

Links Trust Clubhouse set to expand ...

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Plans have been unveiled to extend and upgrade the Links Clubhouse which sits at the heart of golf in St Andrews.

It caters for golfers playing the Old Course as well as the New and Jubilee courses, and comes at a time when visitor numbers to the Home of Golf have soared.

St Andrews Links Trust (SALT), which manages the courses, has submitted its plans to Fife Council which will make a decision in the coming months. The boom in demand for golf from locals and visitors to St Andrews saw the Trust record revenue in excess of £40m and more than 283,000 rounds of in 2023.

The Links Clubhouse is the main hub of activity at the renowned venue, catering for golfers playing the three oldest courses in the



The view from the cafe (Pic: St Andrews Links Trust)

town, as well as non-golfing visitors and locals on a daily basis.

The plans include the extension of the clubhouse to incorporate a new café, bag drop area and enhanced retail space as well as a renovation of locker room facilities for golfers.

New windows will offer uninterrupted, expansive views of the Links from the bar and grill, whilst an upgraded roof terrace will take advantage of the views across the Links and back



An artist's impression of how the clubhouse could look (Pic: St Andrews Links Trust)



towards the town of St Andrews.

Neil Coulson, chief executive of St Andrews Links Trust said: "We're excited to unveil these plans to deliver a significantly enhanced experience at the Links Clubhouse for the benefit of all golfers and non-golfing visitors to the Home of Golf."

"The appetite and demand to play at St Andrews Links since the pandemic has been unprecedented, which has allowed us to not only fully recover financially but to begin the process of strategic reinvestment back into the site to benefit current customers as well as future generations."

"We look forward to sharing more details for reinvestment into the Links, which will include a mixture of on and off-course projects such as irrigation and coastal management."

Since its completion in 1995, when it became the first public clubhouse in the town, the Links Clubhouse

has proven popular with local and visitor golfers alike with its mix of golfer amenities, food and beverage and retail outlets.

As it approaches its 30th year of operation its mechanical and electrical infrastructure and building fabric is now inefficient and associated with high energy costs. Much of this infrastructure is approaching the end of its recommended service of life and needs to be replaced.

As part of the Links Trust's sustainability strategy, the plans will improve the energy efficiency of the building with outdated double glazing replaced and triple glazing introduced.

Separately, a standalone energy hub will be introduced adjacent to the existing recycling point on West Sands Road, including air source heat pumps.

Enhanced access will also be introduced with a customer lift linking the floors as well as accessible chang-

ing rooms, showers and toilet facilities. The refurbishment will also upgrade staff facilities and welfare area.

Details of the renovation and refurbishment plans are available to view in the Links Clubhouse reception area as well as in the Eden Clubhouse and the Links Trust's HQ at New Pilmour House.

The Trust said a recent survey of St Andrews Links ticketholders found that 56% of ticketholders used the Links Clubhouse at least once a month, with only five per cent not using it at all during the year.

At the same time, a new group, St Andrews Resident Golfers Association revealed its survey findings on the back of concerns local golfers were being 'squeezed out' by demand to play the famous courses.

It said its survey showed 92% of respondents felt that availability of tee times has got worse or much worse over the years.

Links proposals

Sir, – Faced with the yearly increasing depredations by the Links Trust (LT) of locals' rights on the links, there has been talk of pressing the nuclear button i.e. asking for the repeal of the 1974 Act. The answer has always been - but we have so much to lose. No longer - we have already lost nearly everything - but the R & A would have a lot to lose. Accordingly, I propose that the LT, the R & A, the local clubs and Fife Region get together to sort out a compromise, which would guarantee something worthwhile for all parties. There would have to be a legally binding agreement so that there could be no backsliding. I propose:

1. No tour operators times be allocated on Saturdays or Sundays, with the exception of the Castle Course.
2. A total of 2 to 3 hours daily be the maximum allowed (this figure is negotiable) and times allocated must NEVER exceed ballot times.
3. Local residents should have ABSOLUTE priority on the Old Course on Saturdays and Thursday afternoons.
4. No tour operator times be allocated after 4pm.
5. No visitors allowed on any course after 4pm unless with a local.
6. Tour operators be allocated all times on the Castle Course on Saturdays and Sundays, and all day on Mondays on the Jubilee, all day on Tuesday on the New, and all day on Wednesday on the Eden. This will spread the load from the Old Course, and enable tour operators to guarantee clients a time/times in St Andrews, if not on the Old Course. These arrangements would run from April until the end of October, and tour operators would not be allocated any times over the winter months. I think these proposals represent a fair compromise and balance between "St Andrews residents and others resorting thereto". The present situation whereby locals play only 25 per cent of the rounds on the Old Course is quite unacceptable. – Yours, etc.,

Name & address supplied

Links Trust

Sir, – You say October 18, no doubt straight from a Links Trust press release, that "the boom in demand for golf from local and visitors to St Andrews saw the Trust record revenue in excess of £40m and more than 283,000 rounds in 2023. This is untrue. Visitor rounds have indeed increased and locals are being squeezed off their own courses. The Trust was set up "to maintain the links as a public park and place of recreation for St Andrews residents and others resorting thereto". Note St Andrews residents are mentioned first and separately. It is clear the Trust is prioritising visitors over locals. So modernising the Links Clubhouse is all very well, but an expansion is just another example of bureaucratic empire building. Money should be redirected to protecting the interests of local golfers in terms of access to their own courses. I hope this planning application is refused. – Yours, etc.,

Colin McAllister,
(via email)

The trust are failing the residents of St Andrews

Sir, – The Links Trust are supposed to be accountable, not to ticket holders as they say, but to residents of St Andrews. Their failure to be transparent about their activities is just one of their egregious failings.

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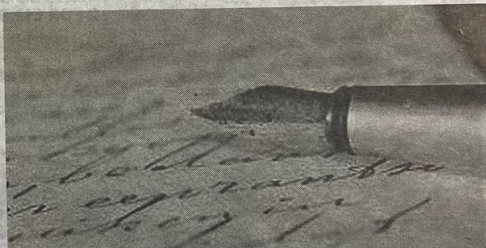


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In the picture



The Brock of Gurness, an iron age settlement on Orkney's main island



Compose your thoughts and drop us an email

Their failure to reply to stinging criticism of them in the letters of October 4 in this paper is just another example of their arrogant contempt of public opinion and demonstrates that they have no answer to charges made against them. – Yours, etc.,
G Murray,
St Andrews

from The Community Council, Preservation trust, Opticians, dentists, residents, members of the public and shopkeepers all voicing their own objections against the South Street proposed changes. Most interestingly though was the almost complete

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