St Andrews Resident Golfers Association (STARGA)
Report of Annual General Meeting 2026
Wednesday 4 November 1900hrs
Venue - Boys Brigade Hall, Kinnessburn Road, St Andrews

Chairman Richard McFarlane (RM)
Director Joe Noble (JN)
Treasurer Kevin Mullins (KM)
Secretary John Winter (JW)

RM welcomed members numbering about fifty to the meeting. He gave an overview of the Associations work over the last year and outlined some of the important issues.

RM reported on an initial meeting with Richard Holland the recently appointed CEO of St Andrews Links Trust (SALT) accompanied by JN and JW. The meeting was notable for Richard's offer of engagement and cooperation and the association officers left the meeting feeling optimistic that relationships with SALT had turned a significant corner.

JN reported on the information meeting the previous evening given by SALT. This evening had been planned for the evening of our AGM and we are grateful to SALT for moving their meeting to the night before. There was a wide ranging review of SALT's activities and plans much of which were known to members. Of note is that the plan to make the changes to allow the Castle course to open year round seems to have been put on hold.

JW reported that the selection of Fife Council's trustee appointment from local clubs had been delegated to SALT in a similar way to the Scottish Government's appointment.The process does not require the appointee to have a significant interest and knowledge of the town or it's golf despite residents being named as beneficiaries in the 1974 Act. Scrutiny of the current trustees reveals an abundance of commercial expertise and little prospect of residents' views being expressed. JN and JW have had a number of meetings with Fife Council's CEO and senior officers, councillors, our MSP and MP. Our councillors and MSP have been very supportive but we have as yet to succeed in influencing change in the trustee selection process, hopefully this will change over the next year or so although the government proposal to reduce Scottish council numbers may complicate the issue. Members were encouraged to make representation to their councillors on this issue.

JN discussed SALT's 2025 annual report showing a surplus of £8.4m and reserves of over £54m. The number of rounds played, nearly 300,000 was contextualised with totals in the low 200,000s in the pre covid period rising considerably post covid, thus comparisons of the current course traffic to that in recent years can give an incomplete picture.

JW reported on the Environment Information Regulations (EIR) which are similar to the Freedom of Information regulations to which SALT is not currently subject. A request for information on environmental grounds for monthly rounds played by various ticket holder groups and visitors was submitted to SALT. SALT received a legal opinion from Thorntons which concluded that SALT was not subject to EIR. STARGA appealed to the Information Commissioner who did not find the information request fitted with the EIR, however he did find that SALT is subject to the EIR. STARGA then requested SALT to provide environmental information on measures to address coastal erosion, this was again refused and STARGA was at the point of being able to appeal to the Information Commissioner. The appeal has been shelved in the belief that STARGA will have a more cooperative and fruitful relationship with the new SALT regime.
JW reported that STARGA had expressed concerns to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) that SALT had provided links tickets to those ineligible to receive them and that St Andrews University and it's students were receiving private benefit by the automatic allocation of links tickets with conditions similar to residents.

Time did not permit discussion of emails received from members before the meeting but these and contributions from the meeting involved the following issues.

Difficulties in interpreting data released by SALT
Difficulties obtaining tee times especially on the New Course
Policing eligibility for resident links tickets
Concerns about student numbers and privileges
Addressing no shows
Limiting the number of SALT competitions which remove tee times from local golfers
Policing the use of fairway mats and dog poo pick up.

Priorities for 2027
Pursue engagement and cooperation with SALT
Engage with councillors to include local town and golf experience as criteria for trustee appointments
Follow up with OSCR

The meeting agreed to reappoint officers RM, JN, JW, KM and Fiona McEwan (FM) and to change the constitution from *The AGM shall be held on the first Wednesday in November each year.* To *The AGM shall be held in November each year*

RM thanked members for attending, encouraged members to communicate their concerns and thoughts either personally or via email and urged the recruitment of new members. A supply of STARGA business cards was provided, courtesy FM.

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https://www.standrewsresidentgolfersassociation.com/