been an excellent addition to the existing greenkeeping equipment.
2. Following discussions about the amount of rough that had been cut-back on the course, a plan was put in place by the Greens Committee to review each hole and grow the rough back in certain areas to add more definition to the course. This plan was implemented over the course of the 2017 season.

### **Reports:**

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

This is my final report as your Captain. I stayed on for an extra year as we were in the middle of the course purchase and it made sense to see that project through to completion. More of that later. Looking at specific areas:

#### ***Club Successes***

The Wilson Cup, played annually between the four Caithness clubs and two each from Orkney and Shetland, was held at Orkney Golf Club. Although our men's teams played well they did not make the final with the hosts winning in Kirkwall. This year Wick will host the Wilson Cup.

The ladies once again competed for the Sandra Proudler Trophy which is presented to the Club who returns the lowest nett score total achieved from competing in the Wick, Thurso and Reay Ladies Opens.

Reay Ladies won the trophy for the first time in 16 years in 2016 and to their credit retained the trophy last summer. Well done ladies.

The last big team competition, the Ulbster Cup, was played at Reay between all the Caithness Teams. Our teams did really well with Reay A narrowly losing to Thurso A in the tougher half of the draw, while Reay B made it to the final where they were also beaten by Thurso A in a match which required extra holes to determine the winners. All our teams represented Reay well and were a credit to our club.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge strong individual performances by our Club Champions: Mollie O'Brien has done really well in competitions both here and south, even winning prizes in the Winter Alliance competitions, whilst Tom Ross represented us very well at the Champion of Champions event held at The Nairn Golf Club. Tom was just a few shots off the winning score. Well done both.

### ***The Course***

As seems the norm now, the weather was very mixed all year. Lots of rain gave us lush conditions which, whilst pleasing on the eye, are not typical of how a links should look. 2010 was the last year of prolonged dry weather which gave us hard greens and fairways.

At last year's AGM we received comments about the course being somewhat easy now with key holes such as the 17<sup>th</sup> having lost their teeth due to excessive cutting of the rough. Meetings were held after the AGM and plans on how to change and tighten up certain areas implemented. It is for you, the members, to decide if these have been successful or what you would like done next?

Having secured the course purchase we slackened the budget reins and purchased a Toro 4300D rough cutting machine. This has 5 cutting decks which follow the terrain and we have set the height of cut at 2 inches, the same as Royal Dornoch. I believe this machine has been a huge success and the groomed rough is much more forgiving whilst still providing a challenge if you are unlucky enough to land in it.

A new boom sprayer was purchased and 3 days of City and Guilds training completed by Graeme Dunnett and myself to get all the necessary spraying qualifications. We are in a much better position regarding knowledge of pesticides and how to apply them.

As always, I must pay tribute to our Green Keeper, Jimmy Macadie, for the sterling work he continues to put in on our behalf. Additionally, much work is done by volunteers who cut the fairways, tidy the bunkers, strim rough, treat or remove daisies from the greens and top dress greens and tees. Without this help the course would not be presented as well as it is. Thank you all for your continued support.

### ***Membership***

This is one of the main income streams for the club and we have been very active in maintaining and recruiting members over the year. Whilst we have been successful this year it remains a delicate balance. Every member can play a part in this – friends, work colleagues, new people to the area. Let us know, we can give them some complimentary rounds to try the course or some other incentive to join. Just think – 10 new members is almost £4000 of income!

We have now had the course rated for 9-hole competitions – holes 1 to 7 plus 17 and 18. This means we can run 9-hole competitions that will count for handicap and we hope this will be attractive to both those not really fit to do 18 holes or others who are just pushed for time but who would enjoy a quick game say on a Tuesday night.

### ***Marketing and Sponsorship***

We continued with all our usual marketing streams which have borne fruit although we need to make more of an effort to capture data on how or where our visitors are coming from.

We have just teamed up with North Coast 500 Golf Passport and now have links and a page on their website. It will be interesting to see if that further boosts our visitor numbers.

Continuing good work by Fred and his team brings in much needed money for the club.

## ***Match and Handicap***

The match and handicap committees continue to run things smoothly and try new ways of making the fixture card as attractive as possible. The change to the format for the gents Open was considered a success and will be repeated this year.

We have changed software at the start of the year from Club2000 for the recording of all results and handicaps to Handicap Master. This is a Cloud based system and runs both the men's and ladies' handicaps which means we can accommodate full Opens now. Whilst losing our link to HowDidiDo all our scores are published on a site called Master Scoreboard – it is password protected - the password is 'rydercup' and the details of how to access it will go out with your membership renewal paperwork.

## ***Bar***

This year we welcomed Mrs Betty Baird to the club to provide catering. It is a franchise type arrangement where we provide the facilities and she retains any money from the catering. In exchange Betty opens the bar with all monies going to the club and she also covers the bar any time she is doing the catering for example on a Saturday. Betty has been a great help and asset taking a lot of pressure off when we have to host events like the Alliance or the Caithness and Sutherland Seniors and indeed the occasional funeral where we work with Reay Church of Scotland.

Bar takings have plummeted due to the drink driving rules but by careful management and the continued use of volunteers we have made a modest profit whilst trying to provide the best possible service to our members.

## ***Ladies Section***

The ladies again ran a very successful Open, sponsored by the Bighouse Partnership and as mentioned earlier, retained the Sandra Proudler Trophy.

We recently recognised the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women getting the vote so it is fitting that in this, the 125<sup>th</sup> year of our club, we celebrate the appointment of our first Club Captain who is a lady. Along with Catherine Macleod at Wick and Lorna MacMillan at Lybster, Morag will be in good company.

## ***Junior Section***

The Juniors continue to flourish under the guidance of Alison, Evan and the other coaches. Willie Mackay, Scottish Golf Club Development Officer, has managed to get our Juniors international recognition via articles in magazines and Global Post on the internet. He remarked at our annual prize giving how pleasing it was to see juniors such as Mollie and Tom now representing our club as Champions.

Evan has also managed to obtain the nets and mats previously used in Thurso High School and this will save us quite a lot of money when we hopefully get our new indoor coaching area.

## ***House***

I would like to thank Kenny Farmer for all the work he does to keep the fabric and other areas maintained. A good example was the porch roof where continual water ingress had led to considerable damage. A team effort by quite a few members got this fixed and a big thankyou to Cammie Ross for the complete redecoration of the entrance porch.

A special mention for Morag who repainted and papered the lounge and arranged for the new curtains which has certainly freshened it up.

## ***Treasurer***

Jock will take you through the detail in his report but this year saw many large expenses – things such as porch roof repair, leaking hot water cylinder and chemical spraying training. However, he has continued to find savings whenever possible such that we have ended the year in a sound position. Well done Jock for your financial acumen in keeping us afloat.

## ***Course Purchase Project***

It is pleasing to report that this project is all but completed. The only item remaining is the electronic registration of our newly purchased course on the land register – this is in hand and should complete soon.

Many people helped bring this project home but two of the main ones were our solicitor, Nigel Jones from Mackenzie and Cormack in Tain who provided his services free of charge and Willie Mackay who gave up much of his time to help with the grant applications. As I write a joint planning application meeting for both Limekilns and Drum Holliston Wind Farms is in progress in Caithness Horizons. It should be noted that if Drum Holliston is successful, a clause has been written into the course purchase missives that once electricity starts being generated they will refund Reay Golf Club our contribution of £30k. Whilst we cannot count on that happening yet, if it comes to pass it will be a welcome cash injection that could be used in many ways.

## ***Summary***

2018 is our 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year. We enter it in a sound, but still fragile, financial position and owning the course which removes the threat of rent and the lack of a lease.

A new Captain and new blood on Council will now take the club forward and I know they can count on your support. I have had the pleasure of having a great team on Council and also fantastic support from others in helping on the course and with other tasks which has made my job much easier.

I am not going away quietly and will lead the project to build a new maintenance facility and indoor coaching area. I do not underestimate the magnitude of this task and it will require similar levels of funding applications as that needed for the course purchase. But Thurso, Orkney and Askernish have all managed to do this and hopefully so can we.

I have enjoyed being your Captain but I would like to end by thanking one person who has been at my side during my Captaincy and a great support all through the course purchase project. Colin Munro is standing down as Secretary and both Graeme Dunnett and I would like to thank him for his input to the running of our club as Match Secretary and then Secretary over the last six years.

## ***Discussion***

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

1. Proposed Indoor Practice Facility and Maintenance Shed – further details about the proposed facility were discussed following a question from the floor. The facility would be 100ft x 35ft, clad with 80mm wall insulating panels, and would house a toilet, a coaching area with 3 bays, and a skytrack machine. It is estimated that it would cost £100k, and it is understood that SportScotland would be able to contribute 40% of these costs, with other monies raised via local funds and club reserves. It was noted that a new shed for machinery was a priority as the current shed is no longer weatherproof.

## **Treasurer's Report**

It is pleasing to report a surplus for the year of £7,887. This is the sixth year in a row we have returned a surplus.

As the captain has said, 2017 has been a milestone year in the history of the club with us becoming the owners of the course. We came into 2017 with £153,549 in the bank, £50,000 of which was grants awarded to the club for the course purchase, and the golf club council had committed the club to paying the balance between the grants and the purchase price plus the conveyancing costs. In spring of 2017 we received a further £50,000 from Sport Scotland towards the course purchase which, with conveyancing cost coming to £997, it meant the club had to pay £30997 from our reserves for the course purchase.

Therefore, when the course purchase is taken out of last years bank account, £72,552 becomes the figure at end of 2016 for comparing with the end of 2107. The £69,227 in the bank at the end of 2017, is £3,325 down on 2016.

It is however encouraging to report that our income has increased by £4,457 but unfortunately expenditure has risen significantly and I will give a breakdown on these later.

The surplus, mentioned previously, doesn't fully reflect the financial state of the club because it includes the depreciated value of the mower and sprayer which was bought this year (75% of £18,700 = £14,025). Also, since we got the course valued in 2015, we have been expecting a bill for this work for approximately £2,000, and this was therefore included in our accounts as a liability. However, having prompted the valuers and no bill has been forthcoming, the accountants have agreed that this liability can be written off. Hence -£2,000 shown in the accounts.

### ***Income***

We increased the membership subscriptions and visitor green fee rates last year by modest amounts and also put a lot of effort into attracting people to join the club and visit the course with positive results - subscriptions are up by £1,152 and visitor green fees are up by £3,349. Thanks again to Fred Groves for his determined efforts, sponsorship income has increased by £850.

It is disappointing that nett income from competitions is down slightly as a result of lower input from the ladies section and higher expenditure on trophies – up from £308 to £669. Bar income is down by approximately £600 but this is balanced by a similar reduction in bar wages. We have many people to thank for doing voluntary bar and cleaning duties.

### ***Expenditure***

Expenditure is much higher than normal with the main items being the purchase of a second-hand Toro rough mower (£16,800) and a new sprayer (£1,896), both of which were much needed. Other unusual items of expenditure were: redecoration of the lounge ~£1,600, re-roofing the porch ~£1,700, signs at course entrance ~£1,000, timed door lock £811, replacing the hot water cylinder £594, a second set of hole cups £590, Wilson Cup in Orkney and hosting the Ulbster Cup ~£1,700.

Legislation changes dictated that we had to have personnel certified for carrying out chemical spraying and the course for two people cost £990, however, we got a £200 grant from Caithness Sport Council towards the cost.

Fuel and oil costs are up significantly partly because of price increases and having an extra machine to service but in the main due to doing extra cutting of rough. Fertiliser and chemicals costs are up significantly partly because the grass seed for over seeding cost £643 and, although we spent approximately the same as last year, we used up stock carried over from 2016.

On the positive side, machinery upkeep is down by £3,392, albeit we did have some major breakdowns in 2016. Some of this saving has come from sourcing spare parts directly from suppliers which is cheaper and there are no delivery charges. We have found that we could get cutting reels sharpened cheaper by a different company and they also collect and deliver them free of charge.

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 £9,000. Without this volunteer input with course work and general upkeep of our equipment and facilities the club's expenditure would have to be severely restricted.

### ***Accounting***

As agreed with our accountants, un-presented cheques and voucher >1 year old were written off. The outcome of this is that the accounts show our liability is reduced by £393 this year.

## **Looking Forward**

Owning the course takes the club into a new era because the uncertainties associated with a lease and possible rent payments have been removed. 2018's Wilson Cup fixture is to be held at Wick and we won't be hosting the Ulbster Cup, which will reduce expenditure by about £1,500.

The club is looking at building a new machinery shed and indoor training facility, which, although we will be looking for significant grant funding, the club will have to contribute towards the cost of this project.

## **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, facility upkeep 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 income and marketing ourselves to attract visitors.

## **Discussion**

The following issue was raised and discussed by the AGM attendees following the delivery of the Treasurer's report:

1. Net book value of the golf course reported in the Accounts – a query was raised regarding the figure of £30,500 recorded in the Annual Accounts against the value of the course. It was noted that this was the price paid for the course discounting monies received via grants and funding bodies. J Eunson stated that he had raised this as a query with the Accountants and was informed that this was an acceptable way of showing the value of the course in the accounts.

## **Approvals**

The approval of the accounts was proposed by S Chisholm, seconded by J Disbury. A motion to use Victor Fraser to audit the club accounts again next year was proposed by J Eunson, seconded by Miss M Mackay.

## **Changes to the Constitution**

Mr G Coghill stated that there were no proposed substantive changes to the Constitution at present.

## **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 2017. 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, Miss M Mackay. Mr Groves asked for any other nominations from the floor, there being no other nominations Miss M Mackay was elected to serve as Captain of Reay Golf Club.

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

<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Proposer</b>	<b>Second</b>
Captain	Morag Mackay	Grant Coghill	Jock Eunson
Vice Captain	No nominations		

Treasurer	Jock Eunson	Colin Munro	Kenny Farmer
Secretary	Jacqui Greig	Morag Mackay	Grant Coghill
Greens Convenor	Graeme Dunnett	Grant Coghill	Fred Groves
Gents Match Secretary	Andy Bain	Fred Groves	Grant Coghill
Ladies Match Secretary	Carol Paterson	Kenny Farmer	Grant Coghill
Bar Convenor	No nominations		
House Convenor	Kenny Farmer	Sandy Chisholm	Simon Harper
Membership and Marketing Secretary	Fred Groves	Grant Coghill	Morag Mackay
Junior Convenor	Alison Ross	Morag Mackay	Grant Coghill
Handicap Secretary	Lee Malcolm	Carol Paterson	Colin Munro
Ordinary Member	Grant Coghill	Jock Eunson	Colin Munro
Ordinary Member	Sandy Chisholm	Kenny Farmer	Simon Harper
Ordinary Member	Leslie Malcolm	Morag Mackay	Graeme Dunnett

## Subscriptions

Mr J Eunson noted that when setting subscription rates for the forthcoming season, the Council had considered the following issues:

1. Fuels costs have increased by 14%
2. Rates are up by 3%
3. An increase in wages in line with CPI would equate to additional costs of £600
4. Electricity charges are up by 11%
5. Fertiliser costs have increased slightly
6. New flags and cups have been ordered at a cost of £1100 approx
7. Scottish Golf affiliation fees will increase from £11.50 to £15.00 per member, this will cost the club £350 approx

It was noted that an increase in fees would be prudent to cover the additional costs noted above.

## PROPOSAL

The following subscription rates were put forward by the Council for the 2018 golf year:

<b>ORDINARY MEMBERS</b>	Male/Female	<b>£380</b>
	Senior (eligible for Nat Retirement Pension)	<b>£300</b>
	Beginner	<b>£150</b>
	Young Adult 1 (18-21 yrs)	<b>£155</b>
	Young Adult 2 (22-25 yrs)	<b>£220</b>
	Young Adult 3 (26-29 yrs)	<b>£290</b>
<b>COUNTRY MEMBERS</b>		<b>£300</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>

During discussions it was noted that the proposed fees are broadly comparable with the other local clubs.

Acceptance of the subscription fees was proposed by G Dunnett, seconded by G Coghill.

## **Any Other Competent Business**

### ***Rough cutting policy***

Following the decision at the 2017 AGM to allow some of the rough to grow back in to narrow some of the fairways, attendees were asked for their views on this policy.

It was noted that there are some areas of the course (notably the right-hand side of the 11<sup>th</sup> fairway) where it was felt that the rough is overly penal. Others expressed the view that the course compares favourably to others in the Highlands in terms of its fairness.

It was agreed that a working group of around 6 members would be formed to look at the course to form a consensus on how each of the holes should be shaped.

### ***Windfarm developments***

It was noted that there was an ongoing Public Consultation in Thurso this week on the proposed Wind Farm developments at Drum Holistan and Limekilns. It was asked how many visitors played Reay during the past year, as this question had been asked during the Consultation. In response it was noted that there had been roughly 700 visitors to the course during this period and as such the course represents a significant attraction to tourists.

It was also noted that as part of the missives associated with the course purchase, the Club would be reimbursed approximately £30k if and when the Drum Holistan windfarm starts to generate electricity.

It was also stated that Reay Golf Club has a neutral stance on the proposed windfarm developments.

### ***Scottish Golf Fees***

It was highlighted from the floor that Scottish Golf intend to increase their annual affiliation fees to £25 per member in 2019. It was noted that such an increase could put many clubs out of business. It was also stated that payment of affiliation fees is necessary to allow players to hold a club handicap. It was agreed that the club would have to keep an eye on this and would react accordingly depending on future developments, but the consensus was that such a steep increase would not be a welcome development.

### ***Handicapping System***

It was noted from the floor that CONGU handicaps will be superseded by a new unified world handicapping system from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019. It is thought that the new handicapping system will rely on courses being given a 'Slope Rating' which will be calculated from existing information. Again, it was agreed that the club would keep a watching brief on future developments in this area.

*(Post meeting note – it is understood that any proposed implementation of the new handicapping system will not occur until the start of the 2020 season at the earliest).*

The departing Captain, Grant Coghill was thanked by all those present over the past three years, particularly for his efforts in bring the course purchase project to a successful conclusion.

There being no other business the meeting was closed at 20:40 hrs

Colin Munro  
Secretary  
Reay Golf Club

02 March 2017