

16 January 2025

Agenda Item No. 6

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## Fife Golf Trust Performance Report

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**Report by:** Iain Evans, FGT Business Manager

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**Wards Affected:** All.

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### Purpose

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To present the annual performance report for Fife Golf Trust for 2023/24

### Recommendation(s)

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Members are asked to:

- (1) Note the contents of the report and the progress made by FGT in 2023/24 and;
- (2) Note the effective delivery of Fife Council priorities through FGT activity.

### Resource Implications

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Increased demand on Fife's outdoor spaces requires sustained investment if the benefits of high-quality, accessible, affordable golf courses are to be realised and Fife is to continue to provide golf courses maintained to highest standards of environmental stewardship to the benefit of local communities and visitors alike.

### Legal & Risk Implications

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There are risk implications pertaining to the provision of service, and delivery of targets in alignment with the Council's obligation to improve local services and local outcomes whilst demonstrating best value.

### Impact Assessment

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An EqIA is not required because the report does not propose a change or revision to existing policies and practices.

### Consultation

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None required.

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## 1.0 Background

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- 1.1 Fife Golf Trust (FGT) has been asked to submit high level covering reports to accompany our published annual report. Please refer to the [LINK TO FULL REPORT](#) for further detail including a summary of audited financial statements for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

## 2.0 Report Summary

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### 2.1 FGT Structure

2.1.1 FGT (SC042206) is a registered charity established on 30 March 2011 to manage and operate Fife Council's seven Golf Courses. The seven courses are:

- Auchterderran Golf Course, Cardenden
- Dora Golf Course, Cowdenbeath
- Dunnikier Park Golf Course, Kirkcaldy
- Glenrothes Golf Course, Glenrothes
- Kinghorn Golf Course, Kinghorn
- Lochore Meadows Golf Course, Lochore
- Scoonie Golf Course, Leven

Fife Golf Trust FGT took over the operation of the courses on 1st April 2011.

FGT manage and operate the golf courses on behalf of Fife Council, who are their sole shareholder. We are one of the biggest public golf facilities in Scotland with more than 150,000 rounds played every year and we have approximately 3000 season ticket holders, the vast majority of which hold our 7 course 'Rover' ticket which enables unlimited play over all the courses.

As a registered charity, we have a strong focus on our stated charitable objectives to provide as many accessible and affordable opportunities for as many members of the general public in Fife as possible to participate in the sport of golf. We aim to have a positive impact on the lives of people in the communities that we serve and do this by presenting quality golf courses that are maintained with a strong focus on environmental stewardship.

#### **Fife Golf Trust's Stated Charitable Objectives:**

1. To advance the public participation in the sport of golf in Fife.
2. To provide and assist in the provision of recreational activities within Fife, with such facilities / activities being made available to the public with the objective of improving their quality of life.
3. To provide as many accessible and affordable opportunities for as many members of the general public in Fife as possible to participate in the sport of golf
4. To provide, establish, operate and /or support other similar schemes and projects which further this charitable purpose

FGT tests all key plans and actions against these objectives, so that there is not divergence away from them, and so our activity is continuously aligned to helping the Trust achieve its charitable aims.

#### 2.1.2 *Environmental Stewardship*

In 2023, the Trust applied for and was successfully awarded £191,294.67 grant funding from Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, managed by NatureScot, for 'Seven Golf Courses for Nature'. This ambitious, landscape-scale project is taking place between August 2023 and March 2025.

It will further the conservation of biodiversity by enhancing, creating and connecting habitat. The Trust is particularly driven to support threatened pollinators, bats and amphibians.

The aspiration is to maximise biodiversity potential on the courses to create rich, multi-functional spaces for wildlife and people.

The Golf Environmental Organisation (GEO) accreditation is a recognition of environmental stewardship, sustainability, ecology, climate action and community values within the golf industry.

Fife Golf Trust achieved GEO certification in 2017 and in 2022 achieved recertification which takes us through to 2025. FGT were the first 7 course municipal site in the world to achieve GEO certification which was a recognition of the work carried out to promote and protect our environment with strong sustainable practices. FGT continues to implement the supporting action plan for this second award.

### 2.1.3 *Golf Development*

FGT's strategy in terms of golf development is to work with partners such as golf clubs and other 3<sup>rd</sup> parties to deliver golf development programs to their communities. FGT, as part of partnership discussions, seeks to support clubs to deliver participation initiatives and will support with budget and course access and set up. This is in particular to target underrepresented groups including: children, women, older people and those economically disenfranchised.

### 2.1.4 *Operations*

FGT continues to operate with just enough staff due to budgetary and FC organisational structure oversight constraints. Staff being unexpectedly unavailable for work can occasionally leave us exposed to a lack of personnel capacity in key roles such as starters and greens staff.

FGT continues to successfully implement a new, innovative and market leading integrated membership CRM, ePOS and tee booking system. This has enabled us to: have access to far superior management information than previously, offer spread payments linked to a customer's membership, increase operational agility significantly and for us to solve customer issues quickly and efficiently.

### 2.1.5 *Affordability and Inclusion*

Closely linked to our golf development activity, FGT places a strong importance on affordability and access for all. We passionately believe that golf in Fife should be an affordable game for all. Accordingly, we have raised prices significantly less than inflation over the past 2 years, making up the difference with increased efficiencies and improved trading. We have also implemented a standing order spread payment option to increase affordability. We continue to maintain comparatively generous concession prices to: those over the age of 62, younger people, children, those on income support or those with disabilities.

### 2.1.6 *Financial Performance*

Total Golfer income from Season Ticket Sales and "Pay as you Play" increased by 13% from £988k to £1,122k which in turn was 8% more than the budgeted figure for the year. Generated income (Golf and Secondary) increased by 15% to £1,195,450. The results for the year before accounting for pension cost adjustments of £8k show an operating surplus of £174k for the year. This outcome continues to build on the significant improvement in performance in 2022-2023 and sets a good platform for FGT to achieve its goals for the future.

## 2.2 **Summary of select outputs**

- Secured £191k grant funding from Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, managed by NatureScot.
- Continue to implement 2022-2025 action plan of Golf Environmental Organisation (GEO) accreditation.
- Continued and increased golf development activity targeting underrepresented groups.
- Continued defence of concession price categories.

- Improved member experience via implementation of new integrated membership CRM and online booking system enabling members to book tee times and pay fees either in full or on a standing order payment plan via the same user friendly app.
- Improved management information and internal operational efficiency via our new integrated membership CRM and ePOS system.
- Strong financial performance building on improved performance of previous years with increased season ticket sales and pay and play revenue.
- Various improved governance policies, procedures and outcomes including increasing female representation on our board to 25%.
- Strengthened partnership working namely with: partner clubs adjacent to our courses, Fife Council, Professional Golf contractors and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations such as Dunnikier Park Community Golf.
- Increased golf course utilisation across the board.

## 2.3 Full report

A link to the full report produced by Fife Golf Trust can be found here: [LINK TO FULL REPORT](#)

## 3.0 Conclusions

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- 3.1 Numerous credible reports in recent years point to playing golf being very good for people's mental and physical wellbeing. It is also a game that can be played right across the age spectrum. Fife is the 'home of golf', and it is important that members of the public living here have access to affordable, inclusive, and accessible golfing opportunities on courses that are maintained to the highest standards of environmental stewardship.
- 3.2 This cover note, in conjunction with the published annual report and audited accounts provides information that demonstrates a commitment to best value through the transparent reporting of activity undertaken by FGT on behalf of Fife Council.
- 3.3 FGT on the whole is performing well with a positive financial performance compared to previous years. This can be put down to strong demand for golf in Scotland and the business and governance improvements of the Trust, detailed in the full report. Trading conditions are still challenging, with competition from other providers, the cost of living crisis putting pressure on non-critical personal expenditure and the surging cost of course maintenance consumables and machinery. FGT will continue to focus on delivering its charitable objectives and implementation of its annually updated business plan.

## List of Appendices

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1. Fife Golf Trust Annual Report for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024

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