



Aboyne Golf Club

Business Plan 2018-2023

The oldest club on Royal Deeside, Aboyne is an immaculately maintained, challenging golf course with spectacular views of the surrounding hills & countryside.

6000 yards of impeccable fairways and faultless greens - a golfer's haven. Aboyne embraces every golfer, from beginner to Scottish Internationalist.

Our welcoming, family friendly clubhouse allows you to soothe away your cares on our sunny balconies where you may catch a glimpse of an osprey, otters or the swans on the loch.

Aboyne is the understated jewel in Aberdeenshire's golfing crown.

Supported by  **SCOTTISH GOLF.**

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This plan has been created by:

Version	Date	People
Version 1.0	03/03/2017	Scott Mackie - President Justin Grant - Vice President Dan Broadhead - Gents Captain Sandra Findlay - Ladies Captain Keith Gardiner - Senior Gents Captain David Munro - Greens Convenor Nigel Bradburn - Marketing Convenor Janice Innes - Council Member Carmeen Eakin - Council Member Allan Taylor - Managing Secretary

Version 2.0	28/03/2018	Justin Grant – President Nigel Bradburn - Vice President / Marketing Convenor John Sutherland - Gents Captain Elizabeth Taylor - Ladies Captain Keith Gardiner - Senior Gents Captain David Munro - Greens Convenor Brian Kinkead – Finance Convenor Janice Innes - Council Member Carmeen Eakin - Council Member Scott Mackie – Council Member (former President) Fraser Dunlop – Director of Golf
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Section 1: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Introduction

Aboyne Golf Course is the oldest golf course on Royal Deeside. It had its start when life was different. In the 19th century, the local economy was supported by Landowners and gentry, who, in pursuit of a fashionable pastime introduced golf to Aboyne in 1874. The club was formed in 1883. Although details are vague it is known that play took place over nine holes laid out on the village green. Sir Alexander Lyon, Lord Provost of Aberdeen, was a regular sight in his Royal Aberdeen Golf Club red reefer jacket. The Club moved from the village to its present site in 1905.

The Club was founded mainly due to the efforts of Mr W E Nicol of Ballogie (Captain), Dr Keith from Aboyne and the Rev. Dr. Drummond, minister at Birse. The local stationmaster, Mr Forgie was the first secretary. Subscriptions and membership were 2/6 each and the grand total of £3 was received from the 24 members!

Play continued in the village until 1905 when the present site was leased from Ean Cecil of Aboyne Castle estate and nine holes laid out beside the loch, mainly on the present inward half. By 1908, with the assistance of Archie Simpson, Professional at Royal Aberdeen Golf Club, the course was extended to eighteen holes. To celebrate this and the erection of “a fine new pavilion” a grand opening was performed before 150 invited guests by Lord Aberdeen.

Further alterations to the course in 1913 lengthened it to 5010 yards (“Bogey” 74). This event was marked with an exhibition match between the famous Professionals Harry Vardon and Ted Ray. They scored 65 and 69 respectively. Probably the Club’s greatest benefactor was James Mearns, a

self-made businessman in Aberdeen and from 1923 the new owner of the Castle estate. He became president in 1924, until his death in 1943, the first such break with tradition. His final act was ensuring the Club's future when he willed the land to the people of Aboyne "for as long as it remained a golf course".

The 1930's were subdued times, economies being made wherever possible, a fact highlighted in 1934 when the club's first tractor (a second-hand Fordson) was subsidised by the Greens staff "accepting a cut in wages"! But by 1939, for the second time in twenty years, Britain was at war and golf was put aside, though not forgotten, until 1946.

During the war most golf courses were used for animal grazing and vegetable allotments. So it was at Aboyne when an E.G.M. was convened in 1946 to form a new committee which redrafted the constitution and reclaimed the course. By 1948 conditions had recovered enough to allow a 36 hole Open tournament to be introduced which continues successfully to this day.

The next 25 years saw golf grow in popularity. Not much seemed to change yet steady progress was made and facilities improved for the increasing membership, largely due in the 1950s to subsidised work by local businessmen. During this period golf was cheap and membership easy to obtain, any one from anywhere could join by paying the subscription.

By 1970 things were changing. The discovery of oil in the North Sea had a dramatic effect on employment in the region and Aboyne quickly became a commuter area for people working in the oil industry. Membership grew rapidly, passing 1000 by 1986 before being controlled by residential qualifications. In this 15 year period good use was made of the increased revenues including the opening of a new clubhouse in 1980 and constant investment in the course and machinery. It was also in this time that the club marked its centenary (1983) with an excellent week of celebration including its first ever Pro-AM.

The layout of Aboyne golf course remained virtually the same from 1913 until five new holes designed and added in 1990 by world famous golf course architect Martin Hawtree of Hawtree Ltd (who designed Trump International and redesigned Royal Birkdale), improving the course to be the fine challenge it is today. Two holes are of archaeological significance and is an immaculately maintained course, presenting one of the finest tests of golf in Aberdeenshire and North-East Scotland. More recently we have been the proud host of the 2016 Scottish Women's County Finals and the 2017 'Scottish Junior Open' Regional Qualifier.

Over recent years, the membership has declined at a steady rate and now sits at 611. Through our strategic partnership with local schools, there is emerging young talent in our growing junior section.

Do we view our Club as a business?

We recognise the need to view our Club as a business in order for it to be operating for future generations. There is a need to consider diversification opportunities, particularly during the 'off' season and given the falling membership, so that the Club can have enough income to fulfil its purpose. There is no desire to retain profits, but we recognise the need to cover expenditure and to build a level of capital which will allow the growth and development of the Club and its facilities.

What is our Golf Club's Business Plan designed to achieve?

To establish a sustainable operating model, promote financial stability and long-term success for the Golf Club. To enable the Club to develop and grow.

Who will be reading this plan?

PRIMARY READERS: Members, Staff, Contractors, Sponsors, Reciprocal Golf Clubs, Scottish Golf, Bankers

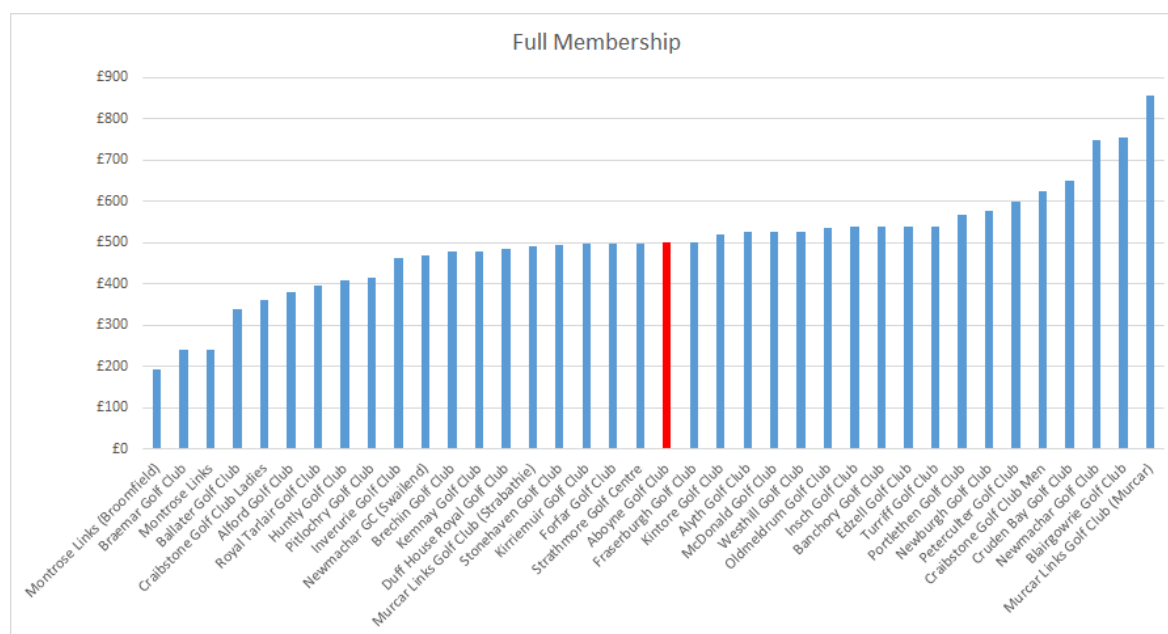
SECONDARY READERS: Visitors, Competitors, Local businesses, Potential new Corporate and Ordinary members

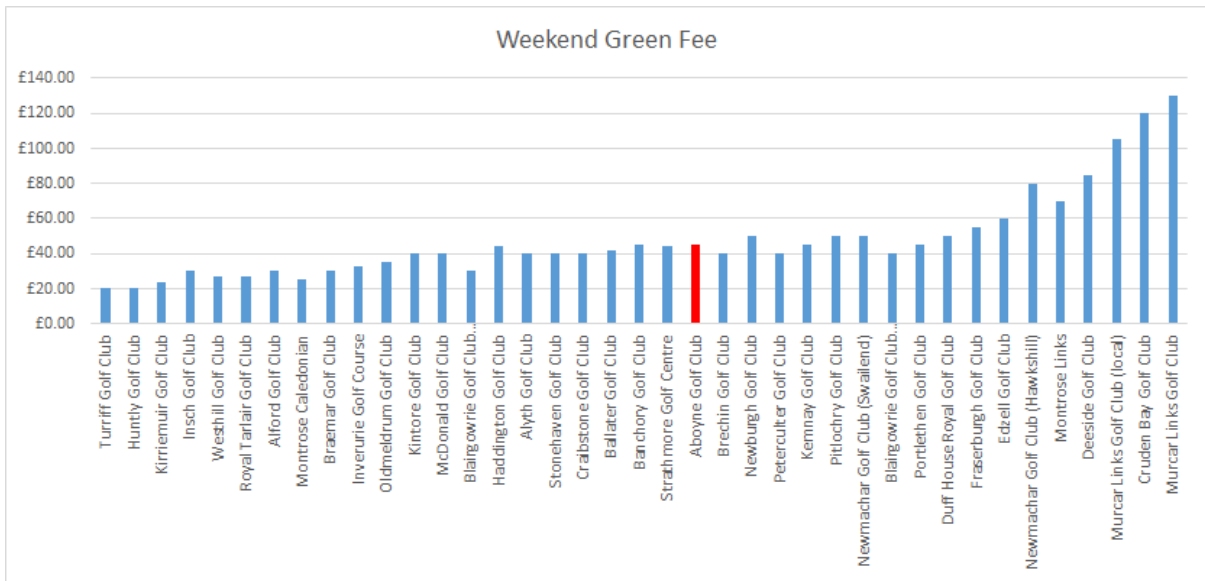
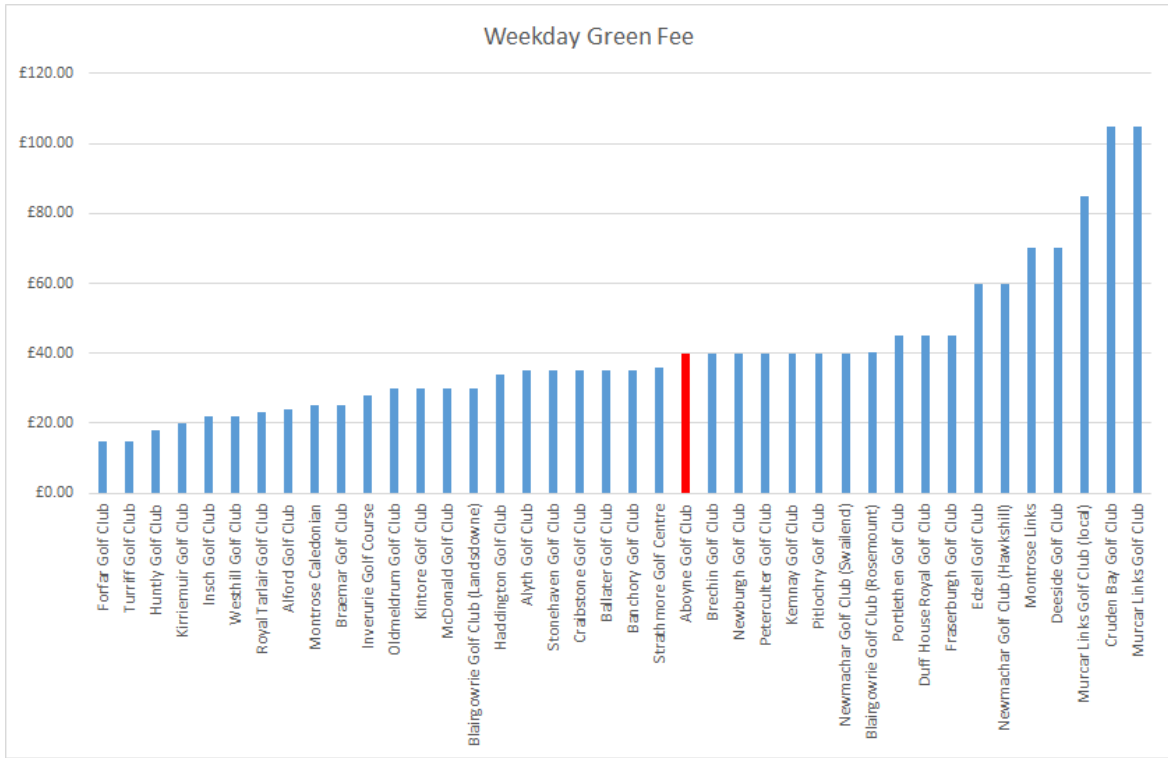
Situational Analysis

Understanding our club's situation is an important part to help plan its future. By undertaking these exercises, we understand where the Club is, and which direction it should go

Selected local 18-hole Adult membership and Green fee 2017

Golf Club	Membership Fee	Joining Fee	Green Fee - Weekday	Green Fee - Weekend
Peterculter	£630.00	£480.00	£40.00	£40.00
Banchory	£565.00	£400.00	£35.00	£45.00
Aboyne	£510.00	Nil	£40.00	£45.00
Ballater	£360.00	Nil	£35.00	£42.00
Braemar	£240.00	Nil	£25.00	£30.00
Alford	£380.00	Nil	£24.00	£30.00
Westhill	£577.50	Nil	£22.00	£27.00
Kemnay	£495.00	Nil	£40.00	£45.00
Edzell	£550.00	£500.00	£60.00	£60.00





SWOT ANALYSIS

Our SWOT analysis identifies what we are good at, what we can do better, as well as the things which may have a positive or negative impact on our club, these items were identified through listening to our membership, via questionnaires and members' forums during 2016 and 2017:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good course drainage, so open when competitors are closed • Course setup & presentation • Highly recommended by members • Highly praised by visitors • Friendly Club • Availability of tee times • Varied front/back nine • Draw/Non-draw sections • Friendly staff • Open to all! • Successful juniors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clubhouse furnishings dated • Falling membership • Locker rooms poor • Financially constrained (see point 2) • Social events (designed to raise funds) are often poorly supported • Not enough outings, no member incentives to bring outings to the Club • Lack of promotional days • Poor communication to the membership • More family comps needed • Clubhouse underutilised • More volunteers required • Consistency & variety of catering limited • More flexible payment options • Low number of members aged between 18-50 • No footpath up to Clubhouse (from village)
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village population should be growing • Flexible membership • Better use of advertising channels • Oldest Club on Royal Deeside • Abundant availability of tee times • Return of joining fee • Corporate membership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many local Clubs competing • Less people playing golf • Require cash injection to address biggest weaknesses • Return of joining fee??

Actions completed since Version 1.0

The following points were highlighted as weaknesses and below is a summary of actions completed

- **Clubhouse furnishings dated** – A refresh of the clubhouse was completed over the winter of 2016/17, old curtains and dark colours were replaced by modern blinds and lighter modern colours. A replacement floor was put in the Bar area replacing damaged tiles floorings, stair carpets all metal carpet fixtures were replaced. Toilets were updated with removal of old tiles and replacement splashbacks. During 2017/18 winter period this was further enhanced with a revamp of the backroom, making this a more useable space for meetings and private dining.
- **Falling membership** – Several initiatives were put in place for season 2018, including an 18 month for 12 months offer at the end of 2017 season, a member gets member offer at the start of 2018 season, get into golf and junior initiatives were also arranged, resulting in an upturn of new members and potential new members
- **Social events (designed to raise funds) are often poorly supported** – In recent years social events were used to cover the shortfall in the bar, however, having agreed a deal with our new caterer in December 2017 to take over the running of the bar, we have also agreed for 5 social nights a year, in which funds raised and profit made from bar takings will be retained by the club, as such, we feel this will allow our members to focus on fully supporting those 5 events. Other events throughout the year can also be put in place to raise funds for the club.
- **Lack of promotional days** – The introduction of Captains invitational in 2017, as well as the Ladies get into golf campaign in early 2018 are the start of ongoing projects to open the club to prospective members
- **Poor communication to the membership** – Council have made every effort to communicate as much as possible with members on all club matters, with great strides being made with communications through late 2017 onwards
- **More family comps needed** – Our Director of golf has implemented this into the planning for 2018 season, with an Easter fun Stableford, followed by a fun club Texas scramble the following week to kick off the season. Various other family friendly events will be held throughout the year
- **More volunteers required** – the creation of the Men's committee will help in this area, alongside the existing Ladies and Seniors committees

- **Consistency & variety of catering limited** – The appointment of Colin Redman and his team at Cecil & Mearns in Dec 2017 was made to rectify this, and we feel that this is no longer an issue
- **More flexible payment options** – Flexible payment options are available (direct Debit, or pay in advance)
- **Low number of members aged between 18-50** – introduction of Twilight membership in 2017 and the introduction of a stepped increase in membership fees for 25-30 year olds has been designed to make golf more affordable and the transition to full membership easier, with a view to increasing participation in this age group. Get in to Golf will also allow new potential golfers in this demographic a route to taking up the sport.

RECENT CLUB TRENDS

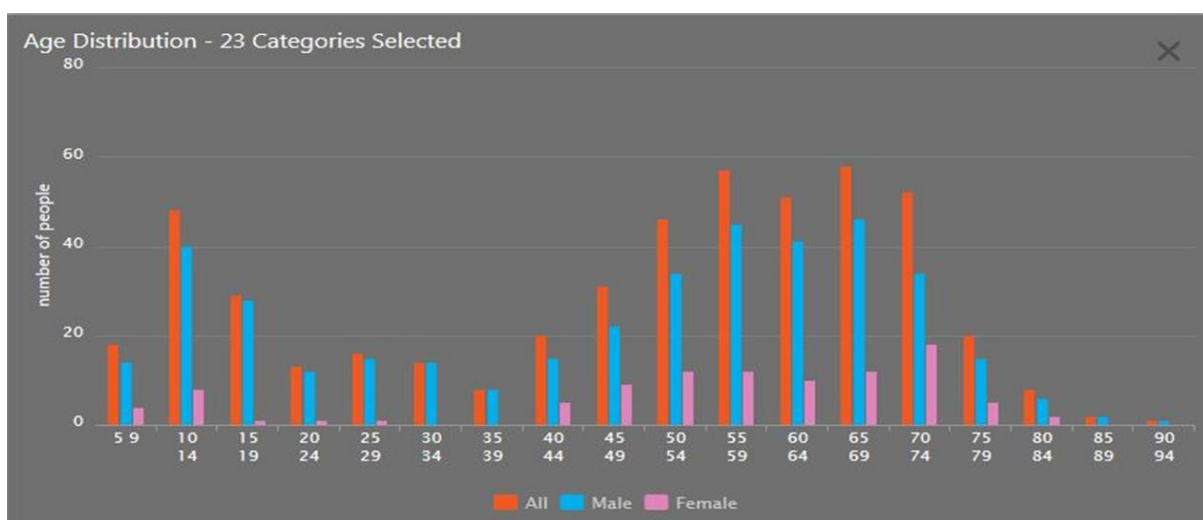
To get an understanding of our club's situation we have identified the following recent numerical trends at our club:

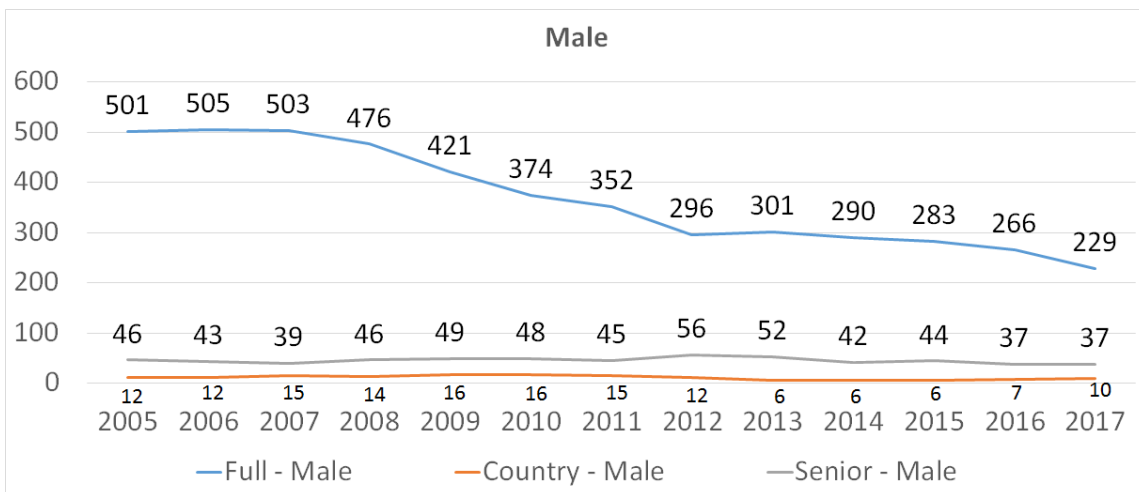
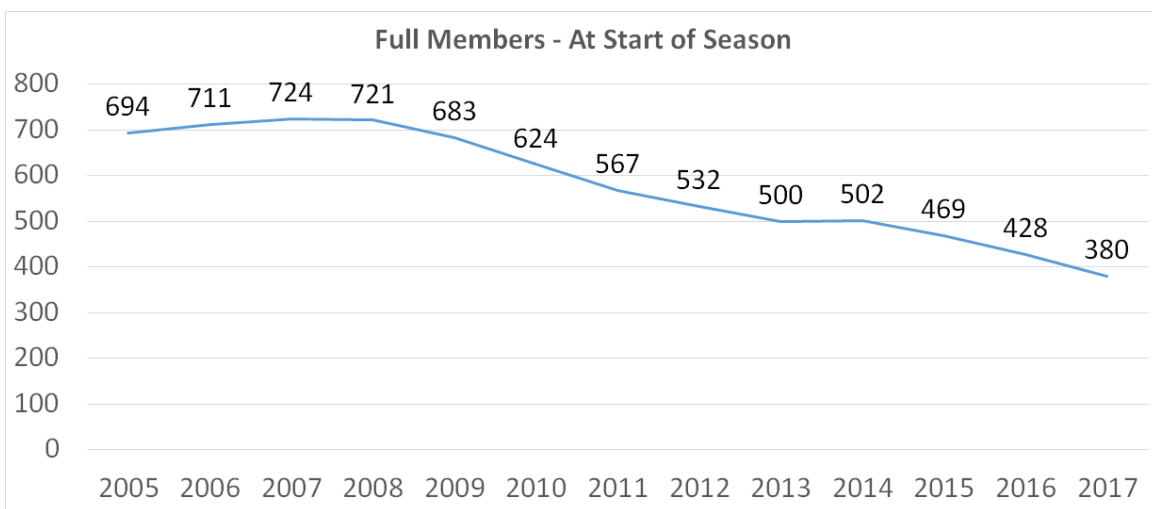
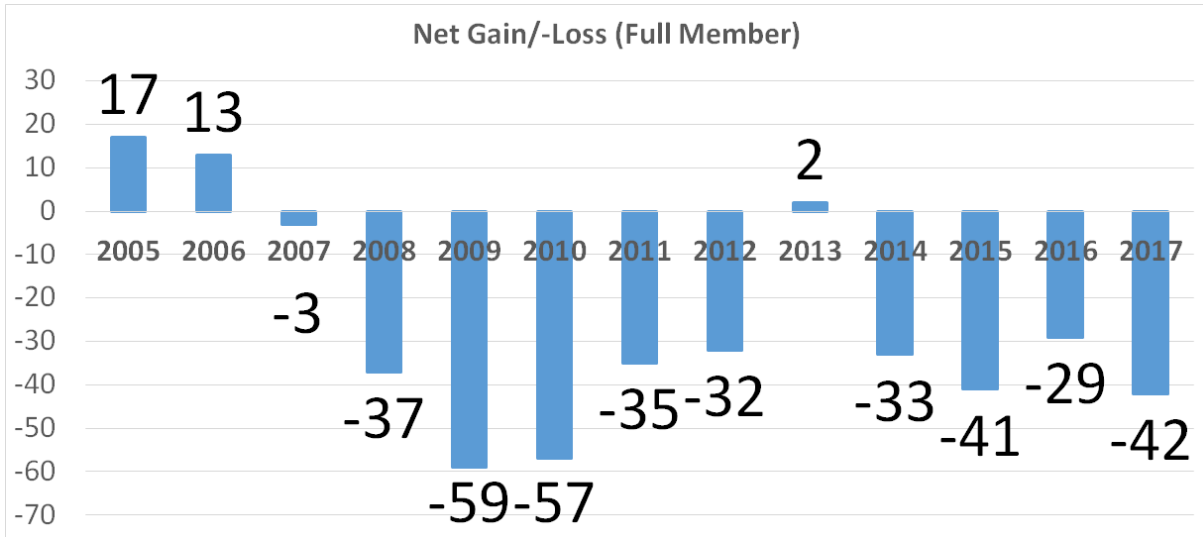
Recent Trends at our Club	
1	Falling Membership / Ageing Membership
2	Decline in Financials (although broke even Y/E 31 st Oct 2016)
3	Historical lack of capital investment in the club
4	Reduced Outings
5	Poor support of social events

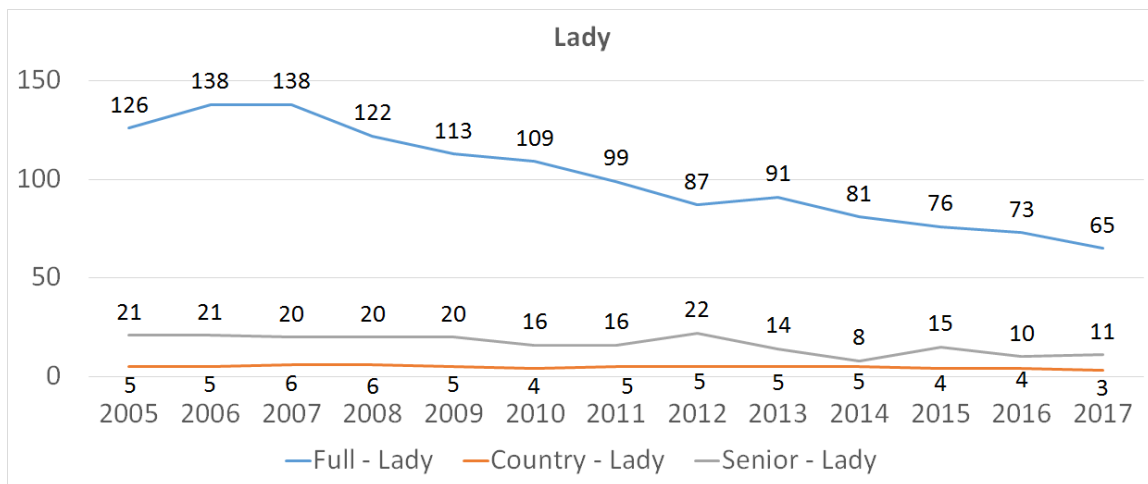
1 Falling Membership / Ageing membership

Membership almost halved in 10 years from 724 to 380, the same trend is seen in both the Gents and Ladies game. Scottish Golf confirms that there are 750,000 nomadic golfers who play but are not members. This is a rising trend over the last 10 years and is mainly due to the rise in cheap online golf. Ten years ago, you would have had to play around 10 rounds of golf to justify your membership, now it's more like 25. Clubs are beginning to realise that undervaluing their product is leading to their downfall.

Largest Membership age group is 50-75, with around 250 of our 380 playing members in this age bracket. Lack of members between 20 and 40, especially ladies, with no ladies at all between the ages of 30 & 40 playing golf at Aboyne Golf Club.







Although numbers are slightly down compared to 10 years ago, Junior golf is on the rise and our numbers are increasing year on year, no doubt helped by the success of our young golfers who have represented the club on a local, County and National Level.



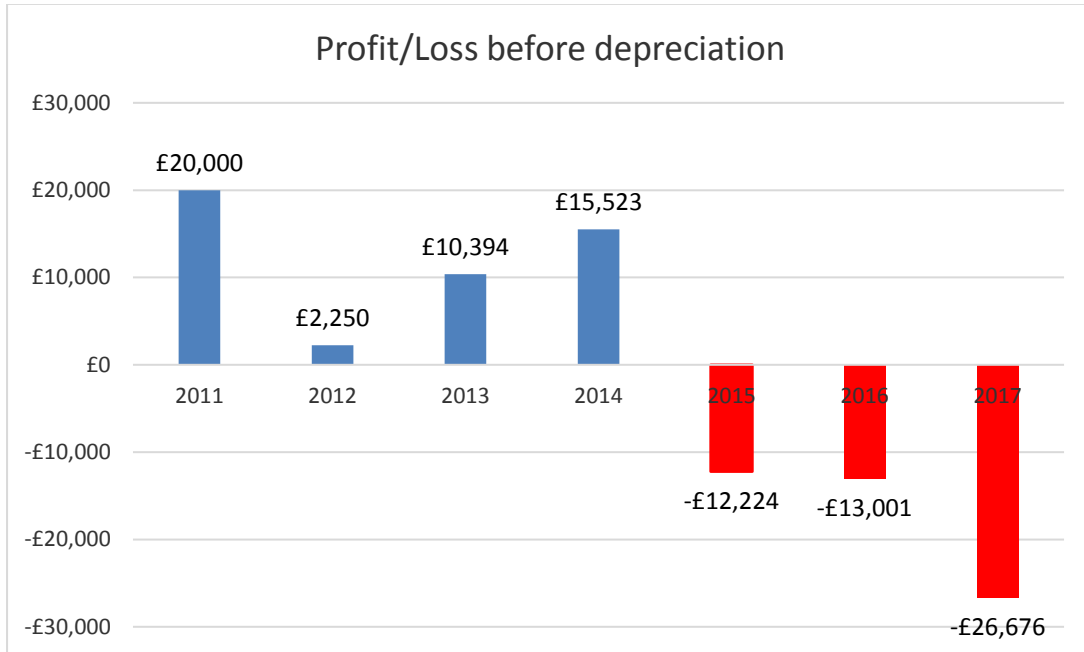
Reasons for leaving

During member exit interviews the following have been given as their reason for leaving Aboyne Golf Club over the last couple of years.

- 29 Lack of Play or Time
- 20 Moved Away
- 13 Moved Course
- 10 Age/Health
- 6 Out of Work
- 6 Cost
- 2 Two Clubs Reducing to One
- 1 Course too hard

2 Decline in Financials

Mainly due to point 1 above, we have seen a steady decline in our financials, albeit with significant cost savings being made across utilities, insurances, bar staffing, postage and other outgoings, as well as reduction in fees paid to the professional.



*2016 excludes VAT reclaim received

3 Historical lack of capital investment in club

Our clubhouse, which was built in 1980, needs updating. In 2017 a member-led improvement to the main bar area has brought a freshness and slight modernisation to the building, but it is very much a papering over of the cracks.

Our Locker rooms are dated, around 5 years ago a motion was tabled to completely refurbish the Locker rooms and attached shower and toilet facilities, to bring them up to a modern standard and quality befitting our top-class Golf course. This was rejected by the membership based on cost. The proposal for the locker room upgrade was self-financing, provided the lockers were rented, however the cost of the attached shower and toilet facilities would have relied on a levy of around £120 per member.

In 2016 we undertook a full refurbishment of the approach road at a significant cost of around £40,000. This has greatly improved the first impression of the Club. This road will require to be top dressed in the next few years at a cost of around £10,000. The car park also requires space line painting.

4. Reduced Outings

We have seen a reduction in outing income, since the end of 2015, which coincides with the downturn of the local oil industry.

However, income to the end of August 2017 shows a recovery, above levels seen prior to the start of the downturn, but further increases in the revenue here is essential for the long-term prosperity of our Club.

5 Poor Support of Social Events

Until December 2017, our bar was run in-house.

Well supported social events were essential to ensure the bar produced enough income to cover the staffing costs. In 2016 the bar made a small profit of around £3,000, having cut the opening hours and therefore the staffing costs, as well as increasing the income, however, the year before it suffered a substantial loss of £8,111. These sorts of losses were a huge risk to the club.

Data from our membership survey indicated that social events are a priority for the club to raise funds, but felt there is not sufficient provision of these. However, the clear majority have also made it clear that they do not see them as important to them personally.

This presented a catch 22 situation, where membership wanted to see social events put in place to support the club financially, but wanted others to attend.

Section 2: WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Purpose

Our Club Purpose: To improve the golfing experience for our members and visitors. To build on our reputation and enhance our facilities to create a 21st century experience, with outstanding customer service, attracting more members and visitors to ensure the future of the club. To meet the challenges of both today and tomorrow to become the finest inland golf course and club in Aberdeenshire.

Section 3: HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE?

Develop a sustainable operating model that allows us to function within our means and support development by providing the required capital expenditure.

We will maintain and develop our superb course, create a clubhouse fit for the needs of the 21st century, improve the 'customer experience' and work closely with our newly created Director of Golf position and Bar/Catering franchisee.

To achieve this, the following core areas have been identified:

- Membership Recruitment
- Membership Retention
- Club Governance

Core Area	<i>Membership Recruitment/Retention</i>
Strategy Statement	
To maintain and where possible increase playing membership levels from 2017 levels (512) by providing a broad range of membership categories to accommodate as wide a selection of golfers as possible.	
SMART Objectives	
<i>SPECIFIC – MEASUREABLE – ACHIEVABLE – REALISTIC – TIMED</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce attrition of members in year 1 to below 10% • Reduce attrition of members in year 2 to below 5% • By year 3, maintain previous years membership levels • By year 5 be at or above 2017 playing membership level of 512 • Increase our Customer Feedback Tracker (CFT) score for the question - Overall satisfaction with club - (7.87 in August 2017) to above national average. 	
Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare several budgets based on varying scenarios to ascertain preferred membership rates on an annual basis • New member incentives • Incentivise existing members to attract new members (completed) • Establish a database of visitors and outing convenors/companies (process initiated) • Proactively target entries on database regarding membership options (process initiated) • Run 'Get into Golf' campaigns Ladies / Gents • Run an event for Women's Golf Day on a yearly basis • Operate a Club Golf scheme (process initiated Aboyne, Finzean & Ko'N)) • Run 'Summer Golf Camps' for Children • Customer service training for staff, contractors and volunteers • Run a yearly Open Day • Target any visitors who fulfil criteria for Country Membership • Create a business development sub-committee • Conduct a fortnightly review of the Club website and other social media outlets to 	

ensure accuracy of information presented.

- Reassess membership rates on a yearly basis to ensure income stream meets budgeted expenditure.
- Carry out competitor analysis on a yearly basis to ensure fit with marketplace.
- Obtain contact details of all visitors/outings to enable marketing opportunities.
- Report on membership statistics at monthly Council meetings.
- Advertise payment options (monthly, etc.)
- Survey members who leave, within 1 week of notice of cancellation
- Create an action plan based on previous leavers' feedback
- Continue to provide a first-class golf course
- Maintain and improve reciprocal golf agreements
- Add further membership benefits & demonstrate value addition
- Enhance communication with membership
- Operate regular survey and forum events
- Members suggestion box
- Enhance overall membership experience, specifically customer service
- Create a new member retention strategy, with documentation
- Monitor number of leavers annually and benchmark with year-on-year results
- Monitor length of membership for each member - have a running log
- Have varied payment options for paying membership fees

Actions completed since Version 1.0

The following points were highlighted as weaknesses and below is a summary of actions completed

- **New member incentives** – 18 months for 12, Get into Golf pathway, introduction of Twilight and 9-hole membership
- **Incentivise existing members to attract new members** - Successful member get member deal 2018
- **Establish a database of visitors and outing convenors/companies** - process initiated
- **Proactively target entries on database regarding membership options** - process initiated

- Run 'Get into Golf' campaigns Ladies / Gents – Organised by DoG 2018
- Operate a Club Golf scheme - process initiated by Dog 2018 (Aboyne, Finzean & Ko'N))
- Run 'Summer Golf Camps' for Children - process initiated, DoG sold out junior Easter camp
- Conduct a fortnightly review of the Club website and other social media outlets to ensure accuracy of information presented – ongoing, new House branding rules and all Online outlets updated to reflect
- Obtain contact details of all visitors/outings to enable marketing opportunities – implemented by DoG
- Report on membership statistics at monthly Council meetings – ongoing by DoG
- Survey members who leave, within 1 week of notice of cancellation - implemented
- Continue to provide a first-class golf course - ongoing
- Maintain and improve reciprocal golf agreements – addition in 2018 of Deeside League reciprocal
- Enhance communication with membership – Ongoing communications much improved
- Operate regular survey and forum events – events held in 2016 and 2017 and to be arranged in 2018
- Enhance overall membership experience, specifically customer service- ongoing – New DoG, Caterer for 2018 season with focus on Customer service and Quality
- Have varied payment options for paying membership fees – Available, Direct Debit or pay in advance

Core Area	Club Governance
Strategy Statement	
<p>To ensure the long-term success, ongoing development and overall sustainability of the Golf Club, the Council will closely monitor key activity (e.g. membership, visitors and social media) together with progress against this plan.</p>	
SMART Objectives	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>SPECIFIC – MEASUREABLE – ACHIEVABLE – REALISTIC – TIMED</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the Constitution is reviewed, relevant, updated and fit for purpose on an annual basis • All policy documents, processes, licences, contracts of employment are reviewed, relevant and fit for purpose and legislatively compliant on an annual basis • Treat the business plan as a living document • Council member terms of reference and role descriptions created by end 2018 • Ensure openness, accountability and transparency with members • Increase our Customer Feedback Tracker (CFT) scores for the questions - Overall, i am satisfied with the way the club is managed (6.13 in August 2017), I feel the committee acts transparently (5.99 in August 2017) & I feel the committee does a good job (6.25 in August 2017) to above national average at the next survey. 	
Initiatives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Terms of reference and role descriptions for council members • Constantly review and update the business plan • Carry out annual review of necessary documentation • Presentation of council minutes • Holding forums and conducting membership surveys/questionnaires (CFT) 	

Actions completed since Version 1.0

The following points were highlighted as weaknesses and below is a summary of actions completed

- **Constantly review and update the business plan** - Ongoing, regular strategy day meetings held to discuss and update
- **Holding forums and conducting membership surveys/questionnaires** – Forum held in 2016 & 2017 and intention to hold one in 2018
- **Presentation of council minutes** – These are available to all members via the noticeboard and via the website

Core Area	<i>Financial Management</i>
Strategy Statement	
To ensure the long-term success, ongoing development and overall sustainability of the Golf Club	
SMART Objectives	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>SPECIFIC – MEASUREABLE – ACHIEVABLE – REALISTIC – TIMED</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return the club to financial stability by 2022, breaking even by year end 2018, with an annual operating profit in 2019 and beyond • By year end 2022, have no reliance on an overdraft for operational reasons • In 2023 be in the position to make capital investment • Increase our Customer Feedback Tracker (CFT) score for the question - I feel the club finances are well managed - (5.41 in August 2017) to above national average. 	
Initiatives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set financial goals for year on year based on the life of this plan • Create action plans for each year of this plan • Allocate relevant roles and responsibilities • Hold specific fundraising events for particular areas of development • Apply for any relevant funding opportunities to support development • Prepare and operate annual and future forecast budgets 	

Actions completed since Version 1.0

The following points were highlighted as weaknesses and below is a summary of actions completed

- **Set financial goals for year on year based on the life of this plan** – Ongoing, plan for 2018 to break even as a minimum
- **Create action plans for each year of this plan** - Ongoing
- **Allocate relevant roles and responsibilities** - ongoing
- **Apply for any relevant funding opportunities to support development** – Updating of the Constitution in 2018 AGM paves way for this possibility
- **Prepare and operate annual and future forecast budgets** – 5yr budget prepared

Section 4: WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE?

Staff & Volunteers

Having completed our plan, we have reflected upon who will be expected to carry it out successfully. For each of our Club’s Core Areas here are the responsible people and who will help them:

Core Area of our Club	Person Accountable	Supported By
Membership Recruitment/Retention	Director of Golf	Marketing Convenor
Financial Management	Finance Convenor	President
Club Governance	President	Vice President

Section 5: HOW WILL WE KNOW WE ARE THERE?

To know if we are progressing our Business Plan we need to keep score for each of our *Core Areas*. These are our club's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) - the things that will determine whether our *SMART Objectives* are on track to being achieved:

Core Area of our Club	Primary KPI
Membership Recruitment/Retention	Membership levels are consistent with yearly targets set in plan
Club Governance	Management of club is effective, and documentation is compliant with legislation and business plan
Financial Management	The Club is operating within its financial constraints, and is creating an annual surplus.

Our Committee Meeting Agenda will consist of our KPI Report and any discussion required around Core Areas that are not 'Not-Target'

