



MINUTES OF THE 59th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF REAY GOLF CLUB HELD IN THE CLUBHOUSE ON MONDAY 9TH MARCH 2020

Present:

P Barker, D Mowat, A Bain, J Eunson, F Groves, E Sutherland, G Gunn, L Malcolm Jr, S Chisholm, S Harper, I Ritchie, L Kelly, J Disbury, I Ross, A Ross, C Ross, P McDonald, C Ross, I Farquhar, M Halladale, B Earnshaw, L Malcolm Sn, C Munro, C Cameron and R Shallcross

Approval to Convene

The Captain, Mr E Sutherland, welcomed members to the 59th Annual General Meeting of Reay Golf Club.

Mr E Sutherland then sought permission for the meeting to convene. This was duly accepted, proposed by Mr S Harper and seconded by Mr D Mowat

Apologies for Absence

Mr and Mrs T Hawes, C Paterson, G Dunnett, F Organ, A Anderson, T Ross, D Kelly and G Freyet.

Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of the 58th AGM were adopted on the proposal of Mr J Eunson and seconded by Mr S Chisholm

Matters Arising

There were no issues from the previous minutes to discuss.

No new matters were raised.

Reports:

Captain's Report

This won't be your normal Captain's report.

I would wish to start by thanking all the Council and members who have represented the club in the past year for their commitment to the club.

Although proud to have been your Captain I am relieved to be standing down after a somewhat traumatic year.

Firstly, I would like to thank all the playing members for so much understanding in giving up the course for most of the year that was a commitment above and beyond what many clubs could expect. Also, to Jimmy and all the volunteers who by day or after work gave freely of their time to make the greens transformation possible.

A special thanks to Mojo and Sandy for the extra commitment in getting the clubhouse back into shape after the window replacement and Kenny for agreeing to stay as Greens Convenor to give some continuity to the greens policy started last year.

We were in my opinion one year away from shutting the doors and my message to the club is we must do everything we can to drastically reduce the chances of a reoccurrence. More investment in the course has to be our priority.

I had promised the Council in my one-year tenure I would try my best head up the recovery of the greens but more importantly for me was to ensure we adopted a policy in future years that would continue that progress going forward. For as much as the greens have improved there is still a great deal of work to do and the key is nutrition aeration and improved root penetration. In cutting the greens grass continually it needs to be healthy and well fed. If the long drought spell was the cause of our problems then why did the fairways and aprons not succumb to the same fate in my opinion there must have been underlying stresses already placed on the greens.

From the beginning I was an advocate of the clubs Document 6 and I will ask that you instruct the club we adhere to that doctrine as the basis for our course maintenance and policy going forward. Attached to that is a plan that I request we follow in the short term.

Jimmy retires at the start of next year and on behalf of the club I thank him for his hard work over the years he will be hard to replace but we need to move forward. It cannot be right that we pull someone from the membership and expect them to control the course maintenance policy. I ask you consider it a worthwhile investment to employ a trained Greenkeeper who can dictate that policy for us.

Although I leave the Council, I have committed to giving the new Captain and Greens Convenor any support they care to request. On or off the Council I will always do what I can for the club and I ask you get behind the Captain and the rest of the Council for these younger members are the future of a stable and consistent operating team.

I wish you all a great season and wishing the new council the best of luck going forward.

The Course

Mr E Sutherland gave an overview within the chairman's report on the course, other issues discussed were:

Things to look at next year on how to protect the greens against future heat waves, Mr E Sutherland explained that we will need to look at water irrigation system that will cope in the event of another dry season.

Discussions on a forward plan for a new green keeper next year, realistically we don't know how much this is going to cost the club as we have not had a qualified green keeper in the past. It was agreed to create a Sub Committee with the greens convener to discuss this at a later date.

Mr J MacAdie has agreed to remain on board with carrying out any maintenance on the equipment as required, this was well received by everyone

Treasurer

Although it is not surprising from the action plan we put in place at last year's AGM and early in the season to bring the course condition back to what we are accustomed to, it is disappointing to report a deficit for the year of £7,621. This is the first year we have had a deficit since 2012. The £60,684 in the bank, + £1,225 cash in hand, at the end of 2019 is £14,912 down on the same point last year. It is also disappointing to report that our income has decreased by £7,190 and our expenditure has increased by £11,641 - I will give a breakdown on these later.

The deficit mentioned previously doesn't fully reflect the financial state of the club because it includes the depreciated value of the club's machinery and equipment. This year we spent £26,205 on capital equipment (3-year-old warranted greens mower, new irrigation bowser and a new irrigation pump), which was offset by a £10,000 grant from the Bailey Wind Farm Fund. We also spent £16,412 on replacing all the clubhouse windows and external doors, and subsequent redecorating, which was offset by a £10,000 grant from the Caithness and North Sutherland Community Fund. We submitted an application to the Strathy North Community Fund for support with the clubhouse refurbishment but we were unsuccessful.

Income:

It was agreed at last year's AGM that the membership subscription should be increased by a modest amount in the hope it would increase the club's income. However, whether it was the poor condition of the greens in late 2018 and early 2019, and/or the subscription increase, membership numbers dropped

significantly resulting in income falling by £4,103. Similarly, because of the poor condition of the course in the early months of the season it was decided to reduce the visitor green fee rate until the course recovered which has resulted in a drop in income of £2,727. However, the total number of visitors remained fairly stable. Although the entry fee for gents' competitions was increased from £2 to £3, the income has dropped by £443. This could be attributed to course condition in the early season and reduction in membership. Thanks again to Fred Groves for his determined efforts, sponsorship income has again increased by £320. Although bar turn over has increased the nett income from the bar is down £187 because of increased wages, nevertheless it still returned a surplus of £909. The 100 Club income has been dropping over recent years for various reasons; therefore, it is proposed we put out invites for new members with this year's subscription renewals.

Expenditure:

As predicted at last year's AGM, there was a significant shortfall in grant support for machinery purchases and windows/door replacements and this came to approximately £22,000, which is the main reason for this year's deficit.

Going back to 2016 when we began the course purchase project, we engaged valuers to give us a valuation of the course at an estimated cost of £2,000. However, having prompted them for a bill for this work, nothing was forthcoming and, with agreement from our accountants, this debit was written off. In February 2019 we got a bill for £1,800 for this work, which has been paid, and is now accounted for under "fixed assets, additions" on page 5.

Additional fertilisers, chemicals and grass seed were required to recover the greens which resulted in increased cost of £4,806. The £489 increase in fuel cost is mainly due extra machinery work on the greens and running the irrigation pumps. The reduction in course hardware cost is associated with not requiring new flag pins and cups. All the other course expenditure is in line with the norm.

Overhead expenditure is up mainly due to the club's input to the window/door replacement. On the positive side, having queried what we were paying for our water services, we got a review carried out by Scottish Water and they confirmed that we were being over charged and were given a refund going back to November 2015 amounting to approximately £1,100.

Scottish Golf Ltd fees were increased last year which cost us £337 extra. The Wilson Cup expenses were much lower than expected due to our players doing a remarkable job in keeping the costs down.

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, unpresented cheques and vouchers >1 year old are written off. There were no cheques in this category this year.

Looking Forward:

Currently our main income is from membership subscriptions but as we have seen, in spite of our best efforts, this is dropping. The visitor income last year dropped for good reason, but with current condition of the course, the £30 one round green fee is exceptionally low compared with other courses and needs to be increased. Hopefully increasing the green fee will make the club less dependent on subscription income, which is the situation with the courses in East Sutherland and further south.

Having 'dipped into' our reserves last year and invested in machinery and equipment it is hoped we have put the club in a much better position to protect the course from long spells of dry weather like we had in 2018. Also, the support we have had from Royal Dornoch Golf Club has enabled us to put together what is thought to be a robust maintenance plan for the course albeit more expensive than in the past and it is hoped the condition of the course will attract more visitors and members.

Our ageing course machinery and the machinery sheds need significant investment and the new council needs to look at what we can afford, along with grant support, to address this issue.

Replacing the clubhouse windows, exterior doors and redecoration has given the place a real facelift but there are areas of the building exterior that need investment therefore the council also need to look at this to see what is affordable.

2020's Wilson Cup fixture is to be held in Caithness therefore the cost to the club should be minimal. Probably the biggest challenge for the club in 2020 is getting a replacement for James MacAdie, our long serving greenkeeper and maintenance man, who is retiring in early 2021.

Summary:

It is obvious that the club's financial position is fragile and heavily dependent on sponsorship and grant income to survive. In 2019 we took a conscious decision to spend a significant sum of our reserves but this level of over spending isn't sustainable in the longer term. Furthermore, without the significant input from volunteers carrying out bar duties, facility upkeep and course work, we would be struggling 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.

Approvals

The approval of the accounts was proposed by F groves, seconded by S Chisholm. A motion to use Victor Fraser to audit the club accounts again next year was proposed by J Eunson, seconded by I Ross.

Changes to the Constitution

Mr E Sutherland explained that there are 2 change proposals to the constitution,

First one being paragraph 9 where to remove any references to the past owners Sandside Estate. Proposed by Mr E Sutherland and approved via the council, no objections were received from the floor.

The Second was for Mr J Eunson as treasurer where by all cheques made against the club funds to require two signatures, as at present they only require one for the treasurer. This was proposed by Mr J Eunson and seconded by Ian Farquhar.

Changes to the other Documentation.

There are two changes requested;

First one being Document 3 Rules and Bylaws – the change being that a president can do more than one term as at present it is not totally clear with what is written, Paragraph 5 of the rules and bylaws states that a president will not serve a term longer than five years. This was proposed by Mr A Bain and seconded by Mr Cammie Ross.

Second change is to document 6 – The purpose of the alteration was to take in to account of the change of ownership of the course to ourselves and the obligation we therefore have to the areas of SSSI that still remain in our charge.

Sites of special Scientific Interest – remove paragraph 1 and 2 as the extent of the areas mentioned have altered since the purchase of the course and inset a paragraph identifying the areas still in our control and any future areas we may purchase or inherit.

There was some discussion on where changes to course ownership is and Mr E Sutherland gave an account which some areas that now belong to Dounreay this was accepted by the floor.

Archaeology – Remove reference to previous ownership, this was accepted.

Greenkeeping Advice – Alter paragraph 1 and 3 to include taking advice from a professional greenkeeper or ergonomist. This was proposed by Mr J Eunson and Second by Mr P Barker.

Mr E Sutherland then went on to discuss the proposed appendix -

Attach Appendix one of the course proposals for going forward in the next few years to the back of document 6. This was detailed on the noticed board prior to the AGM for all to see. It was noted that this is not set in stone just a guidance, can be removed at a later date.

There was a question from the floor as to whether the new plan could be supported financially, Mr J Eunson answered the question with an explanation of proposed expenditure required for the near future, and that if required we can dip into our reserves to support the plan, but believes it will be manageable. A proposer for the attachment was Mr S Harper and seconded by Mr D Mowat.

Election of Office Bearers and Council Members

The captain, Mr E Sutherland, requested Mr Fred Groves, President of the club take the chair. Mr F Groves thanked Mr E Sutherland for stepping into the role last year which'd proved to be a difficult year. He also wanted to show everyone's appreciation for all the hard work Mr E Sutherland did along with the council and volunteers to get the course back on track, also emphasising the spirit of the club going forward.

Mr Groves reiterated the thank you to volunteers who helped with work associated with taking the Club forward.

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

Position	Name	Proposer	Secunder
Captain	Andy Bain	Evan Sutherland	Fred Groves
Vice-Captain	Colin Paterson	Evan Sutherland	Sandy Chisholm
Treasurer	Jock Eunson	Kenny Farmer	Sandy Chisholm
Secretary	Jacqui Greig	Patricia McDonald	Jock Eunson
Greens Convenor	Kenny Farmer	Evan Sutherland	Patricia McDonald
Gents Match Secretary	Andy Bain	Evan Sutherland	Patricia McDonald
Ladies Representative	TBC		
Bar Convenor	TBC		
House Convenor	Sandy Chisholm	Evan Sutherland	Fred Groves
Membership Secretary	Fred Groves	Sandy Chisholm	Jock Eunson
Junior Convenor	David Kelly	Cammie Ross	Evan Sutherland
Handicap Secretary	Ian Farquhar	Jock Eunson	Evan Sutherland
Marketing Secretary	Colin Munro	Evan Sutherland	Fred Groves
Ordinary Member	Lesley Malcolm	Sandy Chisholm	Kenny Farmer
Ordinary Member	Tom Ross	Jock Eunson	Lesley Malcolm
Ordinary Member	Pete Barker	Fred Groves	Evan Sutherland
Ordinary Member	Simon Harper	Evan Sutherland	Jock Eunson
Ordinary Member	Mojo Mowat	Kenny Farmer	Evan Sutherland
Ordinary Member	Cammie Ross	Evan Sutherland	Simon Harper

Jock Eunson proposed for Fred Groves to continue as President for the club, seconded by Mrs J Greig.

Subscriptions

It was proposed by the Council that subscriptions to remain the same due to the difficult year that members had last year with the greens. This was proposed by Mojo Mowat and Secunder by Sandy Chisholm.

The following subscription rates were put forward by the Council for the 2020 golf year:

ORDINARY MEMBERS	Male/Female	£390
	Senior (eligible for Nat Retirement Pension)	£310
	Beginner	£160
	Young Adult 1 (18-21 yrs)	£160
	Young Adult 2 (22-25 yrs)	£230
	Young Adult 3 (26-29 yrs)	£290

COUNTRY MEMBERS		£310
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

The Council considered increasing the green fees to £40. Proposed by Mr M Halliday and second by Mr B Earnshaw.

Memberships – Questions from the floor

Q. What are other clubs charging?

A. There is not a lot of difference between the different clubs, no one is charging £400, Thurso is also considering no changes to their fees this year.

Q. could we consider reducing the membership if it would help to encourage members from other clubs?

A. It was explained that if a winter membership is obtained, this then gets reduced from a membership fee if take out for the year.

It was also suggested that we could offer 20% off for new members only for ordinary member, it would only be for one year only. The opinion was that it was something to consider. Proposed by Mr M Halliday and Second by Mr I Ross.

Q. Could we consider with new beginners' memberships to phase their price over three years before they have to pay full price, similar to what Thurso do?

A. This was proposed by Mr C Ross and second by Mr Lee Malcolm.

Any Other Competent Business

1. Mrs C Cameron asked about winter tees, as this year the ladies are placed in difficult positions, and have been off putting for the ladies to play, belief this has been off putting in getting winter members to play. Mr A Bain explained that this year we have done more winter tees than we are ever likely to do again in one go, next year probably only plan to do half the tees at a time.
2. Mrs R Shallcross asked about the facilities we have to offer visitors, could we offer tea/coffee using an honesty box for payment. A reply that was given is that we are trying to improve where we can, we have Mrs B Braid who open the kitchen when visitors are known to be coming. We are also going to install the use of a cashless system.
3. Mr J Eunson suggested that the rough should be cut back to 2 inches, should be defined more, should be thinned out a little so that if you land in the area, you're not totally penalised, you can find your ball and hit out of the area. Mr E Sutherland explained that Document 6 explains the course architecture and defines what should be done. Discussion was on thinning out the rough, speaking with Mr G Dunnett who recommended a chemical which could be used for this purpose. Discussion ended by leaving this to the council to have a look at it and the way it should happen in accordance to Document 6, place suggestions on the board for 2 weeks for members to see and then the council can act upon their reaction.
4. Mr J Disbury asked about when do the Council intend to look for a new greenkeeper so that there is a hand over period and if and when we get one then they would recommend what is required for the course. Mr A Bain replied by saying that Mr J Macadie is due to retire in January, so hopefully we will be looking to interview around November, December time.
5. Mr S Chisholm asked about the locker in the changerooms, can we try and identify who has them?

6. Mr G Gunn asked about prize money for competitions, to try and encourage more people to enter in, could this be raised? Mr A Bain replied that the problem being if we dictate what we could offer, we could be running at a loss. Mr A Bain said his way forward would be to have 3 or 4 big opens, but to try and work along with the others clubs so that all the clubs are working together and not having different open on.
7. Mr G Gunn also asked about the Safari competition? Mr A Bain replied that it is being changed this year, only 18 holes, shot gun start, new format and also going to invite females to join in.
8. Mr J Disbury asked about the Golf Club Web site, said it needs updating? It was explained that Mr I Farquhar had inherited the web site and is trying to do his best to update the web page but admitted it's not a user-friendly page.

Mr E Sutherland thanked everyone for their attendance and if there was no other business closed the meeting at 21.30 hrs.

Jacqui Greig
Secretary
Reay Golf Club

30 March 2020