



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Issue of golf balls landing on residential properties around City of Belfast Golf Course, Mallusk.
Date:	10 April 2008
Reporting Officer:	Fiona Holdsworth, Principal Parks Officer.
Contact Officer:	Ricky Rice, Area Manager, North Belfast.

Relevant Background Information

City of Belfast Golf Course, Mallusk was built in 1984. It is a nine hole golf course. There is a facility management agreement with City of Belfast Golf Club to manage the golf course partly involving grounds maintenance activities but mainly relating to receptionist and cashier responsibilities.

In 1984 there was relatively little residential or commercial property surrounding the course. Over the last 23 years there has been an increasing build up of residential and commercial property around the golf course. Subsequently there have been occasions when golf balls have damaged property or cars in the surrounding properties.

A process has been in place for some time that requires an Officer, when informed of alleged damage, to investigate the alleged damage. If agreement is reached that it was the result of damage from a golf ball then remedial payment for damage caused is paid to the claimant. No precise records are currently available concerning how many claims have been made and settled, however from the information which is available approximately 10 claims for damage have been received in the last 5 years resulting in a total cost of £4,000.

Key Issues

A new housing development at Rogan Manor, adjacent to number 1 golf hole, (see attached map) has been in existence for approximately one year. Residents of this development have requested action be taken to avoid golf balls landing in their back garden and subsequent risk of harm to themselves and their children. We have also been contacted by other residents concerning golf hole number two and it is considered that remedial works can be made to reduce the likelihood of golf balls causing damage without serious expenditure.

There are a number of options, both short term and long term, to reduce the risk of golf balls landing in residential houses in Rogan Manor. The options are based on consultation with Health and Safety Officers, residents from Rogan Wood and officers from the City of Belfast Golf Club.

Option One

Install 150 metre x 12 metre high fence adjacent to fence line with Rogan Manor. The cost will be approximately £98,000 and will require planning permission to erect the fence. This is dependent on Northern Ireland Electricity Service re routing the electric pylons or diverting them underground. Detailed specification and plans were sent to N.I.E.S in November 2007. Confirmation has been received from N.I.E.S on 10 March 2008 informing us it will cost £30,000 to relocate the cables underground. They have expressed a requirement for a six month lead in period before work could commence.

It is our understanding option 1 is the preferred option of the residents but this can only be confirmed upon a successful planning application for the fence line whereby all residents affected will have an option to object to the fence line being erected.

This option would also require consideration within the capital programme process.

Total cost of this work will be approximately £130,000

Option Two

Relocate the tee box (see attached map) and relocate the golf green (see attached map). Add additional tree planting and additional bunkers to left hand side of green to encourage golfers to veer to the right away from houses.

It is considered this option may not reassure the residents on a long term basis because they may not consider the risk of golf balls landing in their gardens has been sufficiently reduced without the additional security of a 12 metre ball stop fence. In addition this will require the number 1 golf hole to be closed for at least three months and therefore a reduction in play. Committee is reminded the golf course has been playing on the basis of 8 hole golf course for the last two years due to the realignment of water service pipeline. However, it should be noted if planning permission is sought and subsequently refused for the option of the fence (option 1) then this Option 2 may be the only option available.

Total cost of this work will be approximately £35,000.

Option Three

Install 12 metre high fence and relocate tee box and golf green plus additional bunkers and tree planting. This is a combination of option one and two and it is not the preferred option.

Total cost for this work will be approximately £165,000.

As stated option 1 and 3 will require planning permission to erect the fence line. If decision to proceed with erection of fence line is given there is a waiting period for planning permission plus installation time.

Short term option

Reduce the length of the hole for non members by approximately 60 metres by moving the tee box to the far left of the hole and erect a ball stop fence at the tee box. Add additional tree planting and bunkers to the left hand side of the fairway to encourage golfers to hit towards the right, away from the houses (see attached map).

This will reduce the risk of golf balls landing in the houses of Rogan Wood. This reduction of 60 metres to the green will reduce the chance of golf balls 'hooking' to the left towards the houses. By erecting a 4 metre x 3 metre high ball stop fence immediately adjacent to new tee box this will reduce the chance of 'hooking' towards the houses.

Total cost of short term option will be £5,000

Future for City of Belfast Golf Course

Members should note that plans have been submitted to the Council by the Golf Club for a replacement Club House. If this were to proceed the Club would require a long lease to be agreed by the Council. This now requires the Council to assess the longer term relationship with the City of Belfast Golf Club. A report will be brought forward in due course.

Resource Implications

Financial

There is no revenue budget for option number one, two or three.
There is sufficient revenue budget for the short term solution.

Human Resources

There are no serious implications for staff resources concerning this issue.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members grant authority to:

- proceed with the short term solution as outlined above and agree to a feasibility study to be completed into option 1 within the context of the consideration of the future options for the City of Belfast Golf Course.

Key to Abbreviations

None.

Documents Attached

Photographs of the golf course, including proposed fence line and Rogan Wood.

BLANK PAGE