

Woodbrook Golf Club

Plan 2013–2018



Introduction

Woodbrook is an excellent facility that provides an enormous amount of entertainment and enjoyment for the members. It is a very unique course with a great tradition and a very good club environment.

We have continuously enhanced our facilities such as the practice areas, patio and clubhouse. In order to continue to meet the expectations of our members in the future we have consulted with members of the Management Council, General Manager, Catering Manager, Club Professional and the Course Superintendent.

Through this process we have identified the major issues that must be managed successfully over the next five years. These are addressed in the following plan.

Background

In recent years we have experienced a severe economic recession and a consequent period of austerity. This has had a major impact on golf clubs throughout the country and has also presented a major challenge to the management of our club. Despite this, a number of improvements were implemented to the course and the clubhouse. These improvements and the successful management of the club were achieved through a planned and prudent monetary approach that has left us in a relatively healthy financial position.

In terms of the next five years there are a number of ongoing

challenges facing the club which must be managed successfully and in the best interests of the club. Some of these challenges were identified in the previous plan and progress has been made on a number of them. However, these, and others must continue to be managed effectively into the future.

Objectives of Plan

- To have an excellent golf course which is playable all year round and to protect its boundaries from deterioration.
- To have an excellent clubhouse that meets the requirements of the members.
- To manage our financial commitments without recourse to fee increases.

Challenges facing our Club

1. Erosion
2. Building Development
3. Irrigation
4. Clubhouse
5. Finance
6. Golf development

These issues are treated separately below

1. Erosion

Target

To develop a satisfactory solution to the ongoing impact of erosion.

Background

We have approximately 130 acres of land in Woodbrook which is a reasonably good size in terms of what is needed for a golf course. However, as everybody can see this land is

continuously being impacted upon by the effects of erosion along the coast.

Based on the average rate (0.34m per annum for the entire course and 0.51m per annum for the south end) of erosion it will take a considerable length of time before it will cause major problems. Preventative measures such as rock revetments are very expensive. This would first require a process of obtaining planning permissions, licenses and environmental impact studies before any work could begin. The cost of this process alone, without any guarantee of getting approval, could be in excess of €100,000.

In the short term this appears to be prohibitively expensive and we must therefore look at other possible solutions. This may involve refiguring the existing hole layout in parts of the course. In particular, the fourteenth hole seems to be suffering most from erosion and consideration may have to be given to relocating the existing green or to rerouting the fairway further inland. This may impact on existing trees or may encroach on part of the practice area.

Another, longer term, solution may be available if agreement is reached on the land swap between Castlethorn Development, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown County Council and us.

Year 1. Establish the rate of erosion and the likely impact on the fourteenth hole. Develop proposals for dealing with the impact of erosion over the next five years.

2. Building Development (Castlethorn)

Target

To negotiate and conclude the best arrangement to meet the needs of the club.

Background

Although the original agreement has not materialised there is still the possibility that a new arrangement may be found that will suit our needs. In September 2013 Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown County Council agreed a land swap with Castlethorn. This would give us extra acreage near the eight and ninth holes.

This opens up the opportunity to negotiate a new arrangement that has the potential to alleviate the long term problems of erosion and also provide some financial benefits for the club. Contact has been made between the interested parties and initial discussions are set to take place shortly

Year 1. Enter into negotiations with Castlethorn and our landlord with a view to developing a set of proposals that can be put to our members for consideration by the year end.

3. Irrigation

Target

To have an efficient, reliable and cost effective irrigation system.

Background

Currently we have a number of separate irrigation systems. One system was installed in 1990 and another in 1996/7. Experts say that the average life of any irrigation system is about 20 years. Many of the pipes and sprinkler heads are old and brittle and require a lot of costly maintenance.

Each year we spend approximately €40,000 on

maintenance. Also, parts of the electrical system are faulty and will not allow the automation and synchronisation of the system which means that many parts of it have to be operated manually.

The new pump house facility is capable of supporting a single computer based irrigation system. At present we are not getting the benefits of this.

The plan is to install a new comprehensive single irrigation system that will allow the course to be kept in optimum condition throughout the year. This will require an investment of approximately €60,000 per annum over the next five years.

Year 1. Agree overall five year budget. Develop installation plan linked to timelines and costs.

4. Clubhouse

Target

To provide comfortable and pleasant facilities for our members that can be operated cost effectively.

Background

Over recent years there has been a number of improvements to the clubhouse including restructuring of the bar and other areas to allow for various function and the new patio area.

The most recent development of the clubhouse will enhance both the amenities and the health and safety issues of the building. This will be delivered from existing funds.

There is no further major development planned for the clubhouse in the short term. The clubhouse will be managed effectively with regard to heating, lighting, cleaning and maintenance. We will then be fully compliant with health, safety, fire and wheelchair access regulations.

Year 1. Complete current phase of development and then provide for and implement ongoing maintenance and repairs that will ensure that facilities are kept at a high standard.

5. Finance

Target

To continue to manage the club finances and meet all our commitments without any increases in subscriptions based on a five year financial plan.

Background

The current recession and the resulting austerity continue to have a major impact on golf club economics. Not only have these impacted on golf club member's ability to afford club fees but it has also increased the level of competition in the golfing market. It is now much more difficult to attract and retain members. It is also much more difficult to attract green fees and societies. All of this has the potential to impact negatively on our revenue.

Despite this we have successfully managed to meet our financial targets and have not had an increase in fees since 2009. We have achieved this through a planned approach of examining and reducing costs and identifying opportunities to increase income.

How we manage our finances is critical to all aspects of our club. For this reason it is intended to develop an overall financial plan that will examine each element of our income and expenditure and make projections of our likely financial position for each of the next five years. This plan will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Year 1. Develop an overall financial plan that projects likely financial situation over the next five years.

6. Golf Development

Target

To have in place a comprehensive golf development plan with particular emphasis on junior members.

Background

Our core asset is our golf course and our core function is to play golf. Just as we develop the course and its related facilities we must also develop the skills of playing golf. This applies particularly to the development of junior golfers.

The current average age of our members is 58 (including juniors).

The attraction and development of junior members ensures that we have future full members, higher skill levels and a more balanced age profile within the club.

At present there is very active competition among golf clubs in this region to attract junior members.

Besides having an excellent golf course we also have excellent practice facilities available to us which are ideal for developing all aspects of the game. These facilities are important for attracting and retaining new members.

Because the game of golf can be very time consuming, many members have limited opportunity to avail of playing as frequently as they would like. Our practice facilities provide the opportunity to enjoy many aspects of the game without the same time commitment of a full round of golf.

The knock on effect of using these facilities is to attract members to use the clubhouse facilities such as bar and restaurant.

Year 1. Compile a comprehensive plan for the ongoing attraction and development of junior members.

Develop proposals for the use of or expansion of practice facilities to provide golfing opportunities outside of the main course.

Consider the level of usage of the course and assess the optimum number of members based on this usage.

Conclusion

It is likely that, even with signs of recovery in the economy, competition in the golf market for members and green fees will remain difficult.

There is also likely to be pressure to avoid increases in membership fees. It is important, therefore, that our club is managed astutely and that all expenditure and investment is carefully planned and monitored. It is proposed that this plan would be reviewed on an annual basis against the targets set and the outcome of this review communicated to the members.