

## Chairman's Report for December 2017

Firstly, I must apologise for not being able to attend the meeting and thank Barrie for reading this out on my behalf. As many of you know I had a new hip four weeks ago and unfortunately have had to go back into hospital in the last few days with blood clots on my lungs. The hip is fine but the clots have left me short of breath and unable to speak aloud for any period of time. I have been advised to rest and avoid stress for 8 weeks so I feel it is sensible for me not to attend.

## Setting the scene Jan 2017

I have been a member of the Executive Committee since 2013 when I was lady Captain. Along with all Committee members I have been fully involved in the strategic direction and day to day running of the club. Throughout this period, we have been lucky enough to have had the support of The Golf Union of Wales Business Development Scheme. This has offered us access to business specialists who provided examples of best practice as well as sharing a wealth of information regarding policy, practice and legislative requirements. GUW have supported us on data collection, designing and analyzing our member survey as well as helping us to gather reliable information from visitors and societies.

The surveys both yielded very positive comments. Everyone was pleased with:

1. The standard and condition of the course and the only suggested improvement were to the bunkers
2. The Food and service provided by Pat and Lil and their staff was rated very highly and provided excellent value for money
3. The service provided by Steve and his staff in the shop was rated highly as welcoming, friendly and informative.

Areas for development were highlighted particularly course signage, some of the changing room facilities, the garden areas around the clubhouse, the website, social networking and electronic communication

The significant challenges faced:

1. **Financial balancing** – making our packages affordable and attractive whilst ensuring member retention, increasing visitor greenfees and keeping competitive with local clubs. Project funding also needed to be addressed. Approximately £4000 had already been raised for our contribution to the covered hitting area and an 80% grant submitted to cover the rest of the costs – this was successful.
2. **Business Management** – great concern expressed about the increasing workload of the Hon Secretary, we were already running without an Hon. Treasurer and the prospect of Hon Secretary finishing at the end of the year. The Executive Committee identified that we needed to look at Governance, roles and responsibilities generally and we should engage the free services of GUW and their specialist support to guide us through the process. IT systems needed updating, cloud based access to enable remote working and a greater knowledge of all software packages to improve efficiency – i.e. shared diaries, staff emails, SAGE reporting etc.
3. **Legal Requirements of HR and Health and Safety** – in 2013 we received a claim from

a visitor who had broken an ankle in a rabbit hole. From this point, it became increasingly obvious that we were very vulnerable and although we had insurance we needed to be really clear that we were covered for any eventuality. Exploring this opened a can of worms - so many areas needed attention. Employment contracts and Service Agreements were either nonexistent or out of date, those which existed were not fit for purpose with clauses which made it impossible to make appropriate change terms and conditions.

So, together with a long list of jobs from previous years, the data analysis and survey information our 5-year strategic improvement plan was formulated and prioritised.

The 5 main areas:

1. Business administration, Leadership and Management
2. Financial viability
3. Course standards – maintenance and improvement
4. Marketing – maximising revenue
5. Training, Development and improving golf Skills – improving and developing current facilities.

## **Activities and progress throughout the year**

### **Area 1**

#### **Business administration, leadership and management.**

#### **To ensure that we have efficient and effective systems, people to fulfil roles, processes and procedures**

The business management and day to day running of the club has been a priority.

1. We sought to identify the wide range of activities which needed to be covered particularly by the Hon Treasurer and Hon Secretary, find ways to share the workload as well as replace those critically key roles. When the new committee was formed, we identified the strengths of the people around the table and looked at providing the support required.
2. Executive Committee Meetings were getting longer and longer some lasting up to 4 ½ hours. Everyone agreed that this was not the best way of working and did not lead to making well informed decisions. Therefore, we agreed:
  - a. Meetings would have a two-hour time slot
  - b. All matters for AOB discussion would be tabled a week before the meeting to enable research and preparation
  - c. Sub- Committees had nominated chair and secretary, all meetings would be minuted and shared a week before the full Exec meeting and items for full discussion would be noted
  - d. Any special items that needed an additional time slot could be tabled for 30-minute discussion.
  - e. Committee members took on the responsibility to read all documentation prior to the meeting to ensure full preparation.
  - f. Sub Committee structure would be shared with members – this was done in the February newsletter and the minutes from all meetings – both full and sub committees would be available in the usual way.
3. HR Matters and Health and Safety – I undertook to find all existing documentation

relating to employment contracts, Service Level Agreements and take on HR matters. Paul Miles and Ron Scott undertook the same for Health and Safety. It soon became apparent that we were extremely out of date in both areas and specialist support was required. Paul explored companies who could support, advice and references were followed up and three quotes gained. The Exec committee delegated the responsibility to scrutinise these quotes to the Finance Sub Committee and XACT were appointed in July. Since then considerable work has taken place to rewrite the Employee handbook and sort out draft contracts. A full Health and Safety review has taken place and many of the actions from that are now complete. There is still work to be done to finalise staff contracts, outline Service Level Agreements and prepare Bar Staff Contracts. One of the areas which was glaringly missing was any form of contract monitoring, staff appraisal and performance review. There is now a draft policy and associated documentation all ready to go in the new year.

We have already initiated discussion with GUW around protecting members interests and liability. The advice is to consider 'incorporation' which is the direction many clubs are now taking. This needs considerable research and a detailed list of implications for all aspects of the way the club functions. Clearly members would need to be fully informed at each step along the journey and no decision could be made without members consent.

4. IT systems – in order to facilitate flexible working IT systems required remote access for key people. This process is underway. Finance packages have been upgraded and migration of information is nearly complete. The new package is more detailed in terms of monitoring and reporting providing us with all the necessary audit trails to ensure we meet legal requirements. Clearly there are training issues and finding someone with the right skill set to fulfil the day to day as well as the strategic long term planning is critical.
5. Website development – the current website contract an out in October so work has been taking place to secure a good deal as well as ensuring that functionality is appropriate. It was felt that we needed a 'Webmaster', one person to deal with the overall structure, posting information and keeping the site current. Thanks to Geoff Snape and the Marketing group for taking this matter forward and particular thanks to Dick Perry who has put a great deal of work into developing the new site and is now our Webmaster.

## **Area 2**

### **Finance**

**To ensure we are a viable club providing a value for money experience of the highest standard for members, visitors and societies.**

As you can see from the balance sheet we have had a good year financially. Income from Greenfees is up by 25% and membership is as anticipated. We have 21 people on the New2Golf Scheme this year and hopefully everyone will welcome them and encourage them to become an integral part of the club.

Many thanks to those people who have helped with funding through personal loans. Cash flow is always an issue at the end of the year and whilst the bank is supportive with overdraft facilities this is expensive. The member loan scheme seems a 'win-win' situation for all concerned – a better rate for members and a lower rate for the club.

The rest of the finance matter I will leave to the detailed report from Ken and balanced

sheet.

### **Area 3**

#### **Course**

##### **To ensure we continue to maintain and improve the standard of course presentation.**

Without our course we have nothing. Maintaining standards, making improvements and balancing this with budget constraints has been the priority.

1. Health and Safety and legislation - At the beginning of the year we were aware that we were in breach of legislation in respect of the wash down area and a fine could amount to tens of thousands of pounds. After research, the tank was purchased and it was agreed that it could be fitted in house to save approximately £5000. Although this was scheduled to be finished by the end of April the loss of Carwyn meant that this has been delayed due to staffing constraints and the day to day running of the green staff team. This should be complete in the next few months.
2. Course Development Projects
  - a. Course signage – now complete
  - b. Covered Hitting area – 80% funding has been granted by Sport Wales which added to the money already raised means we have enough to complete this. We need to go to competitive tendering – this needs to be completed by Jan 13<sup>th</sup> 2018
  - c. New 11<sup>th</sup> tee
  - d. New path on 18<sup>th</sup> –
  - e. Rabbit Control
3. Staffing – It became clear by June that we would need to replace Carwyn. Meetings of the finance committee and greens committee took place in early July and an advert for Head Greenkeeper was agreed with everyone and placed in BIGGA – the Trade Magazine. At this point it was firmly believed by all concerned that Rob Clark had resigned his post. He was fully involved in the advertisement and outlining the requirements of the newly advertised position. We were so convinced that he had resigned that we sent a letter on July 21<sup>st</sup> thanking him for his excellent work and dedication and posted a notice in the August member's newsletter. Unfortunately, in the middle of August we discovered that this was not the case. The advert had been placed, applications were arriving, candidates were coming for informal visits so we set about looking for an ideal candidate whilst also trying to reach a compromise regarding the position of Course Manager with Rob. The Greens Committee, Rob and myself shortlisted, followed up references and eventually we are pleased to say that we appointed Stuart Adams as Head Greenkeeper.
4. Consultant's Report on the state of the course – Rob recommended a consultant with links experience. Whilst recognising that it contains some valuable information the findings are rather 'overzealous' for example he recommends that we have 7 full time equivalent staff which clearly is unaffordable in our context. Currently this is being analysed by Stuart, Rob and the Green's committee who will formulate a plan and schedule of work.

### **Area 4**

#### **Marketing**

##### **To raise our national and local profile attracting new visitors and societies**

Many thanks to Geoff Snape who has chaired this Sub Committee. The Marketing Group have undertaken various projects during the last 12 months with a view to uplifting the public face of Clwb Golff Aberteifi.

1. Review of Social Media – As we all know, social media is a very useful tool for communicating information, advertising as well as providing a platform for idea exchange. The group looked at the current use of Facebook and the decision was made to separate the outward facing pages for non-members and visitors from the members' section. Generally, this seems to be working well although we still have to agree appropriate use. A Social media policy is currently in draft and forms part of the staff handbook. This will need to be shared with staff and members.
2. Improve national and local coverage to increase visitor and society fees. Specific advertising has been done. Whilst not being able to directly attribute the increase in greenfees to advertising it certainly has posted our name across the whole of the UK.
3. New Tee signage with sponsorship for each hole, this has been achieved and we would like to thank all our sponsors for their support.
4. Re-vamp the website and considerable work has been undertaken to make this possible, our thanks to Dick Perry especially for all the work he has done. The new website was launched on 1st November and we hope members and visitors will appreciate the new design and layout. More work needs to be done over the next few weeks to complete the project.
5. The Special Opens have proved popular and successful and we hope that numbers will start to increase the more publicity we generate throughout the West and South Wales regions. The money from these events has been targeted at financing the marketing activities

## **Area 5**

### **Training, Development, Improving golf skills**

**Continue to develop our existing facilities to become a recognised training club for GUW enabling greater use by new and existing members as well as the wider golfing community.**

Many Thanks to Emyr, Julia, Aled and the team of helpers who provide support for our Junior and New2Golf people in all kinds of weather. Maintaining youth and new members is critical to the future of the club and we are proud to say that their work has been recognised as exemplary by GUW. Julia gained 'GUW Volunteer of the Year', she was shortlisted for Welsh Volunteer of the Year and our Club being the first in Wales to gain gaining the Junior Coaching Award. The accolades go on. The golf Roots programme is engaging new players and our phased subscription scheme has been successful in maintaining interest and enthusiasm. This year, twenty-one people attended the New2Golf adult programme and all have remained on year one of the scheme. Hopefully we can convert these to full members next year. Thanks must also go to Steven for his teaching and Helen and Richard for their support.

We have been successful in gaining the grant for the covered hitting area which is essential to keep these new players going throughout the winter months. Part of this programme will be the development of the academy area to include a large putting green, a bunker and 6 short holes for beginners. Future plans include working more closely with local schools and tying to increase try golf activities.

## **Summary and the way forward**

It has been a very enjoyable year although challenging in many ways. Thank you to all those who have supported me personally as well as the interests of Cardigan Golf Club. Many of you have been members for a long time, Shirley Daniel reached 60 years of membership this year and like many other long standing members, she and her family have continued to support the club at all times. Many of you have held positions on the Executive Committee and key roles in running of the club. The demands of time, energy and expertise are ever increasing. I have tried my best to fulfil the role of Chairman with dignity and respect. The Executive Committee has been superb – everyone being extremely supportive, hard working and loyal to our Club. As volunteers, we have shared our expertise, given our time freely and always acted in good faith. We have endeavoured to be inclusive and transparent in all our activities, minutes from all meetings are available for everyone to read and there are many channels for you to voice your opinions. At the end of the day there are a lot of things which need to be done. They demand time to attend meetings as well as time to carry out duties both at the club and remotely. Paperwork, grant applications, managing emails, preparing reports, ensuing legal compliance all take time.

In addition, we are all family people and have lives away from the club. Sometimes illness and family crises have to take priority – we all understand that and throughout the year have covered for each other to maintain the workload. It is with great regret that I am stepping down. Some of this is due to my family issues and personal health but I have to say that the criticism over the last couple of months about the working of the committee, the accusation of things happening in secret, the claim that there is an inner sanctum of the Exec has cut me deeply. We are now facing even more challenging times, no treasurer, no secretary and an increasing workload. This is when need to pull together, stop this destructive criticism, angry exchanges of words, long early morning and late evening phone calls and general criticism.

I have and will continue to support the club in whatever way I can. I will continue to do things in the background but I can't continue to lead the committee and field this negativity because there comes a time when beating your head against a brick wall is no longer nice when you stop.

Richard Emmanuel asked a very important question on Face Book last week – “what is the way forward?” The simple solution is to put up the fees by £100 a year and employ someone with the knowledge, skills and experience to manage all the day to day finance and secretarial work. My gut feeling is that this would not be acceptable.....

Finally, I wish the new committee all the best for the coming year and be assured I will give you all the support you require in the future.