

## **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **Report by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development**

**Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee: 4 August 2010**

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**Subject:      Unauthorised use of Dalmuir Golf Course**

#### **1.      Purpose**

- 1.1**      The purpose of this report is to update members of the committee on actions being taken to assist in the prevention of unauthorised use of Dalmuir Golf Course.

#### **2.      Background**

- 2.1**      Each year the council experiences instances of individuals and small groups of accessing Dalmuir Golf Course to play golf without registering or paying to play.
- 2.2**      Management and staff at the Golf Course are acutely aware of the problem and are constantly reviewing practises in an effort to minimise incidences.
- 2.3**      There are several particular areas on the course where people access without paying however these form rights of way and it is therefore not feasible to prohibit access at these points.
- 2.4**      Staff monitor the course closely, checking tickets and season passes to ensure that all players have paid. Anyone caught without a valid ticket is asked to pay for their round of golf or leave the course. Most leave without a problem however the police are summoned where necessary.
- 2.5**      Although there is an element of lost income due to people accessing the course without paying, it is the case that many of the people caught are unwilling to pay to play therefore their income would never have been realised by the Council.
- 2.6**      A number of actions have been taken this year in an effort to reduce the instances of people playing on the course without paying. These include the introduction of a small motorised vehicle for the Park Rangers to use to traverse the course more quickly and the introduction of uniforms for the Rangers to promote easy identification and raise their profile around the course.

### **3. Main Issues**

- 3.1** Whilst efforts are being made to minimise unauthorised use of the course, it is recognised that more requires to be done.
- 3.2** The golf course has a right of way going through it which makes it difficult to put in place any security fencing which would restrict access to members of the public. In addition, high security fencing around the course would look unsightly and detract from the overall environment and would be unlikely to deter those determined to gain access.
- 3.3** The cost of providing permanent staffing at the various rights of way to the course would far outweigh the potential income collected.
- 3.4** A meeting was recently held between the Golf Professional, Park Rangers, the Green Keeper, local community Police and course management to discuss additional measures which could be taken to minimise the problem.

As a result of the discussions the undernoted actions are now being implemented:

- (i) Provision of clear signage at the first tee, the bridge accessing the course at the 2<sup>nd</sup> tee and at the 6<sup>th</sup> tee advising those accessing the course without payment that they will be asked to leave the course if unable to produce a valid season ticket, score card or receipt.
  - (ii) Development of a set of Management Rules which will apply to the course and which will clearly be displayed at various locations on the course and will be available in printed leaflet form.
  - (iii) Increased patrols of 'hot spot' areas by Park Rangers making spot checks for valid score cards/season tickets.
  - (iv) Community police officers have agreed to make regular patrols of the course both in uniform and plain clothes to support the work of the Park Rangers in identifying unauthorised usage.
  - (v) Increased communication between staff at the Golf Pro shop and Park Rangers to provide Park Rangers with regular updated information on golfer's names and tee off times. This will allow park rangers to better target those not corresponding with the list.
- 3.5** The introduction of a reduced payment ticket for those not wishing to play a full round of golf is presently being explored. There is a risk however that this does not encourage more people to pay and play but in fact offers a reduction to those customers already paying full price.

### **4. People Implications**

- 4.1** There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1** Although there is an element of lost income due to people accessing the course without paying, it is the case that many of the people caught are unwilling to pay to play therefore their income would never have been realised by the Council.
- 5.2** It is therefore not possible to accurately determine the level of income being lost.
- 5.3** The cost of installing additional signage on the course is estimated to be in the region of £1500. This will be funded from the Outdoor Recreation Revenue budget.

## **6. Risk Analysis**

- 6.1** The actions listed in para 3.4 above are designed to reduce the risk of lost income to the Council. These actions themselves are not considered to present any significant risks to the Council.

## **7. Equalities Impact**

- 7.1** No significant issues have been identified in a screening for potential equality impact.

## **8. Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 8.1** It is recognised that the council experiences instances of individuals and small groups of accessing Dalmuir Golf Course to play golf without registering or paying to play.
- 8.2** Management and staff at the Golf Course are acutely aware of the problem and have, in partnership with the Golf Professional, Park Rangers, the Green Keeper and local community Police, developed a range of additional measures (as outlined in para 3.4 above) to minimise the problem.
- 8.3** It is recommended that the Committee agree to the introduction of the additional measures outlined in this report which are designed to minimise the problem of unauthorised use of Dalmuir Golf Course.

**Elaine Melrose**

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**Date: 7 July 2010**

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**Appendix:** None

**Background Papers:** None

**Wards Affected:** 5