

Locals blast St Andrews Links Trust over golf course access



The St Andrews Links Trust has come in for criticism from locals over a perceived reduction in access to the town's golf courses.

A group calling itself the St Andrews Resident Golfer Association has revealed the results of a survey it has carried out of golfers in the sport's hometown, uncovering what it says are "several key issues" that have "negatively impacted on their golf experience on the links".

More than 80% of the 100-plus respondents said that their experience has got worse or much worse in recent years, with access to the seven courses operated by the [Trust](#) of particular concern.

Around 90% of respondents feel that availability of tee times has got worse or much worse, whilst 80% of respondents expressed concern about the pace of play.

Over 90%, meanwhile, agree or strongly agree that the increased number of visitors has negatively impacted on the Links ticket-holder golf experience.

Comments received as part of the survey suggest that too much priority is given to visitors, particularly block advance bookings which "reduce tee time availability and clog up the courses".

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The findings have been shared with [bunkered.co.uk](#) on the eve of the Alfred Dunhill Links Championship, which takes place on the Old Course this week.

It is the second high-profile event to be staged on the historic links in six weeks, following the AIG Women's Open at the end of August.

A spokesperson for the St Andrews Resident Golfer Association said: "The survey has delivered a clear message about how the residents of the town feel about how their golfing experience has deteriorated over recent years.

"Many of the underlying problems stem from increasing visitor rounds which since 2009 have gone up by more than 50% to 151,000.

"The town owns the links and the governing act which set up the trust recognised this mentioning residents as one of only three groups whose interests should be protected.

"The association hopes that the trust improve transparency and engage more with the local golfing community to identify solutions which will restore parity for residents of the town."

Approached for comment by bunkered.co.uk, a spokesperson for St Andrews Links Trust said: "St Andrews Links is a global golf tourism destination and significant economic driver in St Andrews, Fife and across Scotland offering access to various groups in accordance with the Links Act and the Trust's charitable mission to promote public participation in sport," said the Links Trust spokesperson.

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“In the last five years, both before and after the pandemic, we have seen a significant increase and unprecedented demand for our golf courses from both ticket holders and visitors, in line with global trends.



“The number of rounds played has risen at a similar rate for both ticket holders and visitors and there has been no decrease in the number of times available to ticket holders during this time.

“Earlier this year, we conducted an independent survey of our ticket holders, with more than 1,200 responses focusing on areas such as access to the golf courses. Nearly nine in 10 of those surveyed said their links ticket represented good

value for money with the majority of courses receiving positive feedback for availability of access.”

The spokesperson did confirm that course access has been highlighted as an area of concern, with more dedicated ticket-holder times cited as the best way to deliver improvements.

However, they added that plans are already afoot to address that.

“In the past two years, we have created a Golf Access Group, dedicated to reviewing access methods and forecasting future demand at St Andrews Links. As part of those ongoing efforts, in April this year we were pleased to announce additional tee times for ticket holders, including an increase in 2024 and a substantial adjustment of more than 10,000 exclusive ticket holder tee times to improve access across our courses for the 2025 season.

“Ensuring fair access to the golf courses has always been and remains a top priority for the Trust. We will continue to monitor these changes and update ticket holders on their impact in due course.”