

AGM 2021

PROPRIETORS REPORT

It has been a long time since our last AGM, held at the beginning of 2019, and who would have thought of how popular golf has become compared to 18 months ago. With so much happening over this time and so many changes, this report provides the opportunity to give you an update.

As you are aware, due to the restrictions currently in place, the 2021 AGM is being conducted through unusual channels with all the reports posted electronically. While this allows us to share the various developments at the golf centre, it means we cannot connect with our members in the way that we would prefer. Hopefully, in the coming weeks and months, we can look forward to speaking with you at the golf centre and discussing the various refurbishment plans we need to undertake or answer any other questions you may have.

The pandemic and its impact

Firstly, we can all agree that our General Manager Mark has done a tremendous job in keeping you updated throughout the various lockdowns over the past 12 months, and continues to do so, particularly with regular golf course updates and daily reminders. Many members have said how appreciative they are of the continuous updates and how important they have been. Thank you, Mark for all the hard work you have put into the running of the centre.

While we are starting to return to a new normal it is important to reflect on how the pandemic has impacted on the golf centre. Throughout 2020 and early 2021, our gates were closed for a total of 160 days, with our catering and hospitality departments subjected to even greater closures and restrictions. Although it is obvious how popular the golf centre has become since those restrictions have eased, recovering from the financial impact that of COVID will take time. Fortunately, various Government and Council support schemes available have been gratefully received, allowing us to continue operations even during those difficult times.

There have been many times during the past year when we have had to make tough choices, including the initial decision to hold and refund all direct debit payments during the height of the pandemic. We want to thank everyone for their patience and understanding during this unprecedented process. Our goal is always to treat our members with the utmost respect and consideration, and we endeavour to always meet this standard in customer service.

With the lockdown now easing and people returning to their pre-COVID habits and hobbies, we feel an immense relief at operations resuming at BGC. We are constantly striving to offer all types of members the best possible experience and looking to make continual improvements to the running of the centre.

The current landscape

Golf exploded during lockdown, initially being one of the few outdoor activities allowed as restrictions eased. Many of you will have experienced this first-hand, with tee times in high demand and car parks busy every day of the week. The credits and refunds passed back to members during lockdown encouraged us to take in many new members as lockdown eased. We appreciate our established members welcoming these new joiners into the centre and remaining patient as tee times continue to be in demand.

Our facilities, combined with the superb work that the Members Committees and PGA Teaching Academy achieve make BGC an attractive proposition for membership which has led to unprecedented demand. The results of this have led us to introduce a waiting list and a holding area for Pending Members which we imagine will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

As restaurants reopened, our catering team were also hard at work and our outdoor seating has seen a massive surge in popularity. New menus and table service have helped create new experiences for members and guests which we hope to embrace in the long-term. Golf Society bookings are once again being taken but for the meantime on a limited basis. Many of the bookings being taken are still those that we are holding deposits for but have been unable to visit due to the restrictions in place, their attendance does help our turnover as Clubhouse income has seen a dramatic downturn over the past 12 months, and we do not see this returning to pre-COVID levels for a some-time.

We are proud to say that our careful planning during lockdown has allowed us to avoid making any staff member redundant and we have retained all our key core personnel throughout this period. In the current landscape, we consider this to be a remarkable achievement, considering the diverse nature of our business.

Every member of our team is a huge asset to BGC and we are grateful that they have remained with us during this difficult time. It is not an understatement to say they have been utterly amazing; with greenkeepers working throughout lockdown, sometimes voluntarily, the bar staff working tirelessly to provide food and drink as well as the reception team that has gone over and above the call of duty to meet the needs of both members and guests. We have a fantastic group of people here and their continued efforts have not gone unnoticed.

The future of BGC (Directors Update)

We know everyone is keen to hear an update on the announcement we made back in 2017.

Although Bromsgrove District Council has continued to work on the District Plan through 2020 and into 2021, progress was delayed while the Government undertook a review of the planning process. As this has now been completed, we understand that the Draft Timetable now needs to be formally endorsed in a revised Local Development Scheme. As a result, the process is still ongoing and as of now, there are no further updates to share.

It is easy to imagine that with the current explosion in the popularity of golf, our plans may have changed. However, we are still committed to seeing this opportunity through and await further updates from Bromsgrove District Council.

We do not need to look too far back to see the high number of golf clubs that were permanently closing their doors, due to ever-increasing overheads at a time of reduced participation and reduction in membership numbers. This scenario has played out over many years and there is no assurance that the recent interest in golf will remain. Financial concerns have required us to look at other opportunities which will revitalise BGC, creating a sustainable, forward-looking viable golf and leisure facility. This will ensure we can continue to offer a facility and services to our community for many years to come.

It is important to us that we keep our members updated on any developments and we continue to do so through the Management Committee Meetings held each month, any direct enquiries we receive and those who approach us. This is lengthy progress, and while the Council deliberates on this matter, we are working to deliver the best possible golfing experience for all our members.

In the meantime, we continue to be grateful for the continued understanding and support of our members, the various golf bodies, and the local community.

Challenges ahead

While recent months we have witnessed this surge in popularity, we are only too aware of the immediate challenges to the golf centre as we have a vast number of expenses on the horizon. Course machinery replacements – which have also been delayed due to the pandemic – as well as other sundry costs required to maintain the high standards of the centre.

Utilising the right machinery has always been a priority for us to give our members the best-golfing experience. We are dedicated to keeping the facilities organised and the equipment maintained. Aside from keeping our current machinery in great working condition, we also want to make sure we use the latest tools at our disposal to improve the course and increase efficiency.

To maintain our standing as a leading golf centre and not get left behind, we need to invest in the latest technology on our golf range, providing all our customers with an enhanced experience. By introducing an advanced system like the Trackman Range it will allow players of all levels to track their range shots and engage in a variety of different game modes from the comfort of each driving range bay. Although a huge investment, giving our golf range this upgrade to keep will allow it to remain one of our most important, all-weather activities.

When funds allow, we also plan to refurbish Edward's Bar & Restaurant to give our guests the most enjoyable dining experience – whether they are golfing or just popping in for a drink. While plans are in the early stages, we will aim to provide a fresh, modern environment, with replacement furniture and a whole new look.

As many of the improvements that are visible to members, there are as many that are not. An example of this is the need to fully replace the irrigation system that was installed on our first nine holes over 30 years ago. With many of the bonded joints of the underground pipework now becoming brittle and starting to fail, it now requires a major overhaul. This, combined with the need to adapt to new best practices being brought on because of climate change, hotter summers and wetter winters presents a real challenge to course maintenance.

John Brothwood (Club Secretary)

During the last lockdown, the company regretfully received the resignation from John Brothwood from his role working with the management team here at Bromsgrove Golf Centre.

Since the start of his employment in March 2000, John has performed several key roles here at BGC, always working with great integrity and diligence. We are delighted, to confirm that he continues his other role as Club Secretary.

Seldom do you have the benefit of such a longstanding member who has been so instrumental in the set up and operation of a club. John's role both at BGC and working with Worcestershire as the County Union rules official is hugely valued.

In recognition of John's service to Centre and Club, we are delighted to provide him the rare privilege of Honorary Life Membership of BGC and hope that you will all join us in wishing him a happy retirement and many happy, healthy years golfing.

Closing remarks

It has been strange and a unique period, full of challenges and achievements. However, we are proud of our team and the relationship we have with our members. We are sure you can all agree that the golf course is looking and playing superbly. We hope you share our gratitude to our hardworking team of greenkeepers and the management team who are doing a remarkable job in providing a well-maintained course with first-class greens.

We take this opportunity to thank all our staff, department heads, committee members and of course our members who have supported us and one another over the past year and use this moment to send you our very best wishes for deservedly better times ahead.

Philip Morris

Proprietor

Adam Morris

Proprietor

