

Date: Thursday 19 May 2022
Time: 10.00am
Meeting Room: This meeting will proceed via MS Teams and either a recording or a written summary will be uploaded to the Auckland Council website.
Venue:

Puketāpapa Local Board

OPEN MINUTE ITEM ATTACHMENTS

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8 April 2022

REQUEST FOR WITHDRAWAL AND CORRECTION

To: Auckland Council
From: Golf New Zealand
Subject: Draft Auckland Golf Investment Plan – Request for withdrawal and correction.

This request is submitted by Golf New Zealand and fully endorsed by Auckland Golf and North Golf.

Golf New Zealand is fully supportive of Auckland Council having an investment plan for golf. The sport of golf is growing, and as the city grows, Auckland will need more golf facilities to serve future demand.

Golf has a significant and positive impact on Auckland. This impact is realised through social, environmental, economic and community outcomes for the city and its people. We consider Auckland Council a critical partner and we want to work hand in hand to shape the future of Golf in Auckland.

As the leadership body for the sport, Golf New Zealand is concerned about the recently released Draft Auckland Golf Investment Plan (**Plan**). There are several factual errors and misleading generalisations made in the Plan which we believe justify a withdrawal and redraft of the Plan. It is of great concern that this document has been released to the public. Public submissions will be based on incorrect, inaccurate, and misleading information. We believe this will render any submissions made invalid. There is an imbalance in the messaging and a bias against golf that may have detrimental consequences not only for golf, but for the people of Auckland.

Our vision is to be an integral part of Auckland's future, enriching Auckland through golf. This report does not provide a fair representation of the true value of golf or golf facilities to Auckland. It relies on information that is nearly a decade old in some cases and does not truly reflect a post covid world and the growth of golf over many years.

In addition, project timelines and consultation periods presented both publicly, and directly to stakeholders are misleading. The Plan states that during the formation of this Plan, stakeholders including specifically 'New Zealand Golf' (now Golf New Zealand, name changed in 2019) were 'checked in' with. This is misleading; Golf New Zealand was consulted years ago and were not aware of this Plan. We, as well as Auckland and North Golf, were given advanced notice only two days before the plan went public which was insufficient time to respond. We do not consider this consultation, nor does it constitute due and proper process. This disappointment in the lack of consultation is reinforced by the fact the document has numerous inaccuracies, errors, generalisations and is based on out of date and redundant information.

We wish to reiterate that we welcome an investment plan for Golf in Auckland and are open and ready to engage, consult, advocate and support Auckland Council's work to enrich more lives in Auckland through Golf however, we want to start from a foundation that is accurate and true so that together, we can get valid and meaningful feedback from the public and relevant stakeholders.

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Golf is a growing sport and is contributing towards the vision of Auckland being the world's most active city.

The Plan is silent on this fact and infers the opposite. Participation in golf has significantly increased each year, for several years. It is fundamentally incorrect to say that experienced golfers are declining in number, that there are few places for people to get started in golf and that golf courses are only open to members or people paying green fees. We present the following facts and research to provide evidence on our position.

- Golf is the largest club-based sport in the country with an estimated 500,000 participants.
- Since 2013, golf club membership within Auckland has grown 29% to 31,739. For context, golf's adult club membership is larger than rugby, netball and football's adult membership combined. Participation and membership trends prove significant growth in Auckland and New Zealand highlighted in the tables below. For instance, the number of rounds played has increased 11% since 2017, while the number of club members has grown 31%. This growth has occurred despite restrictions of COVID-19 lockdowns and international visitors.

| Golf Rounds Played | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
| Auckland | 927,276 | 927,712 | 1,021,605 | 1,023,107 | 1,026,843 |
| | | | | | +11% |
| New Zealand | 3,678,718 | 3,686,275 | 3,907,495 | 3,907,243 | 4,315,855 |
| | | | | | +17% |

| Golf Membership | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Auckland | 24,321 | 23,271 | 23,369 | 28,514 | 30,795 | 31,765 |
| | | | | | | +31% |
| New Zealand | 104,251 | 103,443 | 105,976 | 115,835 | 126,608 | 128,980 |
| | | | | | | +24% |

- Over 1,100,000 competitive rounds of golf are now played in Auckland annually which do not include a large number of events, charity days, corporate days, recreational play or practice rounds.
- Each round of golf is approximately 4 hours of active recreation per person playing. Accounting for competitive rounds alone as per the point above, golf currently contributes over 4,400,000 hours of active recreation. If golf courses were repurposed to other forms of recreation, there is risk that this would result in an overall decrease in active recreation. Golf courses are utilised 7 days a week during all daylight hours compared to other green space such as football fields which are predominantly used after hours or at weekends.



- Based on population growth projections, we can expect an increase in golfers across Auckland over the next 20 years. Accordingly, there is a risk that the number of golf clubs that currently operate across Auckland will not be able to keep up with demand and more golf facilities are needed.
- Since 2018, a new strategy to grow children and young people's participation has led to a 71% increase in U/19 club membership and 99,133 rounds played in the past 12 months.
- Golf New Zealand started to register casual golfers/non-club members in 2014 and this has grown per annum significantly with 48,805 Aucklanders formally registering with Golf New Zealand as casual golfers.
- The existing network of private and public golf facilities provide a wide variety of pricing for membership and green fees which makes golf accessible to a diverse range of participants in age, ethnicity, gender, ability, and income levels.

There is an unreasonable assumption that existing 18-hole courses are not able or are not currently catering to the needs of a diverse range of participants. Club management and facility operators recognise the importance of being customer-focused and currently deliver a wide-range of experiences for all skill levels including beginners, children, youth, women, families, and disabled peoples. It is the inclusive nature of golf where players of all ages and skill levels can choose the course length, layout and format that suits their preferences while playing together.

Auckland Council's report states that there are few places for people to get started in golf. To add further context to this statement, the growth trajectory of golf participation can be associated with the interest in the sport, demand, and supply of existing quality opportunities at golf clubs and facilities in Auckland to help people learn, start, and play through coaching, events, 6-hole, 9-hole recreational play which have all grown in line with 18-hole rounds played. Introductory facilities and experiences do not have to be mutually exclusive and there are many examples on Council owned land or managed facilities that cater for broad range of beginners, casual golfers, pay-for-play experiences.

Golf New Zealand's advocacy position is for Auckland Council to recognise any loss of golf's existing footprint would not only be detrimental to the supply network of golf facilities but also to the experience and equitable access to existing and future golfers. Further, increased investment to enhance and add new introductory facilities is required to meet the demand of golf in the future.

Golf is one of the most popular sport and recreation activities with a diverse participant base.

In the Plan, Auckland Council make several inaccurate and misleading statements that do not recognise the diverse participant groups that engage in golf as participants or user groups who value the golf club and facility as their source of belonging and community.

The Plan states that 'Auckland Golf courses meet the needs of a relatively narrow segment of the population'. Decisions that have such a significant impact for the future of golf must be informed by credible sources of data and information. Such data is provided below to demonstrate the concern around providing no context to such statements in the Plan.

- Active New Zealand Survey (2019) undertaken by Sport New Zealand highlights golf as one of the most popular sport and recreation activities for adults with 10% of Aucklanders participating in the last 12 months. For context, participation football (7%), netball (5%), cricket (4%) hockey (2%) and rugby (2%).
- The research also highlights that Golf is one of the most popular sport and recreation activities for males and females. For context:
 - 17% of males have played golf in the last 12 months
 - Male participation across other sports, football (10%), tennis (9%), cricket (7%) and rugby (4%)
 - 5% of females have played golf in the last 12 months
 - Female participation across other sports, netball (8%), tennis (7%), football (4%), cricket (2%) and rugby (1%).
- Golf connects participants from many different cultural and ethnic backgrounds to be active. For context, this table highlights sport participation in the last 12 months by ethnicity.

| | NZ European | Māori | Pacific Peoples | Asian |
|----------|-------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| Golf | 11% | 10% | 8% | 7% |
| Tennis | 9% | 6% | 6% | 7% |
| Football | 7% | 6% | 7% | 9% |
| Rugby | 2% | 4% | 8% | 1% |

- Golf is the source of inspiration for many age groups to be physically active for the enjoyment, social connection, and well-being benefits with minimal drop off in participation across the lifespan, particularly important as inactivity tends to increase with age.

| | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-64 | 65-75 | 75+ |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| Golf | 12% | 12% | 10% | 10% | 11% | 7% |
| Football | 19% | 10% | 8% | 3% | 1% | 0% |
| Cricket | 9% | 6% | 6% | 2% | 0% | 0% |
| Rugby | 7% | 4% | 2% | 1% | 0% | 0% |

- Golf contributes to an active, healthy lifestyle. It is social, bringing friends and families together from all walks of life. This table reflects sport participation by Socioeconomic Deprivation Index.

| | Deprivation Low 1-3 | Deprivation Medium 4-7 | Deprivation High 8-10 |
|----------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Golf | 13% | 10% | 7% |
| Football | 8% | 8% | 6% |
| Tennis | 11% | 8% | 4% |
| Rugby | 2% | 2% | 3% |
| Netball | 5% | 5% | 5% |

The unique value that makes golf an inclusive sport is that it can be played as an individual, in pairs or teams. It's adaptable for a range of disabilities or impairments, e.g. blind, deaf, intellectual, physical, or sensory. The handicap system makes it equitable for varying ages, skill levels, or disability to play and compete with able-bodied participants or within their classification. This table reflects sport and recreation participation in the last 7 days by disabled peoples.

| | Disabled participants (total) | Disabled people aged 18-24 years | Disabled people aged 25-34 years | Disabled people aged 35-49 years | Disabled people aged 50-64 years | Disabled people aged 65-74 years | Disabled people aged 75+ years |
|----------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Golf | 5% | 1% | 3% | 2% | 3% | 4% | 4% |
| Football | 2% | 2% | 3% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Tennis | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 0% | 1% |
| Rugby | 1% | 1% | 1% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Netball | 1% | 2% | 3% | 1% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Pilates | 4% | 2% | 2% | 3% | 3% | 2% | 1% |
| Yoga | 7% | 6% | 6% | 7% | 5% | 2% | 1% |

Regarding the Auckland Council comment that the courses are ‘public land used exclusively by a small number of regular golfers’, it is not clear how Auckland Council have come to this conclusion, the emergence, timeline of this research or whether there was any undertaken at all, that could lead to Auckland Council to present this statement to the public as a fact.

Our points and data above pertaining to participants rebuts the reference to a small number of regular golfers. In regard to the exclusive reference, Golf clubs connect Aucklanders from all walks of life together enhancing social capital and community resilience. For instance:

- For over 100,000 golfers in Auckland, there is lifelong contribution to the prevention of disease which reduces the healthcare burden on society and the regular and enduring social interaction is an opportunity to expand social networks and spend quality time with friends and family.
- Women’s membership has grown 18% over the previous 5 years.
- Young people’s U/19 membership has grown 47% over the previous 5 years.
- Golf provides opportunities for thousands of Aucklanders to make a difference in their community through volunteering.
- Being more than a sport as golf clubs can be significant local businesses, strengthening the surrounding economy and act as the social hub of the community for many diverse groups.
- Golf is a significant contributor to philanthropy and host of charitable events for many causes that are mostly unrelated to golf to benefit local community groups and social enterprises.
- Golf clubs provide affordable spaces for local businesses, community groups, and families to host their functions and events.
- Disability sport and recreation organisations such Halberg Disability Sport Foundation, Blind Sport and Special Olympics work in partnership with golf facilities in Auckland to run All Abilities programmes providing accessible experiences for disabled peoples to learn and play golf.
- Futures Auckland, a collaborative project between golf clubs across the Auckland Region provides access a variety of golf courses and experiences for children and young people of all ages and skill levels with coaching, events, playing opportunities. In 2021, over 25,600 rounds were played and junior membership has continued to grow 10% per annum for membership for U/19 years old over the previous five years.

- She Loves Golf is about creating fun and social experiences to inspire women to start, learn and play golf. Over 2,500 women get started through an experience led by golf clubs and facilities. As mentioned, women's membership has grown 18% over the previous 5 years.

Environmental Concerns

Aside from the reference to Remuera Golf Club's GEO certification, the Plan is negative and bias stating that some golf courses are high users of water, fertilisers, pesticides, and energy. The Plan has no balanced data or evidence. Further, stating that 'many other golf clubs struggle' is misleading.

Golf courses in Auckland are a part of our cultural heritage, set within natural landscapes, and sanctuaries for plants and wildlife. There is a growing awareness within our communities for the need to preserve our green space while simultaneously protecting sensitive habitats and species. Golf courses act as important tools for environmental conservation, enhancement and provide an escape to nature as urbanisation and intensification increases.

Golf New Zealand recognises the effects of climate change, global warming and supports golf clubs adopt practices to:

- conserve natural resources and water usage
- lower energy and fossil fuel use, moving towards green and renewable energy sources
- build resilience to cope with unpredictable weather patterns and related damages.

Golf is already making a positive difference and contributing to being part of the solution by reducing our carbon emissions, adopting new technology and practical solutions to promote and support sustainability in and through golf. For example:

- More than half of Auckland Council owned or managed golf courses back on to green space and act as green buffers to reserves and areas of native bush protecting them from soil erosion, extreme temperature fluctuations, dust and noise pollution and ground water contamination.
- Golf courses provide a valuable storm water function. For example, Takapuna Golf Course collects surface water and run-off from neighbouring streets and properties. Damage to neighbouring and business properties is effectively mitigated in the event of a major weather occurrence such as a 10-year flood.
- Remuera Golf Club's habitat restoration project involved converting 60,000m² to no mow zones, introducing more than 700 native plants and trees planted by volunteers and a predator control programme targeting mice, rats and possums to create a safe habitat for native birds including kereru and kaka.

Further, Auckland Golf and North Golf and the 37 golf clubs have adopted an environmental policy that focuses on:

- Reducing emissions and managing golf clubs carbon footprint
- Restoring the natural environment of the golf course and surrounding community
- Creating a predator-free golf course and community.

This aims to develop ecological enhancement plans for 2,000 hectares of green space in both deeply urban and city fringe. Auckland Golf and North Golf have worked closely with the Auckland Council and Department of Conservation to develop plans that include replacing existing exotic species with native flora setting a target to move from the current 25/75 to 40/60 ratio and intense predator-control, thus making these green urban spaces safe havens for native fauna.

This project supports the biodiversity corridors already invested in the region and includes working with the 13 golf courses on council-leased land, all of which have received the GEO certification reports that were facilitated by Auckland Golf and North Golf and subsidised by Golf New Zealand to encourage every golf club to be environmentally and socially responsible. Of these 13 clubs, 5 have also received funding for a biodiversity report and a greenhouse gas emission report that builds the ecological enhancement plans.

As a golf sector, we are committed and prepared to step forward as a leader for sustainability and climate action to create a better future for golf, our people, and our environment. Work to date and this commitment is in no way recognised within the Plan.

Conclusion

Golf New Zealand formally requests for the Plan to be withdrawn, corrected and redrafted based on the reasons above.

For the avoidance of doubt, this is not Golf New Zealand's stakeholder submission or similar. This is purely a request for withdrawal due to the disappointing consultation process and Plan that is based on historical data no longer relevant for the future of golf. The Plan is not balanced, and does not present a fair or accurate picture of the golfing landscape in Auckland.

As previously mentioned, Golf New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to work with council on an investment plan for Golf in Auckland. We are proud to be enriching lives through Golf and grateful to be able to demonstrate exactly how this is occurring in this document with accurate data and insights. Golf is growing, and golf is thriving. We request for the Plan to be redrafted to reflect the accurate position of Golf in 2022.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to receiving an updated Plan in due course.



Dean Murphy
Chief Executive

on behalf of

Hana-Rae Seifert, General Manager Partnerships & Legal
Thiem Nguyen, General Manager of Golf & Community Development