



Whitepaper

New Par 5 Proposal



Executive Summary

As part of Baltimore Golf Club's 5-year strategic plan, Council investigated the possibility of creating a new Par 5 hole. This is part of our goal of continually improving the course, ensuring that Baltimore remains one of the best golf clubs in the area. This whitepaper summarises five options. A detailed proposal describes Council's preferred option: converting the 4th hole.

A meeting at the clubhouse will be arranged during the summer, encouraging members to debate the Pros and Cons of this proposal. Ultimately, a final decision would be put to a formal vote at the club EGM.

Any immediate feedback or questions can be directed to craigspetrie@hotmail.com.

Introduction

"Balmore doesn't have any Par 5s" is a comment I hear when our course layout is discussed, or our scorecard scrutinised by a visitor. Of course, that's not true. Setting aside the old jokes about not being able to reach certain Par 4 greens in two strokes, Balmore does indeed have Par 5s – three of them in fact: the 3rd, 4th and 12th. The catch is that those are only considered Par 5 holes for Ladies and Juniors. For Gents playing off the yellow or white tees, those are Par 4s. The lack of any Par 5s for Gents, coupled with the fact that Balmore has six Par 3 holes means that we have an unusual course configuration. Setting aside the skewed front and back nines for a moment (34 out, 32 back from the white tees) we have a Par 66 course measuring only 5,542 yards.

Balmore is one of the shortest 18-hole golf courses in Scotland. Fortunately, the number and difficulty of the Par 3 holes, plus the relatively small greens help offset the lack of yardage. Today's 7th hole is technically a Par 4, but one that many Gents can reach in one shot. With the right wind direction, even the current 9th green is threatened by the longest hitters. Last year, we recommended that players on the 12th tee shout *Fore!* as drives are frequently landing on the 10th fairway. Back in the day, drives at the 12th would only have reached the top of the hill. Based on the member survey conducted late 2021, it was clear that the introduction of a Par 5 was one of the priorities members wanted Council to address. After all, Old Tom Morris invented a game comprising of Par 3s, 4s and 5s, right?

So why doesn't Balmore have any Par 5s for the Gents? The answer is, it did, but that was a long time ago when Harry Vardon was hitting a "Gutty" golf ball with a small wooden club while wearing his best woollen plus fours. In 1907, at the time of Balmore Golf Club's founding, the average driving distance of an *Elite* Gent golfer was 160-200 yards. Of course, much has changed since then. Now we have *Amateurs* smashing Titleist ProV1s 250+ yards using large-sized metal woods with carbon fibre flex shafts. The result is that the Par 5, requiring the player to learn the skill of playing long holes tactically with longer clubs, has been relegated to "tough" Par 4s, at best.

Golf's governing body is also wrestling with this problem. The benefits of modern technology and sport science have helped tour golfers make a mockery of the world's most iconic courses – even those where tees have been pushed as far back as the landscape will allow. The power and influence of the golf equipment manufacturers means that distance sells; and will continue doing so for the foreseeable future. Who wants to invest and market equipment that performs less than last year's model?

Continuous Improvement

Over the years, Balmore Golf Club has been fortunate to have been governed by successive Councils who were committed to continuous improvement. For example:

- In the early 2000s, Council made the enlightened decision to upgrade the greens to PGA standard as the challenge to golf courses going forward was in the management of increased rainfall and hence the investment in the course and drainage infrastructure to keep the course playable in an increasing warm and wet climate.
- More recently, the upper practise area was converted to a six-hole Par 3 course. This has proven invaluable in our effort to re-establish a Junior section which will help the club flourish in the future.

A similar situation now presents itself in the attraction of younger members - who have only known professional golfers who bomb the ball off of the tee and hence distance is a key criteria in their thinking and course selection. The addition of a Par 5 helps address this demand and broadens the course appeal to new, younger members whilst recognising that to the traditional golfer, change is an incremental process.

The competitive landscape of golf in East Dunbartonshire requires a programme of investment in the club to further enhance the experience of current members and attract new members (who are no longer tethered to a club by the expense of a joining fee). A new par 5 should be seen as just one step in the many steps mapped out in the ongoing development of Balmore as outlined by the 5-year strategic plan, whilst recognising it is the first layout change to the course in some time.

Assumptions

In order to ground this whitepaper in reality, Council applied the following assumptions to limit the scope of the proposal:

- Changes must be affordable i.e. can be funded through a combination of levies, treasury funds or modest borrowing. In short, nothing that could compromise the club's financial security.
- Proposals should not require the purchase new land. We'll use what we have.
- Creating or extending holes must not cause unacceptable disruption to the use of the current course for members.
- Where possible, options should focus on creating new tees rather than new greens. Typically, tees are cheap, greens are expensive.
- Any proposal should not compromise other strategic goals held by the club, nor redirect greenkeeping resources to the extent that the main course or practise area are neglected.
- As part of any changes, the order in which holes are played should be considered. There is a general desire to "fix" the imbalance between the front and back nines. A change along these lines was trialled many years ago, but obviously not adopted. This is an opportunity to revisit.
- A review of hole stroke indexes and course slope rating will be required for any changes made.
- Careful consideration will be given to the impact on Ladies and Juniors. For example, any hole that is lengthened will have new forward tees, where appropriate to ensure that the extra yardage does not make altered holes too difficult (we're not quite ready for a Par 6 just yet...).

Proposals

Council has spent a significant amount of time investigating the options. Charlie Goodall, our Head Greenkeeper was consulted. His recommendations are factored into this report. We also consulted with Greentech Sportsturf Ltd, the company based in Stirling who rebuilt our greens to PGA standards during the early 2000s.

There are a total of five options that have been shortlisted in this whitepaper.

Option 1

- Extend current 4th hole.
- Build a new green in the unused field, over the wall. The green would be situated at the very back, right.
- The green would be two-tiered and south facing for favourable growth.
- Two new bunkers would be constructed: one fairway, one to protect the upper tier of the green.
- Create new red forward tees to avoid the new hole becoming too long for Ladies and Juniors.
- 130 new yards would extend the hole from 413 to 543 yards. Uphill and typically into the wind, this would be *"A marvellous Par 5"* – Charlie Goodall.
- A bell signalling that the green is clear would be required to permit safe play.
- The current yellow 5th tees would move towards the current 5th white tees to avoid danger to players.
- A new path through the tall trees would allow players to walk directly to the 5th tee area.
- The 5th hole would become a dogleg left for all tees.



Option 2

- Extend the current 5th hole.
- Create a new tee box, back behind the current white tees.
- If a new green is introduced at the 4th, then a short path will lead players to this new 5th tee.
- Creating a new tee is usually low cost, however in this instance a significant number of trees and shrub would need to be cleared to create a channel for tee shots. The result would be only 2 or 3 “rows” of trees separating the new 4th and 5th fairways.
- At the new, proposed tee area, the land slopes down towards the 13th green, so the new tee box would need to be reinforced at the north side – adding slightly to the cost.
- Current yellow and red tees must move towards the 13th tee to play the hole as a dogleg. This is required in order to avoid wayward approach shots at the 4th hole injuring players teeing off at the 5th yellow tees.
- 120 new yards could be gained, extending the hole from 418 to 538 yards.
- A new fairway bunker would add a risk/reward element to any big hitters trying to reach the green in two shots.



Option 3

- Extend the current 3rd hole.
- Create a new tee, up, back left behind current white tees. The new tee would be slightly elevated and shape the hole into a dogleg left with the slope of the fairway encouraging tee shots to nestle in the right rough.
- This proposal, as with option 2 would require trees to be felled and fairway to begin earlier.
- We would also be close to the boundary of the private property of the nearby house. We would need to liaise with the owner.
- Additionally, we would need to determine how to prevent players “taking a short cut” by playing down the 4th fairway (whether intentionally or by accident).
- Consideration must be given to protect players on the 2nd green from wayward tee shots. Also, if the 4th hole was extended, there is the possibility of wild approach shots endangering players on this new tee.
- If we were to proceed, 150 new yards would extend the 3rd from 448 to 598 yards.



Option 4

- Extend the 10th hole through the creation of a new green situated in the unused field, near the current 7th green.
- This option requires a modest number of trees to be felled to make a clearing behind the current green that would allow the fairway to be extended.
- A power line with wooden poles runs right across this field directly behind the current green (some members will have spotted the sub-station that feeds the line behind the 9th tee boxes – especially right-handers who have a slice off the 8th tee...). This power line would need to be buried by the utility company – at significant cost to Balmore Golf Club (if we gained planning permission).
- In addition, there is a drainage challenge where the green would be situated. Anyone overshooting the 7th green will know that while searching for their ball.
- Approximately 110 new yards would extend the hole from 344 to 454 yards.



Option 5

- This is perhaps the most contentious (and complicated) proposal whereby the upper practise area and Par 3 course would be sacrificed.
- The 1st hole would become a long, dogleg right Par 5 to a new green at the far end, near the 6th hole. Drainage issues would necessitate that a pond or marsh area protect the front of the green, forcing players to play a high shot into a raised green.
- This new hole would be a formidable opening Par 5 stretching over 600 yards with a blind second shot.
- As part of this change, a new 2nd hole would be born. A new tee box tucked into the far corner of the current practise area would have players aiming their tee shots towards the current 1st green, uphill, carrying the small burn that runs across today's Par 3 course.
- The current 1st green would become the new 2nd green, playing as a testing Par 4 (about 380 yards).
- This new hole would mean that today's 2nd hole would become the new 3rd, and so on.
- This change creates a rare opportunity to "lose" an existing hole somewhere else on the course. For example, we could combine the current 8th and 9th holes to create another new Par 5...
- Before we get carried away re-architecting the whole course, we must consider whether or we want to consume the Par 3 course – this is a differentiator for Balmore and key to growing our Junior department which is key to our 5-year strategic plan.



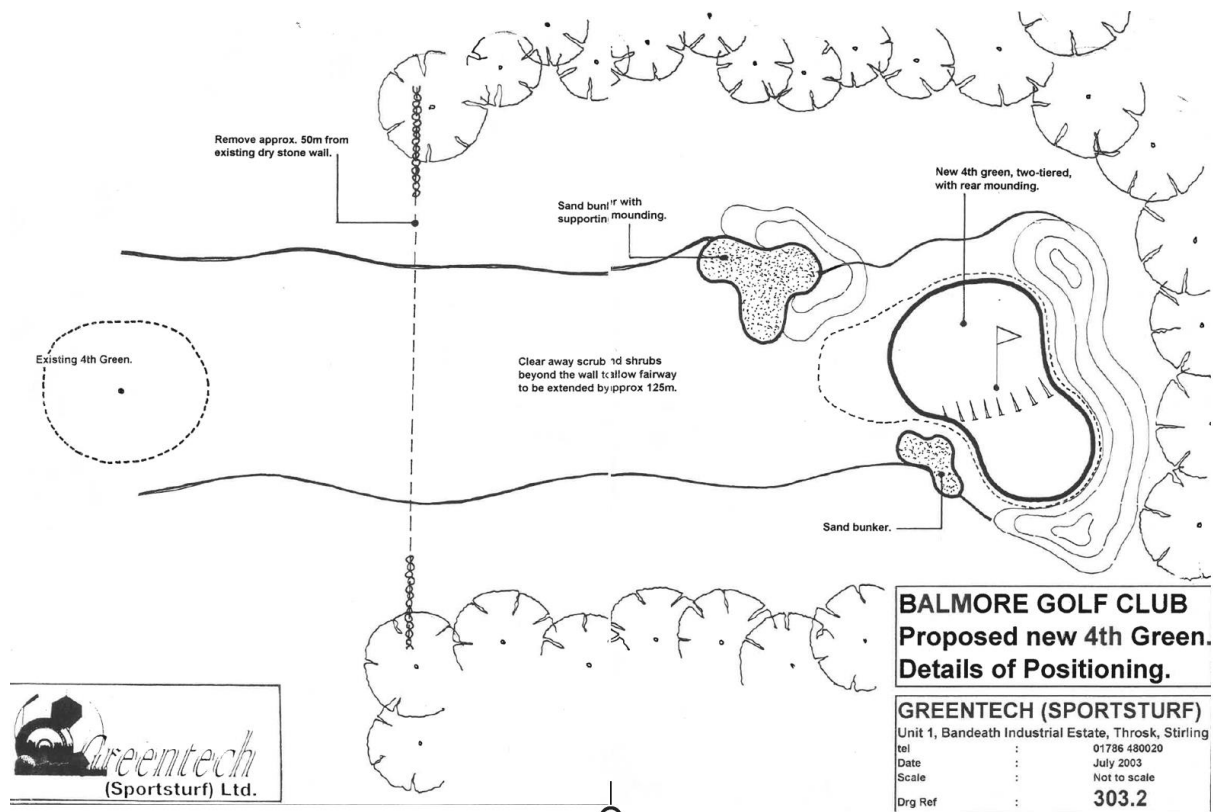
Summary of options

The table below summarises the five options for extending the course to create new Par 5 holes. Costs are budget estimates only at this stage, excluding VAT.

Option	Description	Pros	Cons	ROM Cost (excl VAT)	Effort /Cost	Appeal
1	Create new green at the 4 th , over the wall.	Land is already owned by the club. Minimal disruption to course while work is being carried out.	Creation of new green and extended fairway won't be cheap.	£90,000	Medium	High
2	Push 5 th tee back, into trees, lengthen fairway.	Cost effective, minimum disruption.	Trees must be felled, might need landscaping to compensate for slope. Red and Yellow 4 th tees must move.	£50,000	Medium	Medium
3	Move 3 rd tee back, left as much as possible to create a dogleg.	Relatively easy to implement with existing resources. Low cost.	Trees must be cut down. Danger of wayward tee shots landing on 2 nd green.	£50,000	Medium	Low
4	Extend 10 th with creation of a new fairway and green in the field behind the current green.	Makes use of land owned by the club.	Relatively expensive. Likely to require landscaping, trees must be felled, power line moved. Drainage may be an issue.	£120,000	High	Medium
5	New holes at 1 st and 2 nd by repurposing Par 3 course. Combine 8 th and 9 th holes.	Creates two new Par 5 holes and a brand-new Par 4.	Consumes over half of the practise area, including Par 3 course which is key to our Junior initiative. Expensive, disruptive.	£125,000	High	Low

Council's Proposal

Having explored the five main options described in this whitepaper, it is Council's recommendation that the club consider investing in a new Par 5 at the 4th hole. This was an option explored in 2003 by Greentech Sportsturf Ltd when they rebuilt our greens to PGA standard. Here are the original, detailed drawings that Charlie dug out of the Balmore archives:



The new green would be two tiered, with the upper level protected by a bunker:



Cost

During early April, Charlie invited Greentech Sportsturf Ltd to revisit the course to review the project. On April 20th we received an updated, budgetary quotation. The cost estimate is £87,000 → £95,000, excluding VAT. Here is a copy of the quote:

BALMORE GOLF CLUB Proposed New Green at Hole No 4

<i>Description</i>	
<u>Budget Cost</u> <u>Based on a Putting Surface of 400m²</u>	
1	Complete area to be re sprayed with a total weedkiller.
2	10-14 days thereafter strip top soil to a depth of 200mm and stock pile for re-use.
3	Shape and contour subsoil to form new Green Base and Approach/Fairway including 2 No new Bunkers.
4	Excavate & Install a new Main Drain Greenside of the existing dry stone dyke exiting into a positive working outlet.
5	Install a drainage system for Green Bunkers Approach/Fairway connecting into new main drain.
6	Re-spread previously stock piled top soil onto Green surrounds Bunker Banks and Edges and to Approach/Fairways to a depth of 200mm.
7	Supply and install a 100mm layer of 2-6mm washed grit over the complete new putting surface.
8	Supply and install a 300mm layer of an approved Rootzone evenly over the Grit layer
9	Supply and install a suitable Bunker Liner.
10	Install secondary drainage to Approach/Fairway to connect through the Top Soil into the primary drainage system.
11	Prepare Approach/Fairway to be seeded. Apply a pre-seeding Fertiliser.
12	Using the Blec Culti Pack Seeding Units, seed the complete area excluding the Putting Surface & Bunker Bankings.
13	Supply and lay suitable turf to Bunker Banks.
<i>NB: The above works should be carried out in the summer months.</i>	

BALMORE GOLF CLUB

Proposed New Green at Hole No 4

<i>Description</i>	
	<u>To Marry in Existing Hole to New Par 5</u>
1	Remove the appropriate section of the Dry Stone Dyke. Store for possible re-use.
2	Using the Ryan Turf Cutter strip existing Putting surface. Transport and lay onto new Green.
3	Strip the remaining Turf and set aside for possible re-use.
4	Strip Top Soil to a depth of 200mm and stock pile for re-use.
5	Shape old Green and Approach creating possibly 1 new Bunker. This will give the impression there has never been a green in this area.
6	Uplift previously set aside Top Soil and spread evenly over the area to a depth of 200mm.
7	Prepare area to turf.
8	Uplift previously set aside turf and returf the complete area. There will be a shortfall here as previous Green is no longer available. Allow for a provisional sum for turf or locate suitable turf from the Golf Course.
<p><i>NB: The above works should be carried out as early in the Autumn as possible when ground conditions are suitable. This may require a temporary Green to be prepared early.</i></p>	
<p style="text-align: right;"><i>BUDGET COST excluding VAT £87,000 - £95,000</i></p>	

Should the membership agree with Council that a new Par 5 is something we wish to implement, then all efforts would be made to ensure that the investment is affordable and not detrimental to the club's long term financial stability. A combination of treasury reserves, a levy and affordable loan would be used. A detailed financial model with cash flow projections would be created and shared with members to help them decide if we wish to proceed.

A re-evaluation of the course slope rating would be required. We would also consider changing the playing order of the holes. For example, the current 6th might become the new 4th. In this instance, players would play the current 12th hole as the new 10th, then play the current 5th, then 4th holes as the new 11th and 12th holes. Players would then cut over to the current 13th tee. Still with me?

Playing from the white tees, this change would result in the front nine becoming a par a 33. The back nine would become a par 34 delivering a more balanced configuration with three par 3 holes per nine:

4, 3, 4, 3, 4, 4, 4, 4, 3 = 33

4, 4, 5, 3, 4, 3, 3, 4, 4 = 34

Next Steps

The desire for a new Par 5 was one of the priorities from last year's member survey. Balmore Council has listened to that request and prepared this whitepaper as a way of engaging further with membership. In order to progress this potential project as part of our 5-year strategic plan, we ask that members carefully consider this whitepaper and participate in an upcoming workshop that will be held at the clubhouse during the summer. Details will be shared in an upcoming newsletter. At this workshop, Balmore Council and Charlie Goodall will be available to debate the proposal and listen to the opinion of members. Constructive feedback will be gratefully received and factored into a more detailed proposal that will be voted on at the end of year EGM.

Balmore Council

23rd April 2022

